

St. Francis Neighborhood Center

Newsletter

Issue 4 Summer 2005



Greetings from St. Francis Center

Hi, all. Hope the holidays were happy for everyone. Here at St.

Francis, we are still working toward neighborhood and City approval for our new Arts and Education community center. At a recent meeting, neighbors agreed on the *concept* of a community center, not, however, on location or design. Mini-steps at a time.

We expect many events to be held at the new building throughout the year. The facility will host the Reservoir Hill Improvement Council's meetings, *Kwanzaa in Reservoir Hill* event, fundraising activities and banquets, community concerts and shows, home buying and asset-building workshops, and committee meetings (sanitation, public safety, housing). The current building will be available if more meeting space is required. As for the future, the new facility will provide space to expand activities and start new programs such as dance and music groups, health care, parenting, and other classes that will be part of St. Francis Neighborhood Center's *Open University*.

Later this month, our Community Organizer, Frank Patinella and I will be meeting with an experienced fund-raiser to lay out strategic plans for developing new sources of income. The new

building and its maintenance will be expensive. Nonetheless, I see it as a great legacy to serve the many different populations in our neighborhood . . . certainly worth the effort.

Our grammar school after school program is going great guns under the aegis of Liz Evans. Liz was one of the original founders of St. Francis back in 1963. She takes personal interest in the youngsters and their families. When they're here, the kids don't want to leave.

This summer, we will host two large programs for our young people. The first is the *Kids On The Hill Summer Camp*. As we've mentioned before, this is an arts-based program under the leadership of Rebecca Yenawine. The young people have painted colorful and active murals on some of our empty walls, and have made award winning video documentaries which have been aired on Maryland Public Television.

Rebecca has also initiated a Youth Council for high-schoolers. They meet once a month and discuss neighborhood concerns and remedies for problems. All the teens meet daily for afternoon classes on various topics. They also attend the monthly community meetings so that there is full community participation, not just adults. Recently, I met with them myself because they had interesting questions on spirituality and religion.

The second program meeting here at St. Francis this summer is the *Cutting Edge*

Sewing Project run by Denise Bailey-Jones. She will offer, in each session, sewing fundamentals, principles of female self-awareness and positive self-esteem, and concepts on the importance of higher education.

St. Francis is also involved in discussions about the development of the housing market here in Reservoir Hill. As elsewhere, housing prices over the past three years have increased from about \$75,000 to near \$300,000 with concomitant increase in the tax base. We are working to prevent the forced exodus of our neighbors who have lived here for three or four decades, struggled to buy their homes, cared for their property, and paid their taxes. We also have our share of wandering speculators. When they speak to me, they quickly learn that we're about *respect*.

We are grateful for your continued interest in our mission here in Baltimore. Please keep us in your prayers. If sometimes our thank you notes are late, please know that we appreciate your kindness, even when we're overwhelmed.

Rev. Tom Composto
Executive Director

Our Mission Statement:

St. Francis Neighborhood Center is committed to creating an environment that inspires self-esteem, strengthened and enhanced by the impetus to reach out to others who share our passion for self-improvement.

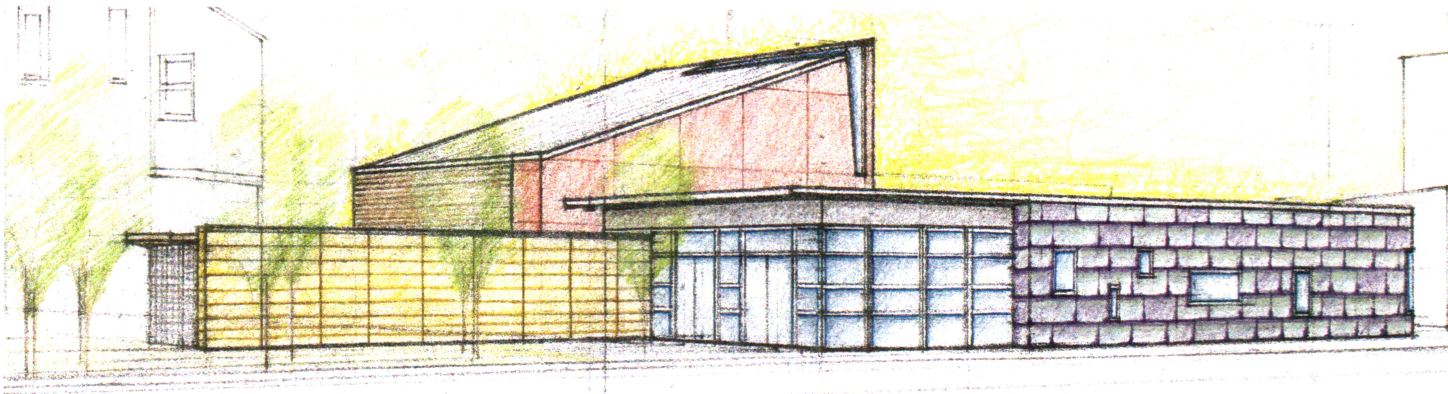
Our primary working areas are health, education, arts and the inner spirit. In this latter, we foster and strengthen the connection of people with their spiritual selves, helping to develop strength for urban living. Health, education and the arts are the vehicles for this development.

The Center provides a safe haven for learning, discussion and listening, and creates tolerance in a place where everyone is welcome.

St. Francis Neighborhood Center is a non-profit organization, #52-0968759. All contributions are tax-deductible.

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Coming soon - The Saint Francis Neighborhood Arts and Education Center

