

# The EVERGREEN NEWS

*A Neighborhood Newspaper Sponsored by Vollintine - Evergreen Community Action Association*

## Cleaners Remodels

University Park Cleaners, 613 N. McLean, has been involved in extensive remodeling during the last couple of months — some planned and some not. The coin-operated laundry on the corner of McLean and Faxon was refurbished recently with new machines, both washers and dryers, added. Now all washers are 50¢ machines and there are both 10¢ and 25¢ dryers. The drycleaning machines have been removed, according to owner DICK SMITH, because of frequent breakdowns. The remodeled laundromat is both attractive and equipped enough that customers can find machines available at any time.

The dry cleaners itself suffered from fire several weeks ago. No one was injured and they were open for business the next day. Mr. Smith says he has replaced the damaged equipment with the most modern cleaning machines guaranteeing more consistent cleaning at high level. Most of the work is done by machine so there is less chance for human error. (Dick has a tip for us — dry clean your polyester clothing. This material tends to attract dirt in the wash which in turn causes the clothes to wear out faster.)

## V/E House Converted

The large house at 1746 Jackson (corner of Auburndale) has been leased by Arlington Developmental Center and will provide a home for eight developmentally disabled teenage boys. Arlington received a grant from the Tennessee Law Enforcement Planning Agency to develop and operate this program.

The home is ideally suited for these boys since it has ample space for sleeping areas, recreation rooms and outside activities (basketball and a garden).

The home is staffed by four houseparents, a recreational therapist, a counselor, and director. In addition, in June a teacher will be joining the program.

The purpose of the home and its program is to help the boys who live there acquire the social, educational and vocational skills needed to become productive members of society. The three residents currently living there attend Fairview Junior High School and this summer will be involved in the Forget-Me-Not Summer Camp.

The staff and residents of the home would like to invite all of their neighbors to come by and get acquainted and perhaps some of the other teenage boys in the area would like to play basketball some afternoon. Director KAYE THURMOND, who has been involved in similar programs in other cities, states that neighbors could help by contributing some of the niceties of home such as pictures, plants, etc. Other staff members are BRIAN LONG (counselor), JERRY STOKES

(recreational therapist), and houseparents JIM PERRINE, ALEX WEST, and BILL and NANCI CROW.

## Parting Shots

by Mike Kirby

Ed: VECAA president MIKE KIRBY has received an unexpected opportunity to spend a year in Washington, D.C., working on a nationwide program in criminal justice. His appointment begins June 1. This is the first of two articles outlining projects he would like continued in his absence.

I would like to take this space in the Evergreen News to thank this neighborhood for giving me the opportunity to function as your president. I hope the experience has been mutually rewarding. I have especially enjoyed meeting the many people in the community and helping give all of you a sense of what I consider to be the greatness of this neighborhood. I intend to return to Memphis in about a year and will work for this neighborhood once again in whatever capacity I can. I've found that this type of work gave me fantastic enjoyment and a feeling of great contribution.

Before I leave, I would like to set forth what I consider to be some of the operational policies that need to be pursued by the organization in the coming year. These include the following:

1) VECAA needs to be an active participant in the new Mid-Town Council of neighborhoods. Many problems can be solved if they are discussed in the context of the total midtown area. I believe that the Mid-Town Council should be a vibrant force lobbying for the protection of all neighborhoods in the midtown area.

2) VECAA needs to develop fund-raising capabilities. Fund-raising allows the neighborhood to do the things they could not otherwise be involved. VECAA relies on volunteers; however, volunteers need resources in order to complete their tasks in a highly professional manner. In addition, it seems to me that volunteers can be used in the fund-raising capacity itself. Not all members of the neighborhood who want to contribute have the specialized skills required in neighborhood planning. However, all interested neighbors, whatever their skills, can get involved in a variety of fund-raising activities. The function of fund-raising needs to be accomplished both through increased membership, through specific projects such as bake sales, dinners and picnics, and through sale of items such as t-shirts, bumper stickers, etc.

3) VECAA needs to become more involved in maintaining housing in the neighborhood. First of all, VECAA needs to continue giving support to the elderly who are short of finances. This means that volunteers from Southwestern and other service programs can be used to provide help to the elderly in re-



### Meetings

A "Town Meeting" will be held in the V/E community on Saturday, June 4, from 1:30 to 7:30 p.m. Watch for posters announcing the location.

## Housing Board

V/E residents are urged to report housing-related problems they identify in the neighborhood to VECAA's Housing Complaint Board. The Board can deal with violations of the city's building codes such as structural disrepair, weeds, litter etc., as well as other deviations from neighborhood standards. Action will also be taken in the area of tenant landlord relations when they relate to neighborhood goals. The Board is especially interested in hearing about "undesirable activities", real estate whether legal or illegal, in our community. All complaints, inquiries or comments should be directed to Board chairman JOE SOHM at 278-6962

pairing and painting their houses. In some cases, the elderly can contribute to the cost of paint and some of the tools. In other cases, they do not have the financial capabilities to make even this minimal contribution. Therefore, VECAA needs to look at sources of funding which will provide paint and other materials, in addition to equipment such as ladders, paint brushes, etc.

In addition, VECAA could benefit from the creation of a development corporation. A development corporation has the capacity to buy housing which is in a deteriorated state, fix it up, and resell it to homeowners, rather than letting the property go to investors who will use it as rental property. Volunteers in the neighborhood can be used to help fix up the property. The profit from the sale of such properties can then be used to generate income for the purchase of other properties. If incomes from such a process eventually become fairly substantial, the neighborhood can then attempt to purchase larger sections of commercial property or deteriorating apartments and can become involved in large-scale rehabilitation and redevelopment.

4) The organization needs to keep Southwestern work-study students involved in some of the details of the organization. Generally, the Southwestern work-study students cost the organization about \$.50 per hour, the rest being subsidized by the Federal government. The work-study students this year have been involved in a wide variety of tasks including fund drives, neighborhood housing surveys, preparing IRS Tax-Exempt Status forms, and many other details such as arranging meetings, investigating complaints, etc. This has proved to be an invaluable service since the volunteers sometimes cannot take care of the details of the organization. In

addition, it is being proposed that some of the details dealing with the publication of the Evergreen News be conducted by a work-study student. This means picking up the copy, delivering paper to the printer, making arrangements for getting it on a particular date, etc.

5) The organization needs to be vigilant with regard to the activities of realtors in the neighborhood. We need to ask attorneys in the neighborhood to look at the legal implications of the activities of the real estate industry. It seems to me that the real estate industry is refusing to take responsibility for the action of their individual members. VECAA members may have noticed that in recent supplements to the Commercial Appeal, the real estate industry has tried to convince the City of Memphis that they are a highly ethical group which is monitoring the activities of its members. This simply is not true, for we are finding in our neighborhood that a small group of realtors and real estate agents exhibit no sense of ethics. We need to publicize the continued activities of these types of agents and attempt as best we can to chastise the entire industry for its lack of concern for neighborhood desires. In addition to considering legal action, it is my suggestion that the neighborhood develop a list of realtors and real estate agents who agree not to solicit in the neighborhood. And that before anybody in the neighborhood agrees to list a house with any realtor, he will ask this realtor to subscribe to this code of ethics. All neighbors should refuse to list their homes with realtors who do not sign the code. In addition, I suggest that realtors who solicit door-to-door and refuse to sign the code of ethics, be boycotted by the neighborhood. This means that the neighborhood might consider actually having pickets at the property so as to discourage those residents from outside the neighborhood looking at that particular property.

## Around The Neighborhood

McLean Baptist Church has recently called a Minister of Youth and Outreach. DON MIN SHEW of 1815 Jackson took over the job in April. He is originally from Georgia and is a student at Memphis State. . . Vollandine Elementary School will benefit from a recent Rockefeller Foundation grant to the city school system. The Vollandine project is designed to expand community involvement. Vollandine has once again won the Central Area "School of the Month" award for beautification. The award is sponsored by the City Beautiful Commission. . . VECAA was the featured organization in the May issue of Center City newspaper. . . May is "Older Americans Month" and a variety of activities have been planned to honor senior citizens. Contact the Lewis Center for Senior Citizens (274-7408) for more information. Also, the Center is the

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agency through which senior citizens can sign up for Penal Farm garden plots. The plots are free to any one who is willing to work the ground. . . There is some interest in a mixed (boys and girls) soccer team for the Midtown area. At present no team is available and it would be good to see how many children want to play and how many adults would be interested in participating. Those interested should call Sallee Bruhwiler at 274-5690. . . Several churches in the Vollintine - Evergreen community are having a Summer Night Studies program on Sunday and Wednesday evenings, June 5, 8, 12 and 15. There will be study groups for all ages, with nursery care provided. Meetings will start with dinner at 5:45 p.m. each of the evenings at Evergreen Presbyterian Church. Sunday evenings the meals will be "pot luck suppers" and those attending are requested to bring food for eight. Wednesday evening meals will be served by the church for \$1.50. Courses will be taught by outstanding leaders and the series will include sessions on the Old Testament and New Testament, worship and music, personal problems and others. Call any of the following churches for information: Evergreen Presbyterian, Trinity Methodist, First Presbyterian, Springdale Methodist, Idlewild Presbyterian, Emmanuel Presbyterian and Lindsay Memorial Presbyterian.

## Landlords and Tenants

by Cathy Johnson

An emerging problem in the Vollintine - Evergreen community is housing deterioration, and one of the factors often associated with this phenomenon is the proportion of rental property. Consequently, I undertook this spring a study of landlord-tenant relationships in the V/E community to determine the extent to which rental property contributed to neighborhood deterioration.

Surveys and interviews were administered to 29 tenants within the VECAA boundaries; these tenants were predominately black (62%), from various socioeconomic backgrounds and residing in a variety of housing types (i.e., single-family, duplex and apartment). Nineteen landlords were interviewed, some as individual investors, others representing management firms or institutional interests. The respondents were

selected from the housing inventory conducted as part of VECAA's long - range planning process; steps were taken to assure that units in all three structural categories (i.e., no problems, minor problems, or major problems) were included.

The first impression from the study is the obvious difference between owner-occupied and renter-occupied property. The former is virtually always better kept and the statistics from the earlier VECAA housing study indicated that 58% of the rental property displayed some sign of deterioration compared to 11% of the owner-occupied property. Among the tenant characteristics associated with deteriorated rental property were low socioeconomic status, unemployment and younger age of the tenant. Race, however, was more significant than those factors, with deteriorated rental property more likely to be occupied by blacks. Also, the longer the tenure, the better condition the unit is in.

More of the tenants were aware when their structures had serious problems; some, however, did not consider their landlords negligence even though their units displayed considerable deterioration. Those who lived in units with little or no problems were more likely to initiate their own repairs than those in units with major problems. Interestingly, there was a strong relationship between the structural condition of the rental unit and the condition of the units interior. That is, renters who lived in deteriorated units were more likely to display interiors categorized as "very disorderly." Almost all renters interviewed felt that the area was a "good neighborhood". In fact, this was cited as the main reason for moving here. However, the higher the regard for the neighborhood, the better the unit was maintained. Also, those who were familiar with VECAA tended to live in better maintained homes. Few tenants were aware of mechanisms for forcing landlords to maintain property; there was some interest in a "tenant's union" among those in the more deteriorated units.

The landlords interviewed had a variety of characteristics such as age and length of time as landlord. Only three of the

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19 were black although blacks comprised 62% of the tenants. Nearly half of the landlords were in business for themselves while one - third were management firm representatives. Churches and other institutions managed a small number. Most of the rental units with major problems were handled by management firms. The best landlords, it seems, are institutional as they insist on tenants affiliated with the institution.

The landlords were generally aware of the condition of their structures and agreed with their tenant assessment. Those managing deteriorated units cited the problems of obtaining responsible tenants and the tenant's refusal, once settled, to help maintain the property as major problems. It was this group of landlords, also, who seldom visited the premises. The managers of the best-kept units tended to be those who lived in the area and/or maintained close contact with their tenants.

It is impossible to single out either landlords or tenants for the deterioration of rental property in the V/E community. Few of the identified landlords could be characterized as slumlords, and most tenants appeared to be willing to maintain their dwellings. The greatest barrier to housing maintenance appeared to be a lack of communication between landlord and tenant. It is this type of negligence that contributes more than anything to deterioration.

Ed: Cathy Johnson is a work-study student at Southwestern who has been involved with VECAA during the past year. She is a senior with a major in political science.

Vollintine-Evergreen Community Action Association  
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## V/E Town Meeting

A neighborhood "Town Meeting" is being planned for Saturday, June 4th, from 1:30 to 7:30 p.m. at a location to be announced. The Town Meeting is being sponsored by several churches in our neighborhood as a way to involve everyone in identifying their concerns and planning creatively for the future. There will be two workshops to quickly pinpoint the group's concerns and to plan for solutions to deal with these concerns. Singing, food and entertainment will be part of the day's activities.

Everyone is invited to participate and help make this day a sign to Memphis that we are a strong community ready for the future. The planning meetings are held at 7:30 on Friday evenings at Lindsay Memorial Presbyterian Church at 1663 Tutwiler. Watch for posters announcing the location. For further information contact PAT GOAD at the McLean Day Care Center, 274-9440. (A Town Meeting will also be held at Lowenstein Towers on Sunday, May 22.)

Address all correspondence to: The Evergreen News, 1032 Rainbow Drive, Memphis, TN 38107

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