

# VOLLINTINE-EVERGREEN NEWS

A Neighborhood Publication Sponsored by VECA, the Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association

Volume XXI, Number 3

July 1995

## Committee Reports for Your VECA Organization

VECA hired the part time grant coordinator, Mary Wilder, effective January 1, 1995. The VECA CDC hired the full time CDC executive director, Steve Lockwood, effective February 15, 1995. Community Resident Ruth Gibson was hired as the full time administrative assistant and book-keeper, on March 16, 1995.

Temporary Office space was secured at 840 Dickinson in February. Staff and board are pursuing the possibilities of other office space in the center of the neighborhood. The BP Station has been considered but environmental questions must be answered.

Furniture and equipment has been purchased and Rhodes College has donated desks and chairs for the organization to use. The telephone numbers are 276-1066 and 276-6413.

The VECA Bylaws were revised and ratified by the general membership at the January meeting, to have an elected board fully representative of the community.

VECA and VECA CDC conducted a media tour and board orientation on March 25. Seventy five people were in attendance. City officials and board members toured the neighborhood to discuss plans for the grant. (Photos on page 5)

## Block Clubs

Block club meetings were held February 23, March 16, and March 30. The volunteers divided up the old block club list and the VECA membership list and called people to see if they were interested in attending a block club training session. The training session was held May 16. Following a pizza party, Beverly Perkins talked to the group about block clubs. Thirty people attended the meeting. If you were unable to attend or did not know about the meeting please call the office to arrange for the block club coordinator to come to your block and talk about starting a block club.

### July 22nd Neighborhood Potluck

This year's midsummer potluck supper for all VECA residents will be at 6 p.m. on Saturday, July 22 at Evergreen Presbyterian Church (613 University Street). VECA will provide soft drinks, cups, plates, and silverware -- all you need to do is bring your favorite dish to share. There will be good company, great food, shade trees, and a playground. Mark your calendar!

The Stonewall block club applied for a "Herban Renewal Grant" from the Herb Society of Memphis. They received \$120 for the purchase of plants and soil for a signature garden on the median of Jackson at the entrance to Stonewall.

Five Maury Street residents held an organizing meeting on April 17. The street had a cleanup on April 24. They had people sign up for a block club at this time. VECA provided t-shirts

*continued on page 2*

Do not place in mailboxes

*continued from page 1*

as prizes and coordinated pickup of trash by the city after the cleanup.

VECA realizes other groups are conducting activities. Drop us a note and your streets events will be in the next newsletter.

As part of the grant process VECA wants to develop a welcoming packets for newcomers to the community. The Block Club system would be a way to distribute the packets. There has also been money set aside for a small Block Club grant program. The Block Club steering committee will develop the guidelines for these grants and the process. By January of 1996 Block Clubs should be able to apply for the small grants of about \$100 for projects on their streets.

## Youth Council

The Youth Council met on February 20, March 13 and March 20. It is hoped that young people from the community would meet and become a part of the VECA neighborhood leadership, developing programs for themselves, helping in volunteer projects and perhaps creating employment opportunities for themselves.

## Cypress School

The Cypress school committee has met two times since March. The committee is made up of neighborhood residents, faculty and administrators from Cypress, a representative from Rhodes College, and members of other civic groups working for Cypress. The Committee is working on a small grants program for parents and teachers at Cypress that will begin January of 1996.

## Greenways Committee

The Greenways Committee has met three times. On March 18, 15 residents toured the old L&N railroad bed. The committee has decided to focus its first year on the railroad and hope to de-

velop a plan for the use of the bed. Drawings have been made of the bed, funding sources have been explored and a policy statement has been prepared and will be submitted to the VECA Board. The Committee will focus on other greenspaces as volunteers come forward and express interest in areas like Cypress Creek and University Park. The grant has a three year life and each can be looked at as time and volunteers allow.

*continued on page 4*

### VOLLINTINE-EVERGREEN NEWS

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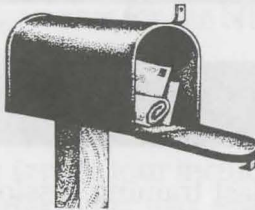
*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is  
a piece of the continent. JOHN DONNE,  
Devotions (1624) 17*

## The Neighborhood Preservation Initiative (NPI) Grant Report June 1995

In every other issue of the Vollintine-Evergreen News there will be a special report about the NPI grant. VECA wants to keep people informed of the progress of the committees. Any person who lives in VECA can become involved by calling the office and signing up. 276-1066 or 276-6413.

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"All Are Welcome"

## VECA NEIGHBORHOOD FOCUS

### VECA Named "Neighborhood Association of the Year", and Mary Wilder Named "Neighborhood Leader of the Year"

The big winners at "Neighborfest" in Overton Park on April 29 were VECA and our own Mary Wilder, grant coordinator for the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative. Competing against nominees from other neighborhood groups all over Memphis, Mary was named "Neighborhood Leader of the Year" and VECA was named "Neighborhood Association of the Year" Both awards were particularly fitting this year! Congratulations.

*continued from page 2*

## Historic Designation

The Historic Designation committee has met four times. It held the last training session and has completed the last of the surveys. VECA has contracted with a preservationist to help with the completion of the nomination. Judy Wimmer has volunteered to do the photography for the designation application. Members of the committee served as tour guides for the Preservation Day tour of VECA, which was a trial run of VECA developing a Historic Tour program for the neighborhood. The committee plans to begin work on a spring 1996 celebration of the VECA National Register Nomination expected in January of 1996.

## Funding

The budget for the NPI grant was approved by both VECA and CDC boards. The majority of the funding is the Community Development Corporation, the housing piece of the grant. The VECA organization has a small grants program for the block clubs, a small grants program for Cypress School, and small budgets for the other committees. The funds are distributed to VECA in two payments annually over three years. The funds are now held at Rhodes College pending VECA CDC tax exempt status. VECA has sent out for competitive bids to accounting firms and has approved a contract for services.

The success of the grant depends heavily upon the volunteer effort of community residents. It was the long term effort of VECA residents in areas of code enforcement, block clubs, and school issues that attracted NPI to VECA. Please feel free to come up to the office anytime and volunteer or join a committee. The work done by the NPI grant will be entirely dependent of the energies of the community. NPI is just money. It means projects can take place a little faster because there is some modest staff to help things get going and funds to start things off. VECA is trying in all cases to match the NPI funds in order to make them go further in improving the community. This

*continued on page 5*

*continued from page 4*

matching process requires planning and research by the committees to identify sources of programs and funds. Your input on committees is welcome.

In the VECA office are copies of the committee minutes, board minutes, charter, bylaws, budgets and the Strategic Housing Plan. All this material is available for review and reading in the office.

Upcoming VECA Board Meetings: June 5, July 10, August 7, September 11, October 2, November 6, December 4, January 8.

Upcoming VECA CDC Board Meetings: June 10, July 8, August 12, September 9, November 11, December 9.

## Traveling in our neighborhood

Hemie Gibson is the owner of Universe Travel & Consultation, Inc. Mr. Gibson lives on N Avalon and is a member of the Housing Committee. Mr. Gibson has helped VECA with its travel arrangements for the NPI training in Boston. Hemie is a native of Liberia and has live in America for many years.

Mr. Gibson's business is located on Beale Street and specializes in planned tours of the Middle East and Africa. In April of this year he took twenty folks to England, Egypt, and Kenya. Preparation for the tour included classes in Swahili, bargain shopping and the history and culture of the countries. This was done two months prior to the trip. The group toured London where the exchange rate made shopping difficult. Egypt was very rewarding for the group as they toured the Pyramids, the Sphinx, the Citadel, and museums. In Africa they toured Kenya. The group was treated to a reception by the Ambassador of the Republic of Zambia to Kenya. The midsoutherners were given a taste of Kenyan barbecue, crocodile, zebra, and giraffe.

Mr. Gibson plans tours of Ghana, the Ivory Coast, the Holy Land and South Africa in the coming months. He can be reached at Universe Travel at 523-1851.

VECA is a neighborhood with many wondrous people who add to the complex flavor of our neighborhood. If you want to share with others in VECA news about your neighbors, contact the Vollintine-Evergreen News.

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### VECA CDC media tour and board orientation, March 25th, 1995



## Easter Egg Hunt on the L&N Railroad

On Saturday April 15, about 75 residents of Auburndale and Hawthorne and their friends met to have an old fashioned Easter Egg Hunt. The hunt was organized by Trisa Eleogram, Vickie Davis, and Claire Hyrka, who had area residents bring candy filled eggs to the field early in the day. The "bunnies" hid the eggs in time for the 4:00 hunt. Children were divided into groups by age and shown areas of the greenspace to hunt for eggs. The Children and adults seemed to enjoy themselves. The once traveled, then abandoned, now gardened L&N railroad bed was filled with the sounds of laughter, gleeful squeals as treasure filled eggs were found and pleas to eat more chocolate. Area residents have shown that treasures aren't just found in eggs on holidays: they are in our neighborhoods when we take the time to care for our greenspaces and take time to be with our neighbors.



**VECA Community Development Corporation needs an occasional laborer, maintenance person and carpenter. Pay according to ability. Call Ruth or Steve at 276-6413 or 276-1006.**

## VECA Community Development Corporation Update Information

VECA Community Development Corporation has approved a set of Policies and Procedures outlining how we will improve the houses in the neighborhood and how we will help first-time buyers qualify for housing loans. Copies of that statement are available at the office.

The CDC has started operations in the neighborhood by pursuing the houses in the worst condition. A number of abandoned houses have been located, owner identified and discussions pursued. A set of tactics to negotiate with owners of derelict housing has evolved. While we try talk with them about selling the structure to the CDC for rehab, we encourage Housing and Code enforcement to use their authority to force owners to take care of public health threats.

In its first ten weeks of existence the CDC has made a number of offers to purchase houses. We closed on a building on Edward Avenue on May 16th. This duplex will be converted to a single-family house and renovated with United Way funds under the CDC's supervision. We have a contract to buy an old dilapidated house on Faxon near McLean as well as a four-plex on Maury north of Jackson. We offered to buy this apartment building, not because we want to become landlords, but to prevent it from deteriorating. All of these structures we plan to sell to first-time home buyers. Other offers are in the works.

The CDC is sending every landlord in Vollintine-Evergreen a letter inquiring whether they are interested in selling their rental properties. The first two-hundred letters we sent have produced remarkable results. To date we have heard from twenty-seven landlords who own thirty-four buildings in VECA. The CDC has no intention of buying every rental house in the neighborhood, but we especially hope to acquire, renovate and resell some that are empty or in the worst shape. We also plan to assist existing tenants in buying the house they currently live in.

On April 27th the CDC held its first Home Mortgage Seminar. Fourteen prospective buyers attended. We will continue to assist people interested in buying houses in VECA. The CDC wants to develop a committee of VECA volunteers who are trained in credit counseling, and would be willing to work with potential buyers one-on-one. If you (or someone you know) are interested in buying a house or learning to do credit counselling, call Ruth at the CDC office: 276-6413.

The CDC has a grant from the Pew Charitable Trust that will last three years. We will be looking for additional matching funds during that time so that we can continue the effort after our initial grant has run out. The CDC

sees a need for a fund to assist existing home-owners who are not able to keep their houses up. We are looking into possible sources of funds to use in conjunction with neighborhood volunteer labor and donated materials.

### Meet the VECA office staff

840 Dickinson

Ruth Gibson, administrative assistant  
Steve Lockwood, CDC Executive Director  
Mary Wilder, NPI Grant Coordinator

276-1066 (Gibson or Wilder)  
276-6413 (Fax or Lockwood)

# VECA Needs Volunteers

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Day \_\_\_\_\_ Eve. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Volunteer Interest</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborfest <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservation <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;">                 Membership Dues                  are \$10.00 per year             </div>

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## VECA Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association

VECA is a neighborhood organization made up of volunteers and paying members. The Evergreen News is the way in which VECA communicates with its residents. The Evergreen News contains information about VECA, neighborhood residents, business and government policies. VECA is bounded by Watkins on the West, Cypress Creek on the North, Trezevant on the East and North Parkway on the South. Contact VECA by writing to P.O. Box 12011, Memphis, TN 38182-0011.