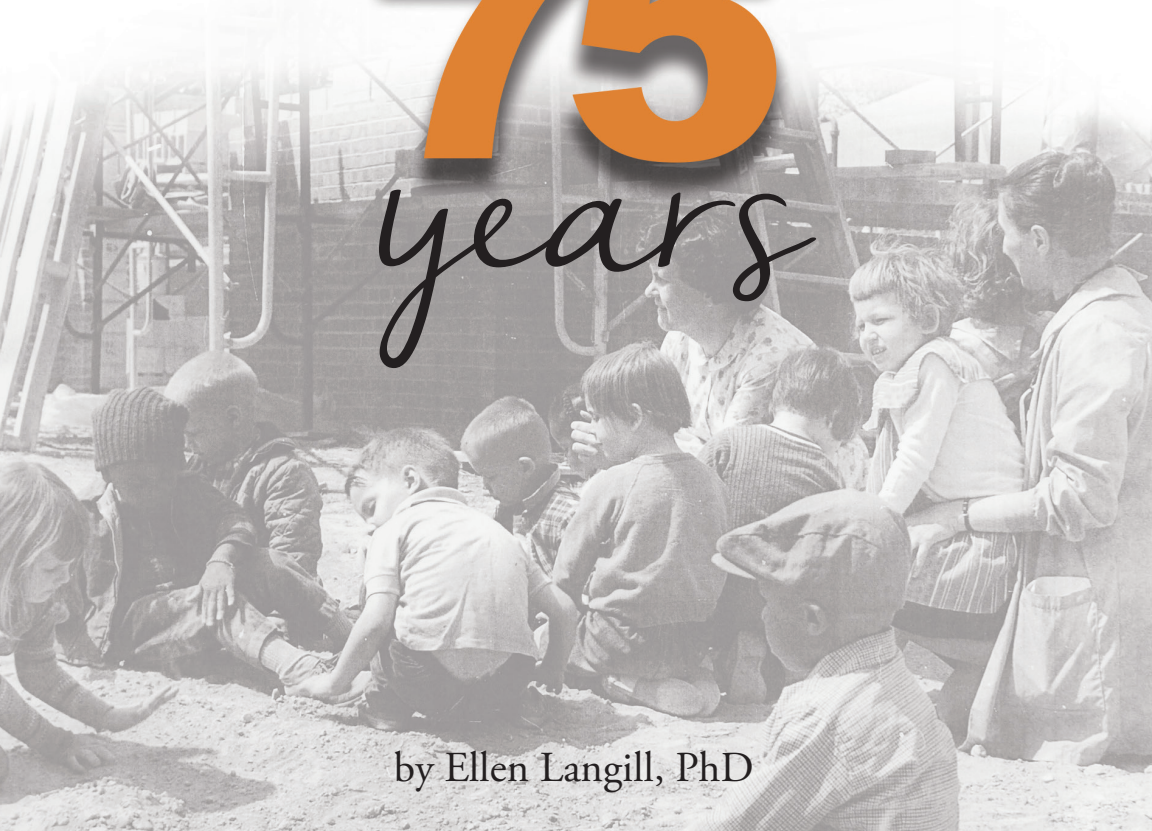




NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE OF MILWAUKEE



THE FIRST  
**75**  
*years*



by Ellen Langill, PhD



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**75**  
*years*

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“ How does an organization go from preparing 15-cent lunches in a “kitchen like a closet” and enduring a furnace breakdown in the middle of winter to running a nature center, educating refugees, and inspiring discovery in the youth of the 21st century?

The journey through more than seven decades of Neighborhood House history echoes with the clamor of preschool children playing... the oath spoken aloud by new US citizens... the friendly competition of a Jolly Oldsters card game or a teen basketball matchup. Reverberating through this history are economic downturns, budget shortfalls, and unexpected tragedies.

In good times and bad, the way forward has been charted by passionate people: the people of the community that Neighborhood House serves, an often forgotten and impoverished area of the city, and the dedicated founders, staff, volunteers, and leaders who have made Neighborhood House a vital charitable institution in Milwaukee.”



## A NEW SETTLEMENT HOUSE IN MILWAUKEE

The institution now known as Neighborhood House of Milwaukee was established in December 1945 on the near west side of the city of Milwaukee. At that time, the city of Milwaukee was experiencing significant demographic changes due to population migrations in the preceding three decades. Between 1920 and 1944, the city's population had increased from 457,000 to almost 637,000. The city's area had doubled from 20 to 44 square miles due to an aggressive annexation program. Following the end of the Second World War in 1945, this annexation continued, bringing disruption and relocation to Milwaukee's shifting population. The city seemed more interested in growth and its newer residents than in meeting the needs of existing neighborhoods, some of which were suffering badly at war's end.

Approximately a mile and a half west of Milwaukee's downtown, working class families and newly-arrived immigrants had been attracted to the area around 18th to 36th Streets along the east-west corridors of Wisconsin and Highland Avenues. A number of these families had earlier found affordable housing in this neighborhood, sufficiently close to the city's industrial valley and accessible public transportation. Several decades prior to the establishment of Neighborhood House, a large migration of African American and Hispanic families had also moved into this neighborhood for jobs during the First World War and the prosperous 1920s.<sup>1</sup> In particular, African American families lived on the southern slope of Merrill Park, working in the valley railroad facilities making Merrill Park one of Milwaukee's first integrated neighborhoods.

In the 1930s, this migration slowed and the area was hard hit by the Depression as the number of wage earners in the city fell from 177,000 in 1929 to only 66,000 in 1933. Some relief programs provided much

needed aid under the Socialist city government of Mayor Daniel Hoan, but unemployment and crime stalked this west side area, marred by the forces of poverty, racism, and cultural deprivation.<sup>2</sup>

By 1945, these problems had multiplied, even though the Second World War brought many other migrants seeking work in Milwaukee, “the machine shop of the world.” The city’s large factories recruited workers from the cotton fields of the South, and even from Caribbean islands such as Barbados. These immigrants moved for employment and new opportunities into a 90% white city with a strong German heritage that did not welcome them despite their filling crucial, often unskilled, wartime jobs.

In the immediate post-war period, unemployment and poverty returned as mass layoffs occurred. Housing shortages brought overcrowding, and the neighborhood further deteriorated.<sup>3</sup> These families had no geographic home to return to and suffered all the problems of joblessness and deprivation, as well as overcrowding, a rising crime rate, and being unwelcome in their new urban homes.

The response of establishing a settlement house there grew out of a movement from England and Boston whereby volunteers would “settle” in a neighborhood home to serve the nearby homeless and impoverished. In December 1884, Toynbee Hall was established as such a home in the blighted East End of London, and two years later, the University Settlement House was set up in New York City.<sup>4</sup>

In 1889, America’s most famous settlement house, Hull House, was founded in Chicago by Jane Addams after she returned from a visit to Toynbee Hall. The founder of Neighborhood House in Milwaukee, Father Reinhart Gutmann, had worked at Hull House prior to his move north. The 1880s was an era when the discipline of sociology was first being offered in American universities and the profession of social worker was coming to the forefront. By 1920, there were almost 500 such settlement houses in the country.

## THE SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT IN MILWAUKEE

In 1890, progressive reformer Lizzie Black Kander established Milwaukee’s first settlement house on North 5th Street to serve the thousands of recent Jewish immigrants crowded in a ghetto there. Kander helped to fund the house by publishing The Settlement House Cookbook, which grew out of her cooking classes for immigrant women and girls.<sup>5</sup> That initial facility on 5th Street was the forerunner of COA Youth and Family Centers, the oldest and largest existing settlement



house still operating in Milwaukee.<sup>6</sup>

Next was the Wisconsin University Settlement house, in 1902, established on Milwaukee's south side on First Avenue at Kosciuszko Park. Like Kander's outreach, this agency served recent immigrants to Milwaukee's south side who were largely Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, and Slovakian. Inspired by the success of these and others, leaders in the city's African American neighborhoods looked to the concept of mission houses, which would be outreach institutions staffed by professionals, not live-in house residents.<sup>7</sup>

### MISSION IN MILWAUKEE

It was in the fall of 1945 that Milwaukee's St. Stephen's Episcopal Church made the decision to open a mission to serve Milwaukee's west side, the forerunner of today's Neighborhood House. Located in the heart of this neglected area, St. Stephen's, at 740 N. 27th Street near Wisconsin Avenue, was ideally located to play an important role. Moreover, the Episcopal Diocese had taken measures to alter St. Stephen's from a typical parish to a new model.

The church itself had been founded in 1891 at the West End Clubhouse, when 27th Street was the western boundary of the city. It became a successful congregation in the next fifty years and was fortunate to be led from 1938 to 1944 by a new and energetic pastor, the Rev. Harold Haug. For several years prior to the mission's establishment,



*The former St. Stephen's Episcopal Church*

Haug had studied the idea of such a mission. Seeing the decline in the neighborhood, he concluded that the church could be of great value to its community if it used its facilities as a center for family assistance, education, and other services. Even before the mission was officially established, Haug reached out to troubled families, “working happily with the children of the neighborhood.”<sup>8</sup>

Tragically, before the St. Stephen’s congregation could implement his mission plan, Haug died in December 1944 at the age of only 49. His successor, the Rev. Reinhart B. Gutmann, supported the dream and led the way in the next year. Both Haug and Gutmann were part of a growing tradition in the Episcopal Church nationwide to serve blighted areas with their outreach.

The first Episcopal City Mission had been created in Boston in 1816 by the congregations of the Old South Church and Park Street church during a national economic crisis. The first such mission “home” opened its doors in 1844 at Trinity Church in Boston’s blighted North End as a homeless shelter and community center. In the spirit of the Social Gospel movement, Boston philanthropist William Appleton donated \$50,000 to the new mission, which was relocated to Boston’s St. Stephen’s Church in the same area. This first Boston mission was so successful that it was expanded to a number of similarly troubled areas in the city.<sup>9</sup>



*Second floor of original building, 1946*





*Rev. Reinhart B. Gutmann, third from left*

## FOUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

As the original St. Stephen's Mission in Boston was celebrating its centennial in 1944, Rev. Haug was finalizing his plans for the Episcopal City Mission at St. Stephen's in Milwaukee. However, his premature death put the plan on hold for a short time. Then the Episcopal Diocese in Milwaukee and Haug's supporters resurrected his proposal and created the Haug Memorial Foundation in December 1945. The key purpose of this fund was to support the Episcopal City Mission that Haug had dreamed of. His successor, the Rev. Reinhart Gutmann, "called on the larger community to join forces" in bringing the dream to life.<sup>10</sup>

With financial support from this foundation and key donors, a team led by Gutmann determined to open the mission doors the next year in 1946. Because the Episcopal Diocese supported the plan and because the old cream-city brick building of St. Stephen's had been closed as a church, the efforts focused on cleaning the structure, which was described as "full of dirt and grime." Volunteers worked through the early months of 1946 to get the building and classrooms ready. Originally, they hoped to have the Mission House and start-up programs ready to launch in April, but its opening was delayed for four months.

Finally, following a grand opening ceremony in early September 1946, the City Mission opened its doors to welcome children, families, and the elderly of the neighborhood. Although the city had begun social work in the area in 1941, there had been no center for a growing number of programs. One month after its opening, the Milwaukee Journal noted that, "In a sense, the city mission is the result of teamwork of the people



*Episcopal Bishop Benjamin Ivans mid-1950s*

living in the area. The policeman on the beat comes in each week to teach the boys' club. Another instructor is a dancing teacher in the neighborhood. In addition, 20 students from Milwaukee State Teachers College take charge of group activities."<sup>11</sup>

Upon its opening that fall, the City Mission registered 450 members and participants, who each paid between five cents and one dollar to join. The staff consisted of four full-time leaders, four part-time, and 25 volunteers. By December, there were more than 600 attendees each month, seven out of ten of whom came from broken homes. As Gutmann noted, "We don't claim we can cure delinquency or prevent all delinquency, but we are trying at least to break down some of the social conditions leading to it."<sup>12</sup>

### THE LEADERSHIP OF FATHER REINHART GUTMANN

Reinhart B. Gutmann was born in Munich, Bavaria, Germany on May 1, 1916, and had long been interested in pursuing a life of service in the ministry. When he was just 17, the Nazis came to power in Germany, and he and his family made the decision to leave Munich for England. Gutmann was able to study at Gordenstoun School in Moray, Scotland, a private boarding school guided by its motto, "Plus est en vous" (more is in you).

The high school had been founded by Kurt Hahn and maintained a

strong connection to many schools in Germany. Hahn, who came from Berlin, had been an outspoken critic of Hitler and was arrested in 1933 for his opposition. Fortunately, he was allowed to leave Germany and go to England. He then migrated to Scotland where he founded the elite school in 1934. Many members of royalty were part of the student body at Gordonstoun. As a student, Gutmann led a scout troop at the school, and the boy who later became Prince Philip was a troop member.

Gutmann then attended a Church of England seminary. He was ordained in 1942 by the Archbishop of York and served as a curate at St. Michael's Parish in London. It was there that Gutmann first became involved in the settlement house and city mission movement under the aegis of Toynbee Hall. In the early 1940s, as the Second World War raged, he immigrated to Milwaukee.<sup>13</sup> When Gutmann first arrived in Milwaukee, he served as rector of St. James Episcopal Church on West Wisconsin Avenue. From that post, he then accepted a call to join Reverend Harold Haug at nearby St. Stephen's Parish. He also worked with the congregation of St. Andrews Episcopal Church to bring them into the mix.

Gutmann not only led the efforts to open the City Mission, he also oversaw all of the programs, worked as a neighborhood liaison, and brought in the necessary financing. In its formative years, the mission still relied on the Haug Memorial Foundation, but Gutmann also attracted key donors and secured support from the Episcopal Diocese and the Milwaukee Community Chest (later United Way). In 1948, its second full year, the mission's budget was \$20,750. Of this amount, the Community Chest contributed \$12,640, the Haug Foundation provided \$2,200, and the rest came from outlying churches and key donors.<sup>14</sup>

It was after Haug's death that Gutmann took the lead in converting St. Stephen's to the Episcopal City Mission. The Episcopal publication "The Living Church" described Gutmann's work as "giving tirelessly to enrich and empower individuals and families living in poverty



*Painting the original  
Neighborhood House, 1950s*

and disenfranchised from the community.” He also traveled widely across Wisconsin for support of this mission and successfully brought in churches and key donors to keep the doors open and add further service programs. Under this sponsorship, the original day care, nursery school, and family outreach efforts were expanded to include programs for teens and the elderly of the area.

Gutmann was further saluted for “bringing together a three-way arrangement of parish, social settlement, and mission work under one director.” This work was celebrated by the leaders of the Diocese, who realized the incredible amount of work in direct service and outreach he had undertaken, calling his position “full time plus.” To provide some much-needed assistance, the Diocese hired two clerics just out of seminary, Rev. William Ische and Rev. Andrew Laabs, who resided in the parish house while Gutmann himself commuted from his home at 2154 N. 61st Street. He was also assisted by his wife Vivian, who was studying for a degree in social work and helped to set up the mission’s first nursery school. Working with his wife, Gutmann led volunteers in transforming the old guild hall on the first floor for classrooms and the former sanctuary into a roller rink and gymnasium.<sup>15</sup>

As well as being a skilled fundraiser, Gutmann also retained his human touch, connecting closely with families in the neighborhood. “Neighborliness,” he stated, “can only be attained through more home visiting contacts and the extension of group work programs into the homes of members.”<sup>16</sup> Support for this home outreach came from leaders of the board of the Episcopal City Mission and the Haug Foundation, including Peter Day, editor of the national Episcopal weekly, “The Living Church,” and Diocesan Bishop B.F.P. Ivins. Under the auspices of the Diocese, the separate mission board for the agency would consist of 17 trustees, 12 of whom would be elected by the Diocese, and five chosen from the community.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout its first five years, under the indefatigable efforts of Gutmann, the Episcopal City Mission thrived, bringing hope and rebuilding to the west side community of 12,000 residents. It was then bounded by 16th Street on the east, 35th Street on the west, Vliet Street on the north, and the industrial Menomonee Valley on the south. By this time, this neighborhood had truly become Milwaukee’s worst blighted area.<sup>18</sup>

By the celebration of its fifth birthday in 1950, the Episcopal City Mission was serving more than 600 individuals each month, with a 17-member board, and a number of strong financial donors. The next

year would bring many changes and improvements, among them the name change to Neighborhood House of Milwaukee and many additional outreach programs. It would also see recruitment of a key leader who would work with Gutmann to strengthen the mission's work with area teens.



*Basketball in the former  
Sanctuary, 1946*



*NH teens enjoy state-of-the-art  
music, 1946*





*1940s scenes of the former  
Neighborhood House  
(note Red Feather Society sign,  
former United Way)*







## GROWING PAINS, THE 1950s

When Neighborhood House was just five years old, the initial optimism about its longevity was tempered by many problems, most of them financial. Just after the Community Welfare Council had approved opening the facility for groups of aged in the area and hiring a social worker to reach out to the homebound, Rev. Gutmann learned that their request for funding had been denied. Yet Gutmann was able to maintain an optimistic outlook, saying that “the program is more important than the building. We don’t need a palace.” This positive outlook, despite many budget shortfalls would see the agency through its most difficult decade: the 1950s.<sup>1</sup>

### EARLY CHALLENGES

Although Gutmann’s efforts included support from Episcopal pastors and churches in Milwaukee, the agency’s funding was not sufficient to fully support its small staff and a growing number of programs, much less pay for repairs to the 95-year-old building. While still tied in funding and leadership to the Diocese, the agency changed its name in 1949 from the Episcopal City Mission to the non-sectarian Neighborhood House.

Even though Neighborhood House had recently been accepted as a Red Feather recipient of Community Chest funding, the budget for repairs could not be met. Money from the Chest could not be allocated to the physical plant that was falling down around them, since it funded only programs and not “bricks and mortar.” Moreover, as a funds recipient, the agency was denied the opportunity to solicit separate donations from September through November each year. Even a temporary Korean War government grant to its nursery did not solve the situation when the war ended in 1953.<sup>2</sup>

Further complicating the problems was the breakdown of the agency's ancient furnace, which forced the closing of the center in January 1952 when room temperatures hovered at only 50 degrees. The estimated cost of its replacement was \$10,700, and only corporate and private contributions could make the difference. Without that, Gutmann noted gloomily, "the center would have to close again with every cold spell."<sup>3</sup>

However, Gutmann forged ahead, acting on his belief that help would be forthcoming, stating his "inner conviction that enough people will be interested in it to make it possible." His faith was rewarded with results. In 1954 and 1955, the L-shaped lot adjacent to the old church was purchased through generous grants totaling \$22,000 from the Episcopal Diocese and the local Wagner Foundation. This property, formerly a garage and used car lot, provided a 40 by 60-foot area for a small playground with some equipment, a sandbox, and wading pool. The old garage was cleaned out to be used for a crafts shop (with a new saw donated by the Optimists Club), meeting rooms, a small darkroom, and bathrooms. In good weather, the elderly Golden Agers could also use the picnic tables for meetings.<sup>4</sup>

Even with this added facility, the need for services and expanded programs meant that just a few years later, there was a waiting list for all programs and no room for planned family support and other preventative



*Neighborhood House after the crafts shop and playground were added*

programs. Gutmann told a reporter that “reliance on present facilities will mean that we will serve a decreasing percentage of neighbors while the problems are on the rise.” The number of clients soared from a monthly average of 750 to almost 3,000 by 1949.<sup>5</sup>

### THE ARRIVAL OF RAY RICHARDSON

In 1950, when the area around Neighborhood House was undergoing dramatic changes, Father Gutmann realized that the agency needed a new, young staff leader to relate to the increasingly troubled youth and counteract the growing influence of both African American and White



*Ray Richardson*

gangs. In July, he invited Ray Richardson, an applicant from the University of Illinois, to come to Milwaukee for a visit and an interview. As Gutmann later recalled, “We showed him the ramshackle building at 740 North 27th Street which was even more squalid than most settlement houses in those days.” Upon first viewing the “monstrosity,” Richardson “looked but didn’t say much.”<sup>6</sup>

The interview continued with a drive south to Area 5 in Greenfield Park, where the small staff had organized a summer day camp. Richardson met the group there, but as reiterated by Gutmann, “did not say much.” Then Gutmann took him for a long walk around the still mostly white neighborhood, also along streets which included Native Americans, and as far south as Canal Street where the “900 or so Black people lived.” Richardson took it all in and remained very reflective, but, again, “didn’t say much.”

Gutmann later recalled that he was very impressed with the young man and offered him the job of group social worker. “I offered him a very low salary ... and also told him that if he said ‘yes,’ it would be a gamble as I did not know where the money was going to come from. He could not resist the challenge and decided to come for couple of years.” Gutmann further reflected about Richardson that instead, “he stayed and gave us his life.”<sup>7</sup>



*NH senior staff and board meeting including Gutmann (standing) and Richardson (second from left)*

Ray Richardson was a native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, born there a few years after the Tulsa Race Massacre. After high school, he enrolled in Hampton Institute in Virginia, alma mater of Booker T. Washington, which had been founded in 1868, just after the Civil War, to educate freed slaves. After his sophomore year, Richardson was drafted into the Army and sent to Europe. He was promoted to sergeant and served in the Red Ball Express all African-American unit under General George Patton and was wounded in combat.

Following the war, he received a bachelor's degree at Hampton (now Hampton University) and then attended the University of Illinois, where he studied law and completed a master's in social work. It was while he was finishing at Champaign-Urbana that he read about the position at Neighborhood House and came to investigate, finally accepting the job in September 1950. Under his guidance and the continued leadership of Gutmann, the agency would expand its programs and campus in the 1950s.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to hiring Richardson, Gutmann paid tribute to two of his most valuable staff members/volunteers, who would work with Richardson. The first program director, Marian Lightburn, came to Neighborhood House just as it was changing its name from the City Mission. Lightburn was a native Milwaukeean who had found work at the mission through her parish church. Her steadfast devotion to the programs and clients at NH caused Gutmann to increasingly rely on her,

and she became his assistant and Program Director.<sup>9</sup>

It was to Lightburn that another key volunteer/staff turned when she sought to become part of the agency. Margaret “Peggy” Schwoegler had attended Ohio Wesleyan University and then moved to Milwaukee with her husband just after World War II, where she became an active alumna of her Pi Beta Phi sorority. Through its connection with the Community Chest, Schwoegler found her way to Neighborhood House, where she was interviewed



*Peggy Schwoegler (right)  
with NH senior*

and retained by Lightburn as leader of three older adult groups. She recalled that back in that old building, “we served about 150 older adults – lots of card playing, hot meals, and trips.” She did all the grocery shopping and most of the cooking for the groups on a budget of 15 cents per meal, a lunch that included rolls, a casserole, salad, beverage and dessert. As Peggy later put it, “Can you imagine cooking for 150 people when the kitchen was like a closet – with a cooler for soda the only flat working or serving space, and the only refrigerator one floor up?”<sup>10</sup>



*Senior card players, 1950s*



## CHANGES IN THE 1950s

Since program development depended on having a safe and warm building (even if it was soot-stained and starting to crumble), the fact that several Milwaukee area companies came forward with building donations was crucial. One of the earliest donors to this latest furnace fund was the Square D Company, which set the pace with its \$500 contribution, and soon others followed. By the end of January 1952, the installation of a new furnace was underway, plus the creation of a well-insulated false ceiling in the first-floor gymnasium and additional insulation throughout the drafty old building. Gutmann's optimism had been rewarded.<sup>11</sup>

As the warmth and safety of the still too-small building stabilized, the agency's board went through a significant transition. From an original group of trustees who were virtually all Episcopal ministers, Neighborhood House began to attract a new board comprised of lay members, many of whom were corporate and community leaders. By 1957, there were six new members who came from businesses across Milwaukee and its suburbs, setting a pattern for area-wide support. This group, which



*Parent meeting of the Family Life Program in the original building's kitchen*





*Jane Thompson teaching the girls how to make caramel apples, 1956-58*

included several very influential women, began to plan for the next decade of growth by initiating a program study.<sup>12</sup>

The new board program committee was formed to evaluate current programs and set priorities. The agency was already serving almost 3,000 youth and adults each month, with Ray Richardson taking the lead. The committee decided that, until a new facility could be erected, its top priority should be in the area of “preventative” programs, such as the nursery school and its Family Life sessions. The Family Life program, established under Richardson’s guidance in 1953 in partnership with the Milwaukee Area Technical College, brought adults and children together 14 times each year to air problems and discuss solutions.

This program was seen as crucial to the agency’s mission of helping families cope with poverty, crime, and neighborhood dissolution in the area. As the study noted, “Present trends indicate a continued influx of minority groups and of persons unskilled in urban living.” It added that “There is likely to be a continued rise in the number of multi-problem families and individuals.” In fact, the committee reported research that 7 out of 10 of its client families were “single parent.” The building was full from morning to night with nursery school classes, clubs for youths, classes for parents, and recreational activities and crafts for the retired

folks. Yet, as Gutmann observed sadly, through these doors “ambles a daily procession of children, adolescents, mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers...[and] many have to amble home again, unserved, for lack of facilities.”<sup>13</sup>

As the needs expanded, the committee realistically reported that “expansion of services is impossible without adequate buildings.” This hard-hitting report stimulated the formation of an additional board planning committee in 1959, which had the task of conducting a study of needed plant facilities and studying a possible new building capital campaign. The efforts of a highly committed board would be crucial going forward into the 1960s.

### A TIME OF TRANSITION

As the agency faced these new challenges, the Episcopal Diocese announced that Reverend Gutmann’s services were needed in another location. In 1960, he was called to serve as the leader of a similar Episcopal settlement house in a troubled area of Washington, D.C. Packing up his family and moving east must have been hard for him, as he had shepherded Neighborhood House’s growth for 15 years. Yet he recognized the importance of this new calling. His talents were valued so highly within the church that he was later called to serve Native American tribal needs and institutions in South Dakota.<sup>14</sup>

The small staff and the board recognized that his departure would be difficult, but Gutmann, in his usual optimistic fashion, turned to a new leader from within the staff, Associate Director Ray Richardson. In accepting the position of director and stepping into Gutmann’s shoes, Richardson brought his ten years as a staff leader and his deep love for the agency.

Commenting on the mission and importance of the agency, he noted, “Often what we do to help families is not written into our programs ... We are a neighbor in every sense of the word. It took us a long time, but here we are as a human partner, a friend.”<sup>15</sup> Richardson’s 27 years as leader would witness the fulfillment of this ideal and the robust expansion of both the building and programs.



## THE EARLY RICHARDSON YEARS, 1960 - 1975

On September 15, 1960, by a unanimous vote of the board, Associate Director Ray Richardson became the new leader of Neighborhood House at the departure of founder Rev. Gutmann. He was the first African American agency director in the area outside of the Urban League. He had served as Program Director and then Associate Director in his ten years at Neighborhood House prior to becoming Director. In choosing him, the board found a leader who could fill Gutmann's shoes and go far beyond as the agency expanded. He noted that when he had first arrived in 1950, the immediate area was about three percent Black, but it was a "changing neighborhood" which would become almost 50 percent Black over the next 25 years.<sup>1</sup> Richardson's tenure as the director stretched from 1960 to 1987, and his full tenure there was 37 years, from 1950 to 1987. His leadership established Neighborhood House as a major nonprofit serving Milwaukee.

### DIRECTOR RICHARDSON, FIRST STEPS

One of the board's top priorities even before Richardson's accession was to get the word out to the community about the good work at Neighborhood House. Awareness would bring in more volunteers and friends and enhance fundraising potential. To this end, Richardson met with a reporter for the Milwaukee Sentinel just two months after he took over, and an article on the agency's mission and challenges appeared in mid-December, along with a photo of Richardson and a summary of his background.

The story, entitled "Neighborhood House Head Thinks Big," focused on the agency's work in four areas: truancy, theft, teenage drinking, and gangs. As the surrounding neighborhood changed, Richardson noted,

# Neighborhood House Head 'Thinks Big'

By JAMES M. JOHNSTON

Executive Director Ray Richardson and his staff "think big" at Neighborhood House.

They have to.

The problems are big—especially the woes that the old and the young bring to their doorstep at 740 N. 27th St., involving truancy, theft, teenage drinking and gangs.

The doorstep is too small to hold them all and the building, which had "matured" some 56 years ago, is also too small for the cradle-to-grave services the organization wants to give.

Neighborhood House must be selective in picking its youths from the 11,000 in the area, bounded by W. Canal St., W. Vilet St., N. 16th St. and N. 35th St.

But it selects the incorrigibles, as well as the cream of youth. It extends a helping

Floor, because the other group had had it the previous year. We admitted we had erred in putting it on a 'first come-first serve' basis.

"We urged them to present their case in a letter to the council.

"The group abandoned its gangsterism, had one of the girls draw up a letter, and presented it the right way. It won its point."

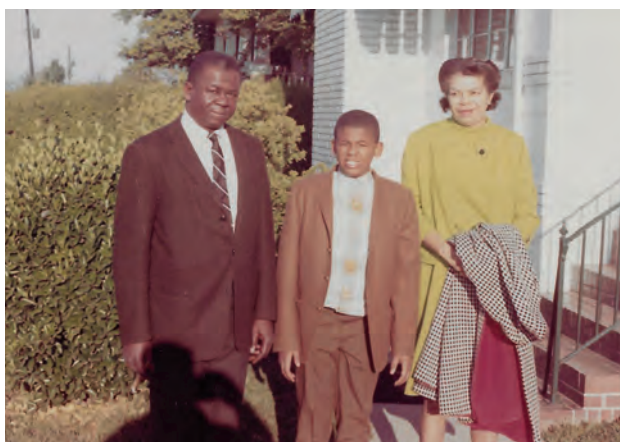
**LESSON LEARNED**

The victory is mine, how



*Milwaukee Sentinel, December 1960*

*Ray, Ed and Evelyn Richardson celebrating Easter in 1968*



the challenges in each of these areas grew. The agency focused on the more than 11,000 youth and teens in the area and tried to include as many as possible in its programs and outreach. School dropouts were a particular focus, he noted, as well as increasing problems with alcohol. He established a Teen Council to include the youth in program decisions and teach responsible citizenship. One question which the Council had just resolved was where and when to hold the dozen or more celebrations scheduled before Christmas. Richardson observed that this first successful effort helped to teach them that a "constructive, democratic method is not just 'sissy stuff,' but the right way of living."<sup>2</sup>

By the following spring, Richardson could report that the agency's budget had grown to more than \$93,000, \$58,000 of which had come from United Community Services, \$25,000 from Episcopalians, and only \$3,600 from the Episcopal Diocese itself. Support was particularly strong for the nursery school program, which had doubled its enrollment to 44 preschool children, 75 percent of whom came from "deprived families." These children, he commented, "begin to develop an educational handicap before reaching school age...which results in poor school-work, and eventually his dropping out of high school."<sup>3</sup> As this and other programs continued to expand, the shortage of space in the old church became critical, and the budget was also tight.

### FINANCIAL CAMPAIGN AND A NEW BUILDING

As a result of these financial shortages, the board voted in March 1961 to begin a fund drive for a new building. Following procedural guidelines, they appealed and received approval from United Community Services for a \$600,000 campaign to build an entirely new building. The planned new facility would allow the agency to more than double its program participants. The new building would have a full gymnasium, small chapel, several offices, and seven meeting or activity rooms to serve its interracial membership of more than 900 children, youth, and elderly.<sup>4</sup>



*Ray Richardson (left) and LuAnne Thompson (right)  
with NH preschool kids, 1964*



In addition, the building would provide room for the 12 professional staff, six of whom were trained social workers, two were child development workers, and three were clerical. This support staff was vital as the agency expanded and as Richardson took on additional responsibilities as secretary to the board of the National Federation of Settlement and Neighborhood Centers. There were also almost 70 volunteers. Richardson's part-time teaching position in social work at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee had helped him recruit agency volunteers, many of whom would have space to operate in the new structure. All eagerly looked forward to having the additional space to take in members from the long waiting lists and increase the number and scope of their programs.<sup>5</sup>

However, even after approval for the drive was received, it wasn't until 1965 that community leadership of a fund committee was ready to begin the campaign. Under the guidance of Atty. Richard Cutler, James O. Wright, president of Badger Meter, and Bob Hoffer, president of Wisconsin Gas Company, the drive kicked off that spring and concluded with a "gleeful" victory in May of 1966. One of the key reasons for its success was the presence on the board and fundraising team of business leaders from the Milwaukee community, names such as John Oster Jr., Robert B. Bradley, Albert O. Trostel Jr., William A. Hayssen and Dudley Godfrey. The total amount raised for the new building was \$622,457, which was



*New building construction, 1967*





*NH staff Glenna Czepulonis (far right) and LuAnne Thompson (center, rear) with Early Childhood Program children Luke Gerron, Thor Backus, Bruce Merkel, Susie Reynolds, Bunny Womack, Elaine Reynolds and Kenny Williams at new building site, 1967.*

111 percent of the original goal. According to Cutler, “Construction of the new building would begin as soon as possible.” A special committee of Beanie Kloppenburg, Betty Wright, and Mary Lou Roozen had visited many school structures throughout the winter in order to make positive design recommendations and set final plans for groundbreaking in early spring of 1967.<sup>6</sup>

### THE NEW HOME

As the successful campaign came to a close, the board moved swiftly to begin construction one block west and three blocks north of the old church, at the corner of 28th Street and Dunbar Streets. Architect Jack Kloppenburg worked closely with a board committee through the winter of 1966-67 to design a structure that would enhance the agency’s mission. Three new nursery school rooms would have tall glass doors facing out to the playground in the rear of the building, with special observation rooms that allowed parents and college students to closely monitor activities.

These rooms would face south to allow bright sunlight to stream in and would be painted in bright colors to get away from the dim and dreary dark brown motif of the old church's interior. A number of offices would provide work space for all of the staff.

Just off the main lobby, the Adult Center would feature a fireplace and ample room for the many "golden age" groups. It could also be used for teen and family events in the evening and weekends, as well as for staff trainings. On one end would be a pass-through counter to the adjoining kitchen. There was also to be a spacious gymnasium with locker rooms and showers in the basement, adjacent to a crafts room, a wood shop, and a machinery room. The building would feature a great deal of new furniture, thanks to donations exceeding the original campaign goal.

With these plans well underway, a groundbreaking ceremony was held in the spring of 1967 with hopes that the new structure would be ready for at least partial occupancy that fall. Throughout the summer, children and youth in the summer programs often visited and picnicked at the site to watch with excitement as their building took shape. The old church and property were to be sold, and the resulting move would enlist the help of many member families and volunteers from churches across the region.<sup>7</sup>

### PROGRAM EXPANSION

As Richardson and the staff looked forward to the new building, they planned ahead for new programs which would support their mission. Central to these was the theme of family, through which both adults and children could work to surmount the challenges in their lives. Nurturing the parents so that they could better nurture their children was a key focus of a number of adult groups which included both craft sessions and Family Life Education discussion groups on topics



*Teens at NH Family Camping*



*Teens enjoy a photo op with Judy Raether (front), 1974*

such as, “How can I stretch my budget?”

Out of these sessions came the idea of family camping trips, eventually including 34 parents and 96 children on weekend trips which Richardson described as fostering “a better understanding between people of different races and supporting adequately functioning family units.” Educational field trips for teens were also initiated, including sojourns to Madison where legislators such as Milwaukee’s State Representative Fred Kessler hosted the group and gave them tours of the capitol. Another valuable innovation was the development of job clubs, which helped reinforce a strong work ethic and place teens in paid jobs in the area, in cooperation with the Youth Opportunity Center of the Wisconsin Employment Service.<sup>8</sup>

Parallel to the family programs was a new initiative, the Teen-Child Development Program, begun in 1968. This umbrella program included girls in areas such as cooking classes and child care education in nursery school classrooms. As social worker Judy Raether noted, “It recognized the fact that many of the 15-year-old and younger girls in the neighborhood are regularly left in charge of younger members of their families.” Activities for youth and teens also included recreational opportunities such as sports in the new gymnasium and camping outings.<sup>9</sup>





*Summer campers playing baseball, 1970s*

### **"THE FARM"**

Growing out of this new emphasis on outdoor activities was a board initiative, headed by Robert and Jane Wagner, to purchase 93 acres of farmland in Dodge County, where all sorts of recreational and environmental activities could take place. It was just 45 miles from Neighborhood House, located on Highway MM, a quarter mile west of Highway 67 and 12 miles north of Interstate 94. Requirements had included this accessibility, as well as few natural hazards such as cliffs or lakes. The beauty of the rolling hills and meadows there and the distance from neighbors made it ideal. Through a number of special donations, the property officially became part of Neighborhood House in 1969. In the words of Robert Wagner, this land would expose inner city children to outdoor activities on a far larger scale than local parks.

The Farm, as it was originally called, provided outdoor space for enhanced camp programs for children ages six to 12 as well as family and teen camping and family picnics. It also allowed for the creation of another new program, the Technical Training Camp for boys, created by Program Director Tom Ackerman. The teenage boys in this program ripped out more than 3,500 feet of old barbed wire fencing and cut back nettles, six-foot-tall grass, noxious weeds, vines, and thorns, while fighting ants and mosquitoes. They were paid a modest sum for this work through a special grant from United Community Services and took great pride in laying out a whole new campground.<sup>10</sup>

In those years, Otto Borkowski, who had grown up on a farm, was a key staff leader and trainer at the teen camps. Borkowski also played an important facility management role at the center in Milwaukee.

Partly as a reward for their labors at the Farm, the teen council, called Teens Inc., helped to raise money for a thrilling 10-day<sup>11</sup> field trip to the faraway Apostle Islands in the fall of 1974. Following six months of carnivals, car washes, and yard work, 17 teens and five staff boarded vans headed north to Lake Superior. As one of the staff noted, “No other NH group has probably learned more about themselves, about people and about working together while achieving a special goal.”<sup>12</sup> Future NH Director Clarence Johnson was one of the teens on that 1974 adventure.

In March 1972, more than 50 preschool kids and 12 nursery school teachers and volunteers boarded a bus and headed to the Farm to “discover a world city kids often never get a chance to see.” As a reporter from the Milwaukee Sentinel wrote, “They found out that snow isn’t really supposed to turn a sooty black hours after it falls. It’s supposed to stay white and soft and edible.” The children watched in awe as flocks of

geese circled and landed, and they got to taste the sap, and later, syrup, from the newly-tapped maple trees. The reporter further wrote that, “At some point, the children couldn’t hear anything, which is probably something many of them never heard before.” It was the first such outing for the preschoolers, of whom Richardson wrote, “In the city you don’t really get a chance to learn about nature.”<sup>13</sup>



*Kids fishing at Greenfield Park Summer Camp 1975*

In 1972, the Farm became the focus of a new festival called the Fall Farm Fest, which brought families and members of all ages to a picnic and fun activities in the colorful Wisconsin autumn. In addition, there were plans to harvest produce which could be used in the kitchen. Held in October, the festival welcomed 37 NH families, many of whom also pitched tents to camp out. After activities which included hiking and exploring, the group cooked a supper over the campfire and ate by lamplight. Perhaps the most fun, however, was picking pumpkins from the crop on the Farm which had been planted by nursery students that summer. The children and families turned these into a group of candlelit jack-o-lanterns, which smiled at them as they ate roasted pumpkin seeds before turning in. As they headed home that Sunday, the families asked, "When can we come again?"<sup>14</sup>

By the end of its third year, programs at the Farm included more than 400 children and several hundred teens and families. With programs growing so rapidly, the board took steps to complete a safety fencing project and add better bathroom facilities. These projects were undertaken under the leadership of board member John Hazelwood and Melita Lane to conform to Dodge County zoning requirements.<sup>15</sup>



*Seniors meet in NH Family Lounge, 1975*



## ADULT ACTIVITIES

In addition to the growing number of programs on the Farm, staff helped the older members revitalize their programs with opportunities beyond just meeting, card playing, and socializing. They organized and operated a resale clothing outlet store in the NH basement, and senior groups such as the Jolly Oldsters, the Wednesday Club, and the Harmony Club held their annual rummage sale, luncheon, and card party, a 20-year tradition by 1974. Moreover, through their own interests and suggestions, this group began to expand the number and reach of their off-campus outings. As an example, in 1973, they took a trip to the Chicago Art Institute, which included other sightseeing and shopping in the city. Other such adult outings soon followed, taking advantage of local cultural and historic sites in the area.

## HONORING RAY RICHARDSON

One of the hallmarks of Neighborhood House was the dedication and long service of its staff. In the fall of 1974 the retirement of Estelle Williams, who had served as office manager for 20 years, and of Mary Hamm, after 17 years, exemplified that pattern. At that time, six of the 13 other staff members had served for at least 10 years, with four others not far behind. Most of all, Director Ray Richardson, who had joined Neighborhood House in 1950 and served 10 years before becoming director in 1960, was recognized for his 25 years.<sup>16</sup>

An article in the newsletter proclaimed “25th Anniversary for the Heartbeat of Our Agency.” It continued: “To many, both man and agency have become synonymous... surely the most profound investment of love and dedication any man can give.” He was celebrated for his professionalism, humor, strength, intelligence, and compassion, “a very special man, one whom we honor with love and appreciation.” In his honor, the city agreed to change the name of Dunbar Street to Richardson Place.

At a gala celebration dinner with board, staff, and friends, the new street name was announced, followed the next day with a picnic of all members and supporters at which the street sign was officially unveiled by



*Estelle Williams, longtime  
NH office manager*

Board President Bill Davidson and Alderman Robert Ertl. Hundreds of helium-filled balloons were set free with attached postcards so that those who found them could send their own personal congratulations to Ray. Hundreds of former participants and staff came back to Neighborhood House to salute his years of service.<sup>17</sup> Although he had lost his wife to cancer several years before, Richardson was pleased to be joined at agency events like this by his 17-year-old son Edward, by then a strapping six foot, three inches tall.



*Ed and Ray Richardson, 1985*

Throughout his tenure, Richardson exhibited a particular ability to recognize and retain talent. As an example from this period, he hired Peter Tropman as a young social worker. Tropman excelled in a variety of programs at Neighborhood House until 1972, when he was elected to succeed Fred Kessler as the area's State

Representative. In that office, and later when appointed to the Governor Lee Dreyfus administration, Tropman continued to support the work of Neighborhood House from his new Madison positions.

Perhaps reflecting the role of the staff in speaking to trustees, friends, and the assembled members, Ray Richardson noted that “what we keep continuously before us is the idea that a person gains by serving the community.” Perhaps the best news for Neighborhood House was the fact that Richardson himself would be around as director for a dozen more valuable years.<sup>18</sup>



## **GREEN ADVANCES, 1976 - 1987**

Following the landmark year of 1975, Richardson's visionary leadership continued to drive Neighborhood House in new directions. The celebration in his honor had been a great success, bringing friends, old and new, to the campus in numerous ceremonies orchestrated by staff leader Jane Thompson. The well-deserved honors for Richardson continued throughout the next year. In addition to the renaming of the street in his honor, a bronze plaque was mounted in the front hall "with affection and gratitude." A supportive group of donors presented Ray with an airline ticket to visit his son Edward at Northfield Mount Herman School in Massachusetts, where he was a student and star athlete.

On June 2, 1976, Richardson received further recognition, receiving the William C. Frye Award for Community Service from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. In this period he also served on the Boards of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Medical College of Wisconsin, as well as the Lakeside Children's Center and the Wisconsin Housing Corporation.<sup>1</sup>

### **FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES**

Richardson was acutely aware of the financial challenges ahead for Neighborhood House. In an article entitled "Agency Dilemma," he wrote that the financial status of Neighborhood House had declined severely in 1976 due to cuts from its main supporting fund, United Community Services. The fund, which had previously contributed 66% of the agency's yearly budget, had reduced the amount to just 57%, with a forecast of further decreases to come. He added that the recent death of a major donor and the end of allocations from the Hearst Foundation further increased the financial problems. Richardson also did battle with

the Milwaukee United Way to continue funding for degreed professional staff. As a result of these reductions, as well as the budget crunch from increased costs of gas and electricity, the board had to agree to a budget reduction of 10% for 1977. Even that reduction left a \$46,500 deficit.<sup>2</sup>

However, Richardson did not alter his optimistic approach to problems, noting that the agency had faced budget problems before. He added that “with some hard planning...and a few prayers, we’ll find ways to broaden our base of support and solve our current financial problems.” He added the encouraging words that “people helping people is what this agency is all about.”<sup>3</sup>

Members and the board responded in helping to meet the challenge. The Parents Advisory Board and other adult groups created a new cookbook with favorite recipes and sold copies for \$3.50 each. The board created a new support group which consisted of current members and influential friends from the community to offer a slide presentation that “tells the Neighborhood House Story.” They also looked to rejuvenate support by recreating a 27th Street Businessmen’s Association.

Further good news came with the announcement of a new endowment to benefit the agency. Richard L. Paddock, a longtime board member, set up a generous fund within the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to provide NH with ongoing financial support. It was Paddock’s hope that this endowment would attract additional support from donors to “further maintain the high level of program excellence.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition, as a tribute to the value of NH to their families, parents voluntarily raised their tuition payments for nursery school in the spring semester of 1981, increasing that program’s revenues from \$1,217 to \$1,714 in a single month. These were people on very limited incomes who expressed how much they valued the agency.<sup>5</sup>

## NEW FUNDRAISING

As financial recovery proceeded slowly, the board realized that, once again, the number of program participants was stretching the building’s space too far. It was agreed that the original structure had to expand. Accordingly, a new wing was planned so that the nursery school and youth programs would have increased space for programs and classes. The new wing also allowed for an expanded after-school daycare program and more offices for social work outreach staff.<sup>6</sup>

However, even these measures did not adequately meet the ongoing budget shortfalls. As Richardson noted, “We cannot operate as we did five, ten years ago.” Staff were severely overworked and underpaid, and

the costs of utilities had “skyrocketed.” As a result, the board decided to take action, announcing a new fund drive in the fall of 1984, the first since the new building fund 18 years earlier. Campaign co-chairs Mary Louise Roozen, vice president of the Marine National Bank, and Donald J. Schuenke, president of the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, led the effort to raise \$1.5 million, with the assistance of many past and present board members and supporters.<sup>7</sup>

The funds would be used for repairs to the nearly 20-year-old building, upgrades to employees’ salaries, and adding to the endowment funds to supplement the ongoing budget shortfalls. In 1983, the shortfall had grown to \$83,600 despite a substantially increased stipend of \$180,000 from United Way. Total revenues had grown to \$423,235, but expenses for building repairs, utilities and salaries had increased even more, to \$506,840. In 1984, as the fundraising effort kicked off, the budget deficit had grown by another \$40,000 to \$123,000. However, with substantial advance gifts from board members and friends, the drive was launched by Christmas and the committee was confident of its success. Due to the success of the Sustaining Fund, the deficit decreased the next year by 50 percent to \$61,000. A brighter future lay ahead thanks to the generous support of many donors.<sup>8</sup>

The campaign was enormously successful, reaching 90 percent of its goal by the summer of 1985. However, since donors would pay over a five year pledge period, the budget had to be further reduced with the departure of two long-time staff members and the losses were marked by “great sadness and much appreciation for their many years of dedicated service.”<sup>9</sup>

### EXPANDING PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

By the late 1970s, Neighborhood House programs for youth and teens were already



*Larry Kress (front),  
Jimmy Giggar (right) and friends, 1975*



almost 30 years old. This maturity meant that a number of adolescents and young adults had spent their entire childhoods in the nurturing environment of the agency. Several key members of this group remained attached and decided to volunteer their time back to help other youth. Two of these mentors were Ken Williams and Regina Robertson, who reflected on their experiences growing up at the agency. Ken's mother had also been a member, so he was second generation. "It gave us something to do and to work for," he remembered. "Otherwise we would have been out running the streets."

Regina likewise noted that after attending nursery school, day camps, clubs, and classes at Neighborhood House, she had been recruited to volunteer there when she was 14. Along with several others in high school and college, they assisted in the programs of the youth club and outings.<sup>10</sup> Through its job programs, NH had set up various part time employment opportunities for its teens and young adults, but too often the funds ran out and they just continued as volunteers. "The idea to serve is foremost in their minds," noted Richardson. In 1980, the agency celebrated Richardson's thirtieth anniversary, saluting his leadership and dedication.<sup>11</sup>

Another growing involvement for children and families was the Language Arts Program, through which parents were invited to attend preschool classes, read books to their children, and take books home to continue the pattern. Staff valued the program which, they said, "helped erase the line between home and school and stimulated a mutual trust



*Nature Center Lodge ground breaking September 20, 1982, with Ray Richardson, Richard Paddock and Lynn Schuette.*

as parents became interested in the educational process and experienced the fun found in a supportive classroom environment.” Funded by the Service Club of Milwaukee with a \$5,000 grant, the money allowed the agency to purchase many new books and audio visual aids and was supplemented in 1987 with a \$15,000 grant from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation.<sup>12</sup>

By the early 1980s, volunteer opportunities were growing as the agency offered many more summer programs and the small staff needed help. Richardson led the way with the creation of a program that allowed some parents to volunteer one afternoon each week to offset the cost of nursery school fees. Teen and family camping opportunities were also greatly expanded and a new summer program for those age 18 and over was added.<sup>13</sup>

A further opportunity, with a small, subsidized stipend, came about in 1983 when the local Neighborhood Housing Service program, a state agency, received a \$20,000 grant to rehabilitate North Side houses, an effort in which NH cooperated. The pay was modest, but almost 100 local banks joined the effort, allowing an average sum of \$3,400 per structure and providing part time jobs for young adults to assist in fixing up properties, painting, scrubbing, and even some carpentry along with several key volunteers. This effort would soon be expanded into a year-round program.<sup>14</sup>

## THE DEDICATED STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Among the many longtime and valued volunteers was Peg Nelson, who was a volunteer for more than 31 years (1952 – 1983) and later a board member. “I do it just for the satisfaction of helping somebody,” she remarked. Her tenure had begun when she got to know Rev. Gutmann early in the 1950s. Just as she announced her retirement as a volunteer in the fall of 1983, she and the entire agency were thrilled with a visit by founder Rev. Gutmann.

Gutmann, who had left the agency in 1960 after 15 years, had answered a call from the Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. and had served as the church’s outreach leader to several Native American tribes in South Dakota before his retirement. His visit lifted spirits as the agency continued to face severe budget shortfalls. He was able to recount stories from the first 12 years, when there wasn’t enough money to heat the building or even turn the lights on.<sup>15</sup>

One of the longest-serving volunteers and supporters was Jane Wagner, who began her service in 1950, when the agency was just five



*LuAnne Thompson with  
NH youngster and lamb,  
1962*

years old. She and husband Robert had been the key donors and leaders in buying the Dodge County farm, which was adjacent to their own farm retreat where they would often host families, volunteers, and staff for picnic dinners. Described as having a “natural inclination to help as spontaneous as her love of flowers and nature,” Jane served as a volunteer and on the agency’s board for 36 years until her death in July 1986. Quietly funding college scholarships for graduating teens, Jane’s “concern for anyone less fortunate was universal and unqualified.” Richardson noted that “she will always be here in the work we do.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition to these long-serving volunteers there were a number of staff members who had begun their affiliation as volunteers, such as Margaret “Peggy” Schwoegler. Another was Jane Thompson, who brought her degree

in social work to Neighborhood House in 1952 and became program director. Her energy and courage were well-known, as she worked to combat gang membership and violence. One fellow staff member recalled, “Jane used to wade into their fights and break them up- she wasn’t afraid of anything.”<sup>17</sup>

Another Thompson who had a great impact on children and families was LuAnne Thompson, director of the nursery school. She had moved from her teaching job in Buffalo, New York, in 1963 to accept Richardson’s offer of head of the nursery program, “sight unseen.” One observer wrote that a mother who had just lost her husband was comforted and encouraged by LuAnne, who helped turn the widow’s “dream for her family into reality.” Her sister Carol Sue also played a staff role.<sup>18</sup>

Bruce Steinmetz offers another example of the staff dedication in the Richardson era. Steinmetz was a longtime NH group leader, working effectively with agency participants of all ages, both at the community center and at The Farm.

An enormous contribution of time and love came from Otto Borkowski’s work to “paint walls, fix engines, build cabinets, repair toys, maintain fences, mow lawns, plow snow and keep the furnace running.” Described as the glue that held the agency together, on his 25th anniversary in 1982 Otto was further hailed as “an indispensable and much-loved man.”<sup>19</sup>

A great reward for members and staff was to see “one of their own” return to serve the agency. Just out of the military, Kevin Murff came to Neighborhood House in the summer of 1987 to work with the summer camp program. Many staff remembered “Murf” and welcomed him back. Ray Richardson saluted him with the comment, “Our people helped him – now he wanted to do it...When you grow up with support, care and direction...you want to give it back.”<sup>20</sup>

## GOING GREEN

Across the country in the 1970s, there was a growing awareness of the problems of air and water pollution. The passage of federal Clean Air and Clean Water legislation provided this movement with concrete national action. The baby boom generation had come of age, and environmentalism was at the forefront of their priorities. Wisconsin’s own Senator Gaylord Nelson established Earth Day in 1970, hoping to force environmental protection onto the national political agenda.

At Neighborhood House, this awareness became a clarion call for action. Beginning with a revised curriculum in the nursery school program, ecologist and teacher Laura Carlson expanded the NH outreach to include family picnics. There were also open houses for NH families on Fridays at noon and Sunday afternoons where the focus centered on the natural world. More than 80 members and their children attended these events, even when the topic was just the new natural playground which had recently been created on an empty lot adjacent to the building. As Carlson noted, even urban denizens could experience the “joy of discovery” by spending time looking at the natural world with new eyes.<sup>21</sup>



*NH carpentry shop, now the art room*

The lot also had a “wonderful new greenhouse,” where youth and teens could cultivate seedlings before taking them out to the farm and replanting them. Students also learned how to tap trees to make maple syrup. In celebration of Arbor Day the nursery students planted forsythia and flowering quince bushes next to the building, which brought nature into the school’s very windows.<sup>22</sup> Further efforts included an enhanced Fall Farm Fest where crops were harvested and families enjoyed the great outdoors of Dodge County.

During one such successful harvest, the assembled group participated in a “potato roast” where a large crop of potatoes and squash was cooked over a bonfire in the crisp October air. They also picked vegetables to take home, enjoyed hayrides, collected Indian corn, and took guided hikes amid the beautiful autumn colors of Wisconsin. Because these year-round picnics were so popular, the Richard Paddock Foundation, Kenneth M. Nelson Foundation and Demmer Foundation donated funds in 1984 to erect a permanent shelter at the Farm with a fireplace cooking unit, picnic tables, and plumbing in a cozy 87 by 30 foot building heated with solar panels, described as “an agency dream come true.”<sup>23</sup>

As Director Richardson noted, “The Farm is a good place to keep families together without tensions or stress. Kids can go and play safely. It’s the best therapy I know.”<sup>24</sup> Staff member Bob Desotelle added that “The Farm is a safe harbor where people can get away from city tensions. They aren’t afraid they’ll be mugged or robbed.” Desotelle later implemented the highly successful teen work program and rose to become



*Teen work program crew, summer 1983*



assistant director. He had been actively recruited by Richardson, who even offered him and his wife a room in his home to stay for a time.<sup>25</sup> Richardson's own favorite hobbies included gardening and fishing, which allowed him time to relax away from the stress of his more than full-time job.<sup>26</sup>

The many Farm programs became even more vital when the agency's summer day camps at Greenfield Park lost much of their county funding in 1982. In addition, parents were expected by the county recreation agency to pay a 500 percent increase in swimming pool fees from five cents to 25 cents per day. Donors were asked to help supplement these increases to keep the fully-enrolled summer camps functioning.<sup>27</sup>

### THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF "ACE"

Also crucial to the organization was August "Ace" Backus, who came to NH in 1961, advanced to program director, and was still active 20 years later. Backus remarked on how fulfilling it was to work there: "I'm convinced our neighbors are infinitely better off because of Neighborhood House."<sup>28</sup> With Richardson's many contacts at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, he had not only been able to attract a number of valuable volunteers, he had also been able to recruit and hire key members of the staff such as Backus, who was a master's degree candidate at the university. Richardson brought him on board as Assistant Program Director and found a way for him to complete his degree while working.<sup>29</sup>



*August "Ace" Backus,  
NH staff 1961-1982*

Ace also became a valued liaison to many community groups, including the Midtown Neighborhood Association and the Fair Housing Council. These community groups worked together to address the growing problems of racism, neighborhood poverty, and unemployment. As the problem of joblessness grew during the recession of the early 1980s, Neighborhood House hosted a group of heads of families who were without work. A program director, Jane Thompson, commented that a number of these adults had themselves been part of agency

programs as children and young adults and found their way back in a time of great need.<sup>30</sup>

The boundaries of the service area had been changed a decade earlier with the construction of Milwaukee's east-west freeway I-94, resulting in further isolation of the near-west community. To bring this community together, Backus convened a series of "town meetings," which brought 150 participants together for an entire day to discuss solutions to problems such as elder care, crime, redlining and housing problems, and unemployment. Attendees representing 31 distinct agencies resolved to continue the process, knowing that "working together imparts more impact."

A similar neighborhood-based group was the Block Club Council, which involved nursery school parents Richard and Helen Meyer in an activist improvement program on behalf of the agency and nearby residents. Through these outreach and collaborative efforts, Neighborhood House became an even more essential institution in its changing area.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to his work as a program director, Backus gave a special emphasis to the agency's expanding nature program, directing the winter camping experience for families at the Farm. He didn't just advertise the allure of snowy hikes, cross-country skiing, and bonfires in the cold air, he also fine-tuned the tent heaters and created special "inner tents" for insulation. He worked on supplying an increasing amount of warm food to heat up the adults and children, noting that "Appetites double in outside winter activities."<sup>32</sup>

The agency continued to expand its mission and become increasingly inclusive. One example of this outreach was the celebration of

*Teen work crew at  
Nature Center in  
1988*



*Family camping in the  
Grandmother Grove of  
sugar maple trees, 1980s*



special events and holidays. Families did not always have to be members to take part. As one example, the agency began a tradition of hosting a “happy and safe Halloween” party, put on by the Parents Advisory Board (later called the Adult Board). In October 1980, its third year, the event attracted 440 families with treats and games. Like many other dedicated staff members, Ace devoted his whole being to the agency’s mission, commenting that Neighborhood House wasn’t just an invaluable resource, “It’s trusted and very, very special.”<sup>33</sup>

An additional holiday festival was the annual Christmas party, also organized by the Adult Board and staff leader Judy Raether. Almost 500 children were treated to a visit from Santa and gifts from a treasury of toys and games. Adults could shop for a variety of homemade presents in the Christmas Store. This event raised more than \$2,000 to be used for expanded youth programming.<sup>34</sup>

## THE NEED FOR JOBS

NH responded to the needs of its teen members with many social activities and sports opportunities. It also recognized the need of its teens to help their families by earning some money and the need for long-term career planning. A new program called Early Training for Careers

operated in the summer. Its leader was an alumnus of Neighborhood House, Chris Scofield, who described her program as offering “another new and vital service to the ever-changing community.”<sup>35</sup>

The agency was also included in a teen jobs task force established by then County Executive William O'Donnell in 1978. Alumna Regina Robertson was selected to serve on this Youth Advisory Task Force to make recommendations regarding the expenditure of youth employment funds in Milwaukee County. In the area served by the agency, even adult unemployment rates hovered between 40 and 50 percent, and teens seeking jobs needed all the assistance they could get.<sup>36</sup>

The program was so successful that Neighborhood House added another program which targeted teens age 14 and younger who were not able to qualify for employment. Called Extra Innings, this summer program took early teen students in agency vans to a variety of possible future employers such as hospitals, stores, and fast food restaurants, where they were met by personnel directors who answered their job-related questions. In addition to these educational outreach efforts, Neighborhood House was active in contacting the area business community by asking local employers to hire its students for the summer. The estimated cost for eight weeks would be only \$562, and the appeal ended with the message that they should “consider helping an inner-city youth into a responsible outer world.”<sup>37</sup>

As the problem of teen unemployment grew, Neighborhood House set up another solution, called the Teen Work Program (TWP), which would operate year-round for an estimated 50 to 70 youth. Employment included work at the Farm as well as selling vegetables harvested there, and small jobs for the elderly in the area including lawn work and snow shoveling. TWP aimed to reduce acts of “wanton violence among teens who were seeking an escape in alcohol and drugs.” An advertisement for the program encouraged local homeowners and businesses to hire teens who would operate as “well-supervised crews... at low cost.” As Richardson described it, the program helped teens to “recognize the value of employment, of growth and self-respect.” As this valuable program continued, the local sorority of Delta Sigma Theta, part of the National Council of Negro Women, pledged its support and gave a starting gift of \$500.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, for teens who could not find jobs, the agency offered a growing number of activities to “keep them off the streets.” These programs included ongoing carpentry and woodworking classes, art classes in a variety of mediums, and games and sports from pool to volley-



*NH teen, Randy Echols,  
painting wall mural in the  
west lobby in 1985.  
Completed mural shown above.*



ball, basketball, and the very popular roller skating in the 7,000 square foot all-purpose room.<sup>39</sup>

One member of TWP, Randy Echols, had been a part of Neighborhood House since the age of eight and rejoined the program as a teen to make a valuable contribution. Echols, who had discovered a love of art in his grade school years at NH, spent his time in TWP creating a mural for the main lobby which told the “incredible story” of the agency. In colorful painted graphics, he portrayed a composite of NH people, places, and programs. As a result of his early NH endeavors, he noted that he chose a career in art.<sup>40</sup>

### CONTINUING HOPE DESPITE TRAGEDY

With many of its programs thriving and with the success of the fund drive, 1987 dawned with a better budget balance and the hopes of many for an even stronger future. However, the year closed with the tragedy of Director Richardson’s sudden death on December 15 at his Glendale home. Age 64, Richardson was operating his snow blower when he collapsed with a heart attack. A memorial service was scheduled for that Saturday at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, presided over by Father Richard Thieme, who described Ray as “transparent to the light of God.”<sup>41</sup>



Tributes came from across the region and the nation as Richardson was celebrated as “a man whose wisdom and goodness touched our world and changed it forever.” Acting director Jane Thompson described Ray as a “very, very strong sensitive, warm loving person,” and board leader Hazelyn McComas added, “It was the God in Ray to which we were all drawn... He challenged each to give, and to be, the very best of which one was capable... He was so wise.”<sup>42</sup>

Others noted, “What a joy it was to work with Ray... we felt we were addressing root problems of a flawed society and offering glimmers of hope.” The eulogy continued by proclaiming his legacy a “precious inheritance... the commitment to see our neighbors as our brothers and sisters.” Reinhart Gutmann, founder of Neighborhood House, wrote that “Ray was a man of deep convictions - a passionate advocate for social justice,” who had come to the agency in 1950 promising to serve for “a couple of years.” Instead, Gutmann added, “He gave us his life.”

As former staff member Bruce Steinmetz reminisced, “In my first days at Neighborhood House, I was immediately impressed by Ray as a man of humanity and integrity. Over the years I grew to see him also as a very wise leader. And if kids asked me who the “boss” of Neighborhood House was, I would sometimes barge into Ray’s office with the whole group - to his tolerant bemusement - knowing there was no better role model for the kids or, for that matter, myself.”<sup>43</sup>

As a lasting tribute to Richardson, the board established a memorial fund, the proceeds from which would go to scholarships. Richardson had been asked in a recent interview: “How do you break the poverty cycle?” He answered immediately, “Education.” “How do you gain your full potential?” Answer: “Education.” So it was fitting that his memorial would go to this purpose. The fund began to grow immediately as donations from over 150 agencies, businesses, and friends poured in within weeks.

The theme for a recovering staff and members was “hope.” Ray himself had hit that note shortly before his death. He was asked, “Why do you go on, particularly in this neighborhood?” His response was that “Even in the light of deteriorating conditions, [we] have never given up hope... There is an amazing strength in people no matter what their circumstances.” With this belief as a guiding theme, the Neighborhood House community went forward after Richardson’s death, strengthened by this hope and his continuing inspiration.<sup>44</sup>



## **NEW LEADERSHIP AND EXPANDING PROGRAMS 1987 - 2005**

In the first years following Richardson's untimely death, the board and staff knew that their top priority was to keep the agency's doors open and its many programs running smoothly. While everyone felt the loss of their longtime, beloved leader, his legacy of service had to be honored. As a close-knit community, they came together to go forward.

### **NEW LEADERSHIP AND EXPANDED PROGRAMMING**

With the agency under the temporary leadership of Jane Thompson, who had been appointed acting Executive Director by the board, programs and services were in good hands. Thompson had been a leader at the agency for 28 years under Richardson and was program director at the time of his death. In forming a search committee, the board did not want to operate hastily and set the timeline for finding a replacement at one year, or sooner if possible. After an extensive search over the next eight months, the committee, led by Joe Tyson, welcomed Jose Vasquez as the new Executive Director in July of 1988. As Vasquez came to lead the agency, the board thanked Thompson for her leadership during the trying times, noting with gratitude that "we couldn't have made it without her."

Vasquez brought an impressive history in social service administration in the Milwaukee area, serving as Associate Director of the County's Department of Health and Human Services. Like the Rev. Gutmann, Vasquez brought an extensive background in religious work and training, having studied as a seminarian in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas, before graduating from St. Mary's University there, and then moving to Milwaukee. He was active on the advisory committee for education of Catholic clergy and at St. Joseph Academy before joining Milwaukee government work.



*Sue Thompson (center), Jane Thompson's daughter. Jane was a former NH Acting Executive Director.*

Vasquez called Neighborhood House a “hidden jewel,” with an outstanding history of service and an excellent and dedicated staff. As only the third director in its 43-year history, he noted that he was honored to follow the service of Gutmann and Richardson but that they “were irreplaceable.” His task, as he outlined it, was to continue their record of excellence while bringing the agency into the ongoing conversation in the city regarding all social service agencies by asking, “Are we relevant, are we effective, are we efficient [and] are we making a difference?” Saluting the board and staff for already being engaged in this process, he added that it was an institution “second to none” and a vibrant participant in this evaluation. Under Vasquez’s leadership, this examination process continued as Neighborhood House sought new ways to expand its relevance and effectiveness.

With targeted funding from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, the agency carried out an extensive survey of residents in its 500 square-block area. The results spoke strongly that the two most pressing needs were in the areas of day care and job training for young people. Even though the agency’s nursery school program was 43 years old by 1988, working parents indicated the need for expanded day care. As Nursery Director LuAnne Thompson noted, changes in the federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children program mandated that heads of households seek

increased training and gain jobs as a condition of receiving funding. A new day care initiative began in the fall of 1988, with 75 children joining. Day care was offered from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m., before nursery school began. Following the morning session, the children would be served lunch and take naps before the afternoon day care program from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. To meet this great increase, the agency hired two additional day care workers, both mothers whose children had been in the existing nursery school program. While this additional service added “red ink to the NH budget,” Thompson noted that it was a critical response to family needs, and there was some county support for the increased costs.

Another new program which grew out of the needs survey was an expansion of the highly successful Teen Work Program. Realizing that there were young, unemployed people in their early twenties who needed a similar program, the agency opened the Work Experience Program (WEP) which not only provided a paid job experience, but also counseling and support. WEP reached out to the community to provide custodial and janitorial work training and follow-up employment to young people age 19 to 25. It became another example of meeting crucial needs and another marked success.

## INTO THE NINETIES

The earliest years of the next decade witnessed several additional programs and a better track record of dealing with budget deficits. In 1991, the agency adopted a full-fledged program, then called the Indochinese Learning Center, whose mission was to serve recent immigrants in the neighborhood from Indo-China. Most of them were refugees from the recent wars there. Offering a special tutorial program and other refugee services brought Neighborhood House into close touch with these new members of the community. In addition to the refugee program expansion, Vasquez was active in opening doors to other community service groups for meetings and visits. In 1991 alone, more than 35 such groups came to the campus or joined in trips to the Farm.

Adding to this extended outreach effort, the agency collaborated with the Milwaukee Public School system in offering a four and five-year-old kindergarten class. This effort brought even more families in the area to the facility and enhanced the existing pre-kindergarten nursery school program. In providing these additional services, the staff had grown to 116 part and full-time by 1991, with significant budget implications. Moreover, through the efforts of LuAnne Thompson and staff, the Neighborhood House nursery school received a national accreditation for

its program from the National Academy for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The agency was the first non-university-based program in the State to achieve that prestigious NAEYC designation.

Yet, even with these additional programs, Vasquez issued a message for the board, staff, and community to meeting the many challenges ahead in the decade. After praising staff and board for the agency's many successes, he posed a key question: "Are we truly preventing?" Vasquez added, "We need to put our collective arms around the community to try to ameliorate challenges such as ongoing racism, poverty, violence, and the continued assaults on family values." He posed the further questions: "Do we have the will to seek new approaches? Are we really addressing and making a difference for 'hard-to-serve' individuals?" To which he answered, "I believe we do."

### **GROWING BUDGETS AND EXPANDED SUPPORT**

These many changes and expansions were fully supported by the board, which boosted its fundraising efforts in the early 1990s. In a single year from 1990 to 1991, total donations grew from \$249,000 to \$289,000. The balance of support between private donations and United Way funding grew from 27 percent from donations and 35 percent from United Way to a closer balance of 30 percent to 31 percent. Clearly, United Way support was still pivotal in underwriting the \$942,000 in operating expenses as the Community Chest had been before, but the contributions from both new and steadfast donors was a mainstay. This increase allowed for the purchase of land at the southeast corner of the property facing 28th Street, where there was a plan to refurbish an old house for program expansion and child care. However, due to an unfortunate fire, the house had to be demolished. The good news was that donations continued to rise, growing to \$337,000 in 1992 and \$362,000 the following year.

Reports from board president Robert C. Archer and Edward C. Corrigan echoed the determination to broaden horizons and seek new solutions. Partnerships were strengthened and new ones established to join community efforts to prevent many problems in the 1990s. In 1992, the Tutor Program merged with Neighborhood House to bring services to Indochinese families under its wing, and a collaboration with nearby Marquette University's Campus Circle program provided both consultations and new volunteers to address ongoing problems. Additional partnerships were established with Stout State and several other campuses in the University of Wisconsin system, as well as a valuable collaboration



with the Milwaukee YWCA to assist in operating its Panda Day Care Center. Other programs included an expanded drug counseling service, as well as collaborative efforts with Planned Parenthood and the Next Door Foundation to teach teens alternatives to at-risk behaviors.

In the valuable area of recreation, the agency continued to see growing participation in its volleyball and basketball programs, up to 154 teen participants. This enthusiasm resulted in the creation of the Neighborhood House Hurricanes basketball team and a dynamic 3-on-3 annual tournament. In addition, there was the ongoing popularity of the roller-skating area in the basement. The emphasis on outdoor environmental education led to the creation of a new 33,000 square-foot “outdoor play environment” behind the building. Additional funding provided money for the purchase of six canoes, a trailer, and an aquaponics system for the greenhouse. Moreover, the NH staff created and published a curriculum guide for environmental education of urban children called “Nature Trails.”

### LEADERSHIP TRANSITION AND NEW INITIATIVES

After just four years as director, Jose Vasquez made the decision to leave Neighborhood House in 1992 and accept a position at the University of Wisconsin Extension. The board turned to staff member Carol Wythes to serve as Interim Director, while another search was organized. Wythes had served as a program director at the agency and was willing to step forward to provide short-term leadership until a new director could be brought on board. Following a year-long search, the board invited Judith Selle to become the agency’s fourth Executive Director in 1993.



*Carol Wythes*

Selle had an extensive background in social work and in administration and had worked at Neighborhood House for seven months before accepting the position. In becoming the new director, she remarked that “Wherever I go in Milwaukee I meet people whose lives have benefitted through their involvement in NH.” Before accepting the position, Selle, who had grown up in the area, had exchanged a number of letters with Father Gutmann about the agency’s mission and history.

Under the leadership of Selle and program staff, NH began a new initiative aimed at area teens. Partnering with the West End Community Association and the Next Door Foundation, Neighborhood House



*Mayor John Norquist, Michael Brady, Alderman Paul Henningsen, Ralph Jefferson, LuAnne Thompson Carol Wythes and US Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros view expansion plans, 1995.*



*Mayor John Norquist, a former NH summer camp counselor, with Henry Cisneros*



*VJS Construction Services project team at new building site, 1995. Far right, VJS Chairman and NH Board member and former Board President Gary Jorgenson. Far left, his son, David Jorgenson of VJS, also a current NH Board member.*



*VJS Construction Services' crew, 1995*

became more proactive in trying to reduce the usage and availability of drugs in the area. They formed a Teen Council and the West Side Pride Group, both of which spread this anti-drug message through direct education and activities. An additional new initiative added both pre-natal and post-natal education to the family program.

### **A SUCCESSFUL CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AND THE NEW ADDITION**

By 1993, the enrollment and attendance at so many diverse programs had resulted in overcrowding in the 24-year-old Neighborhood House building. With more than 6,400 participants in all programs, the walls

were bulging. Another measure of usage showed that these thousands of members attended programs at a high rate, leading to almost 150,000 participant hours. To alleviate this extreme overcrowding, the board launched a new short-term capital campaign in early 1993 to add space through another addition, at an estimated cost of \$1,569,000. The campaign was so successful that by the close of 1994 fully \$1,131,000 had been raised or pledged, including \$373,000 from corporations, \$213,000 from foundations, and \$317,000 from individual donors.

As Board President Ronald L. Zemlicka reported, the new addition's new classrooms and large multi-purpose room provided crucial breathing space so that families on the wait list could participate. Moreover, it allowed for further collaboration on site with community service groups including Highland Community School, the YWCA, Sojourner Truth House, Milwaukee Girl Scouts, and the Campus Circle. Not only could programs expand their membership, the schedule would allow for more offerings to meet simultaneously. It was the agency's third successful capital campaign in its 50-year history.

Further tributes to the agency's service and growing importance came from visiting federal cabinet secretary Henry Cisneros, who paid a special visit in 1994, and from Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist, who commended NH on its new building addition and its past record of success.

### TOWARD THE CENTURY'S END

1995 was very special for two reasons. The new building addition was fully occupied, and the agency celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, com-



*International Learning Program computer lab*

memorated in part by the creation of an \$1.3 million endowment fund. In 1995 alone, more than 1,000 additional members could take part in NH programs, and the number of service hours for childcare and nursery programs grew to 69,700.

In addition, the language and family services for adults and children from Southeast Asia grew from 241 in 1996 to more than 330 in 1999. This very successful program included expanded space at the Central United Methodist Church at the corner of 25<sup>th</sup> Street and Wisconsin Avenue. Now labelled the Indochinese Learning Center (ILC), the program provided adult language and literacy classes as well as citizenship training, teen language and computer classes, and a bilingual nursery and day care center. The new agency-wide emphasis on computer education was made possible through a \$10,000 grant from the Bader Foundation for a Computer Learning Center, used on a rotating basis by all programs.

The growing program for the Indochinese families was a much-needed response to the flood of Lao and Hmong refugees who were pouring into Milwaukee. Wisconsin was the third largest recipient of these relocated immigrants, and Milwaukee alone had more than 12,000. The program was begun on a small scale in 1981, just six years after the end of the Vietnam War, and the number of immigrants in need had continued to grow dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s, reaching a total of 3,000 served by 2000. The number of staff and volunteers, including program alumni, had grown to more than 20 by the end of the decade.

Marge Senn not only volunteered at the ILC, she also gave her time and expertise to converting the agency's bookkeeping and records to a computerized system. Ze Vang worked in the nursery program where her three sons were enrolled, and John Wallace was a retired Ameritech technician who volunteered in the area of youth environmental programs. A generous donation from donor Harry Samson in 1996 created the Rose Samson Family Life Center at NH. This center provided funding for a variety of parent education and family nurturing programs, as well as training in child behavior management. Ancillary to this program was the ongoing tradition of family fun evenings, picnics, and outings to the Farm in all seasons. Additional funding from the Harley Davidson Foundation, the Northwestern Mutual Foundation, the Wisconsin Energy Corporation, the Chase Foundation, and the Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation underwrote the family support, outdoor education, free health screenings, computer learning, and day care programs.

In recognition of its dedicated board members (past and present) and steadfast donors and foundations, in 1998 Neighborhood House estab-



lished a series of awards to be given at the annual Ray Richardson dinner each year. Over the next two decades, these awards were one way to thank valued donors, volunteers, and affiliated churches. The support of the Milwaukee United Way remained the backbone of all ongoing funding as it continued to underwrite at least 30 percent of the annual budget.

**A NEW LEADER AND A NEW CENTURY**

After three years as Executive Director, the departure of Judith Selle in 1996 led the board to turn to another short-term interim director, Donna Brady, before hiring Peggy Kendrigan in 1998. However, at century’s end, the board decided to conduct both a new strategic planning process and a search for a permanent new director to lead the agency into the 21st century.

Following an extensive search, the trustees named Clarence Johnson as the new director in April of 2000. Johnson had a great familiarity with Neighborhood House, having first come there as a teen worker in 1972. He subsequently met summer day camp counselor Tina Bartol, and the two were married in 1976. By the time he became the agency’s new director, their three children were participants in NH programs. Johnson had received a bachelor’s degree in social work from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, a master’s in educational psychology in 1983, and had worked in the field for 17 years before taking the position.



*Clarence Johnson,  
Executive Director  
2000 - 2006*

*Clarence with a  
group of kids in 1974*

Donald Wallace became board president, bringing to NH its first African American team of leaders. Wallace, like Johnson, had been a social worker before joining the agency's board. His two sons, Geoffrey and Simeon, had also been program participants before going on to distinguished careers in academics. The two men complemented each other in their talents and dedication to the agency.

Their joint reports noted that in 2000 alone, the agency's programs had served a growing number of members, stating that the Westside community was a "precious historic gem which must be both preserved and treasured." They were also aware of the many challenges posed by the fact that more than 49 percent of the residents of that community lived below the poverty level, fully 74 percent were single-parent families, and almost half of the breadwinners had not earned a high school diploma.

### THE HALL FAMILY

If Neighborhood House had a founding family, it might well be the Halls. The late Bob Hall, Sr. and his wife Jay Lou were actively involved in the health and growth of Neighborhood House starting in 1950. A Milwaukee native, Bob Sr. had gone to West Division High School (now the High School of the Arts) and worked at his father's first Milwaukee car dealership, Hall Chevrolet, on 32nd and North Avenue.

Jay Lou and Bob Sr. were active with Neighborhood House for more than 50 years, and they became close friends of both Reinhart Gutmann and Ray Richardson. A series of the Halls have served on the Neighborhood House Board of Directors, often in senior positions. Bob, Sr., Jay Lou, the late Bob Jr. and, most recently, Andy Hall, who in 2016 retired from the Board after 15 years of service, were each impactful as this organization grew.

The Hall Family has also been critical to the financial health of Neighborhood House. Along with offering



*Gretchen and Andy Hall (center) with WISN 12's Mark Baden (right) and Jeff Martinka (left)*

their own resources over seven decades, the Hall family connected Neighborhood House with an extensive network of community contacts to support its initiatives. In a particularly amazing act of kindness, Bob Sr. and Jay Lou offered a \$100,000 challenge grant to completely refurbish the center's lower level in 2001, the first major remodel of Neighborhood House in 25 years. They then more than doubled their own contribution by working with Milwaukee business colleagues to successfully complete the project.

### GROWING SOCIAL CHALLENGES

With so many families in crisis, Neighborhood House leaders supported the creation of additional programs and collaborations to address the many challenges of child nurturing and preschool care. Two outreach programs added to the already extensive nursery. One with the Milwaukee Public School system added a sixth classroom in cooperation with the system's MacDowell Montessori School. The other was a \$1 million collaboration with the Penfield Children's Center of Milwaukee, which also served children and families in crisis. This collaborative program received an award as a "Center for Excellence" from the State of Wisconsin.

In the years following the attack on September 11, 2001, the community felt a growing sense of insecurity. Unemployment was rising and many young people had been traumatized by the act of terrorism. Families were unsettled by mounting problems and needed reassurance that the agency would continue to provide a safe and supportive force in their lives. Sensing this growing insecurity, Director Clarence Johnson, along with Board President Don Wallace, wrote to all NH families, "We know how stable this community is because Neighborhood House serves as its anchor." They added the reassuring message: "Our focus is unwavering ... [it offers] the "renewed strength we provide for one another ... we have focused on trying to make life seem normal again."

Thanks to a rising number of generous donors, this strong message was underscored by the fact that the agency budget was increasingly solid, with revenues exceeding expenses by more than \$10,700 in 2001. The next year, the agency's revenues of \$2,279,000 again exceeded expenses by more than \$10,000 with contributions of over \$724,000, United Way support of \$349,000, and government grants of \$904,000. This strong measure of budget health continued with a \$21,000 surplus in 2004 and only a very small shortfall of \$5,000 in 2005.

The year 2002 was marked by a special staff departure, that of Chris

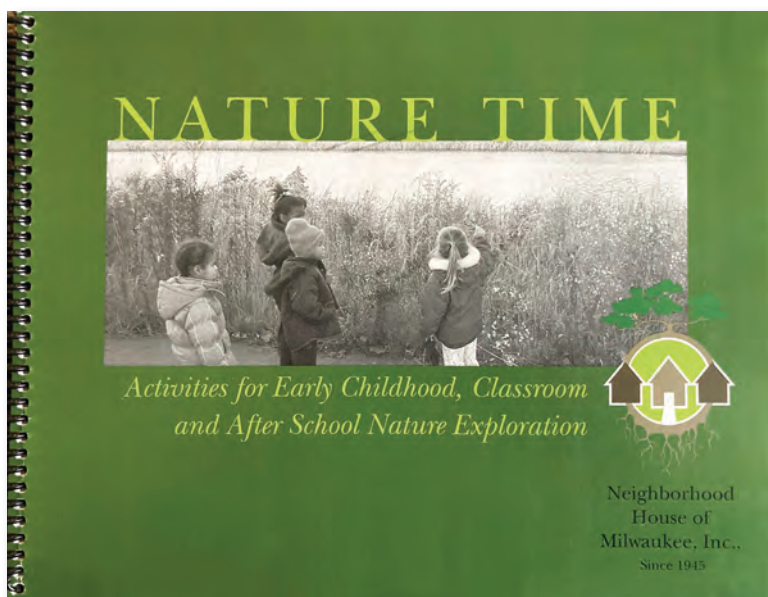


*Chris Reynolds sharing a discovery with a student at the Nature Center, 1980s*

Reynolds. Reynolds is the only NH participant who has worked as a volunteer during the service of every Executive Director of the agency. She is a rare representative of every era of Neighborhood House's existence. She worked, albeit briefly, with Father Reinhart Gutmann, our founder, coming to the agency as a volunteer first in 1960. Reynolds then served for the entire 28 years of Ray Richardson's tenure as our Executive Director. In her staff time, she served as a camp counselor, preschool teacher, child care supervisor, parent educator, and finally, ended her paid work for NH as our Early Childhood Director, helping NH to secure a \$1million preschool partnership the year before her departure.

Chris retired in 2002, but remains active at NH right up to 2021. Just as she guided the kids of the 1960s through the 1990s, Chris remains as a potent volunteer teacher 61 years later, active in NH's nature center programs.

This period at NH included a number of important new NH initiatives. One that earned positive national attention was a renewed effort to expand the early NH focus on environmental education for urban populations. Led by Bradley Blaeser, a team at NH, with support from Faye McBeath Foundation and Wisconsin Environmental Education Board, created the Nature Time curriculum in 2004. The book provided a comprehensive activity guide for early childhood, classroom, and after school nature exploration. The work was sought out by



*NH's pioneering Nature Time curriculum, 2004*

schools and agencies across the U.S. and is still a part of NH nature programming decades later. Blaeser, now the founding owner of a pioneering land management firm, has remained an important supporter of NH to this day.

Other examples of new program collaborations included a Red Cross effort focused on early childhood health needs, a free clinic at Aurora Family Service, and a new Adults Preparing for College Program with Alverno College, all in 2005. The agency also welcomed a new set of volunteers from the Manpower Corporation who came each week to assist with computer needs, refugee programs, and one-on-one tutoring.

New Board President Gary Jorgenson saluted the agency's achievements in his 2005 report, recognizing that "young lives are shaped, families supported, and adults enriched." He added, "We are a community that cares," noting that a recent increase in the number of refugees from Somalia had been met with additional programming as part of the ILC. Its 60th year found Neighborhood House thriving as it enlarged its scope and while holding true to its original mission.





## TRADITIONS AND LEGACY 2006 - 2020 TOWARD THE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

As Neighborhood House began its 61st year in 2006, Director Clarence Johnson focused his message to the community around the theme of dreams. Noting that a “true home is built on love and dreams,” he reported that the more than 4,000 program participants were receiving crucial support in achieving those dreams. These adults, families, immigrants, teens, and toddlers filled the halls and program rooms seven days a week, working alongside the supportive staff to overcome the handicaps of poverty, joblessness, and family and educational challenges.

### ACHIEVING GOALS

Among the many hallmarks of achieving dreams in 2006 was the proud report that all ten members of the NH Hurricanes basketball team had graduated from high school and every one was attending a program of higher education. The team itself had been honored as finalists in the national high school Amateur Athletic Union tournament. The pair of major achievements by the talented NH teens earned them front page coverage in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the staff published a revised Health and Safety Orientation Manual to guide families in health care and preventive medicine. To that end, Neighborhood House provided two full days of on-site, free physicals and free immunizations to its members in cooperation with Aurora Family Service. The agency’s Teen Council also held a program with more than 100 participants on the subject of “Youth United Against Violence.”<sup>2</sup>

Looking to NH’s refugee program, Milwaukee’s immigrant population had grown by almost 50 percent since the 1970s, with new arrivals fleeing wars in Iraq, Somalia, and Afghanistan. The city’s Hmong pop-

ulation was also the second largest in the country. The NH Indochinese Learning Program reached out to all with English and literacy classes, citizenship preparation, and jobs programs, winning several national awards for its outreach. In 2006, 60 NH students secured new employment and 21 became citizens. In 2007, more than 600 immigrant family members were being served at the Center, which changed its name that year to the International Learning Center to reflect the growing diversity of its immigrant attendees.<sup>3</sup>

Neighborhood House in 2006 learned of the death of its founder and first leader, Reverend Reinhart B. Gutmann, at age 90. Gutmann had envisioned the agency as a crucial vehicle to meet the needs of underserved and impoverished residents of Milwaukee's inner city. He had kept in close touch with the agency as its outreach and programs grew over many decades through both visits and telephone check-ins.

Gutmann had been especially pleased with the expanded services to immigrants, since he and his family had been refugees from Hitler's Germany in the 1930s. Dear to his heart had been the growing number of young children who entered its doors and received help. The highly-accredited preschool, which he had created as "the nursery", in 2007 partnered with the federal Head Start program, which was specially designed to prepare disadvantaged children for elementary school. Moreover, in the spirit of discovering and meeting the needs of the youth at Neighborhood House, the agency created a "bridge" program which would help to transition youth from the middle school activities to teen-oriented activities and set up a post-secondary planning project to assist high schoolers in seeing options for careers or further education and training. By 2008, the teen programs Gutmann had fostered were serving more than 800 high school students each year.<sup>4</sup>



*Group session in Teen Lounge, 2019*

Neighborhood House changed leadership at this point, with Don Shane serving as Interim Director in 2007 after the departure of Clarence Johnson. The Board hired Richard Cox in early 2008. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (UWM), Cox had served a long management career with Milwaukee County, including exemplary service as longtime Superintendent of the Milwaukee House of Corrections. He also brought his strong community connections to his NH role, including particular ties to UWM, the Milwaukee Brewers, and a range of local nonprofits and churches.

Cox's management strengths and broad Milwaukee network were hugely important, especially as the center was badly-buffed by the impacts of the 2008/2009 economic recession. Difficult staffing decisions and pay adjustments were needed and Cox provided the steady hand in the recovery years that followed. He stabilized the agency while retaining its quality and reputation.



*Richard Cox, Executive  
Director 2008 - 2014*

## INNOVATIONS

In 2009, as the agency prepared to celebrate its 65th anniversary, there was a growing emphasis on health issues for children and families with programs offering health checkups and vaccinations for almost 2,500 people. The Community Health Improvement Program, in a five-year partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin, experienced marked success in “raising immunization rates of children up to the age of 14 in Milwaukee’s most destitute areas.” The center also hosted a community health fair in partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin and sponsored the City of Milwaukee’s Flu Season Kickoff Clinic, beginning in 2011 and extending to this day.<sup>5</sup>

To bolster this success, the program received substantial grants from the National Institute of Health and the National Center for Minority Health. In addition to free clinics, the program emphasized family education about nutrition and exercise by sponsoring a “Walk for Wellness,” as well as the HUGS Grow Strong group. With exercise as an ongoing priority, Neighborhood House created a Team Challenge Course at “the Farm”, now the Nature Center, and offered yoga and Tae Kwon Do classes to add alternatives to the popular roller skating, volleyball, and basketball programs. In addition, the agency strengthened its Family

Advisory Board in this period to help member families (many of which were single-parent led) provide health and family forums and implement “Wellness Wednesdays” and “Super Saturdays.”<sup>6</sup>

Another creative innovation was related to the existing Outdoor Education program. Calling the urban phenomenon “Nature Deficit Disorder,” the staff initiated partnerships with programs at the Horicon Marsh, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Crane Foundation of Baraboo, the Milwaukee County Zoo, the Urban Ecology Center, and Pheasants Forever. In addition, the agency became part of Wisconsin’s bluebird restoration effort when it successfully hatched and released 42 baby bluebirds in the spring of 2010. The director of the project noted “the wonder in their eyes at the sight of a nest of bluebird eggs and hatchlings.”<sup>7</sup>

To bolster an emphasis on the national movement of science education to focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), the staff expanded the initiative to include our arts programming, hence, STEAM. NH was the first organization to promote programming with this arts concept. Another innovation was the inception of the University of Kids Club, which provided after-school homework assistance with an emphasis on study habits for youth ages seven through 12. Through this very popular program, participants could choose core academic classes or elect drama, art, cooking, nutrition, or fashion.<sup>8</sup>

## MILESTONES

The celebration of Neighborhood House’s 65th year (and its 60th as a United Way agency) in 2010 brought kudos from Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, who described it as a “pillar of hope and stability in our city center.” Further congratulations came from Congresswoman Gwen Moore, herself a graduate of NH programs. The president and CEO of the Medical College of Wisconsin, T. Michael Bolger, added his praises, noting that the agency was “at the heart of the city’s most distressed neighborhood.” In the same year, a study of urban communities concluded that the area around Neighborhood House was Milwaukee’s poorest zip code and the fourth poorest in the country. Greater Milwaukee Foundation board leader Judy Jorgensen added that the agency was “right there on the front lines where the need is the greatest.”<sup>9</sup>

Additional national recognition came when scholars worked with staff to develop reports on the agency’s health and describe its Outdoor and Environment Education programs at nationwide meetings such as the American Public Health Conference in Washington, D.C. Its Interna-

tional Learning Center received full accreditation from the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals, a program which the state's first lady, Jessica Doyle, hailed as a "wonderful place full of energy," serving refugees from 25 different countries.<sup>10</sup>

The rates of citizenship achievement escalated rapidly to more than 30 in 2011 and 42 the following year, and more than 700 refugees annually were learning English and life skills. Other national, state, and local officials saluted the fact that Neighborhood House had "touched the lives of hundreds of thousands in two or three generations of families."<sup>11</sup>

One particularly poignant testament came from Eva Lam, a Harvard graduate, Rhodes Scholar, and alumna of Neighborhood House, who wrote, "It is such a vibrant and innovative place, I was lucky to have such a great start in my early education." Dr. Joan Prince, University of Wisconsin Vice Chancellor, added, "It truly has been a beacon of hope for many children who might otherwise lose their way," and former board member Madeleine Lubar stated that it was "the state's leading center for refugees."<sup>12</sup>

As a positive footnote to these tributes, Director Richard Cox and the board could report that revenues of \$2,208,000 had exceeded expenses of \$2,157,000 in 2010, with a crucial donation of \$475,000 from United Way. That organization's director, Mary Lou Young, reported that United Way "is proud to be a long-time partner through six decades of life-changing work."

This positive financial trend continued into 2011, with revenues exceeding expenses by \$29,000. As program expenses continued to increase, the totals two years later still brought the agency close to a bal-



*COVID-era cooking class in the Penguin Room, 2021*



anced budget with \$2,327,000 in revenue and \$2,333,000 in expenses. The challenges of raising funds from foundations and the hundreds of longtime loyal and generous donors continued to be great. In 2013 alone, there were almost 60 distinct donors who gave at the level of \$2,500 or above annually, and several at \$5,000 or more each year. As then Board President Roman Draba and Director Richard Cox wrote to donors, “We are continuously called upon to find additional resources to help the children and families we serve [achieve] a better future for themselves and our community. [Yet] there is one constant that sustains us... YOU... You build the future today.”<sup>13</sup>

## TRANSITIONS

With Director Richard Cox’s retirement in May 2014, the board was pleased to hire Jeff Martinka as its new leader. A native of Milwaukee, Martinka had previously worked as director of the West 7th Street Community Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, as well as working for five years as director of Literacy Services of Wisconsin when that statewide adult education agency was located just two blocks from NH. Martinka earned master’s degrees in Public Administration and Urban Planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, after graduating from UWM. Martinka worked in management in Milwaukee’s County Parks, at the office of Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist (another NH staff alum), and at the Milwaukee Department of City Development.

Reporting on Neighborhood House’s achievements in 2014 and 2015, Board President Judy Shane joined Martinka in celebrating the agency’s 70th anniversary. They hailed the creation of the new Neighborhood House Garden Park on 27th Street, with its raised beds for urban



*Jeff Martinka  
(fourth from  
right) with  
NH teachers  
Amelia Davis  
(back left) and  
Tina Yang  
(back center)  
2019*

agriculture and play areas, as a significant step in providing additional greenspace to grow healthy food and active children. Funding and project management for the garden park were led by Bradley Blaeser and his Green Team of Wisconsin landscaping firm. Located just one block from the agency's building, the new park also featured a beautiful mural, designed by NH artist and teacher Sally Duback. Duback later worked with NH youth to create a collection of mosaic totem poles and a large mosaic bench for the garden park.<sup>14</sup>

The agency's leaders also thanked the consortium of the Central City Churches for hosting a summer family picnic for 500 members and gave "back to school" backpacks and supplies to 300 students. Moreover, they described the new strategic planning initiative, sponsored by the Emory Clark Foundation, which would allow Neighborhood House to remain effective and relevant as it looked forward to its 75th anniversary.<sup>15</sup>

Highlighting the day, two members of the agency's founding families came to the 70th anniversary celebration: Robin Gutmann, son of NH founder Reinhart Gutmann, and Ed Richardson, son of Ray Richardson, who had served the agency from 1950 to 1987. The two enjoyed the opportunity to celebrate the agency and its achievements, as well as to reminisce about their respective fathers' roles.<sup>16</sup>

With the addition of many refugees from troubled Burma in 2014, the ILC's service to immigrants was up 22 percent in just one year. Teen programs were also increasingly popular, with a 60 percent increase in 2015. The agency's bottom line had finally recovered from the perils of the 2008 recession. Term loans, credit card and line of credit debt had been retired in 2015, and a \$120,000 operating deficit had been turned into surpluses.<sup>17</sup>

In defining a new expression of the agency's mission and vision as "being a safe and strengthening cornerstone in the community," Neighborhood House also created and strengthened two new initiatives: the Personal Responsibility Education Program and an after-school enrichment program at the Albert Story Elementary School, located at 3815 West Kilbourn Avenue.

## TOWARDS THE 75<sup>TH</sup>

As a defining anniversary of three quarters of a century drew near in 2021, reports were issued of this continued success in strategic planning, fundraising, and program expansions. Fully 496 youth were active in the center's after-school and teen programs, while enrollment in the greatly-honored and nationally-accredited early childhood programs included 84

preschool children. The Safe Place program at the Albert Story elementary school, which served many immigrant children, had an enrollment of 140, while the adult programs at the International Learning Program included 556 individuals from over 20 different countries.<sup>18</sup>

Numbers alone, of course, did not tell the whole story. As the agency hosted the state's World Refugee Day celebration in 2017, Board President Terry Young and Director Martinka wrote that "Neighborhood House today stands stronger than ever." Ten state and federal programs had supported programs at the center, and over 300 volunteers had donated thousands of hours of volunteer instruction to the area's newest Americans. Private donors and family foundation gifts now comprised 35 percent of the agency's budget, with government grants at 25 percent, and the much-valued support from United Way now at 17 percent of budget. There were also more than 300 total donors and 76 in-kind donors.

In addition, special events had become a strong pillar in the agency's overall revenue stream over the years, as the annual NH Gala, launched as the Ray Richardson Dinner in 1990, and the annual NH Golf Open fundraiser, had grown to provide nearly \$250,000 in annual support of NH's programs. Both events were supported for much of their runs by the extraordinary talents and energy of "Milwaukee's best meteorologist", WISN 12's Mark Baden. To date, Mark has been Neighborhood House's emcee for nearly 20 years of the gala and golf events.

As a result of careful stewardship and community support, NH enjoyed seven years of cash budget surpluses in this period. In addition, Neighborhood House earned a Gold Level ranking from Guide Star and



*Former NH parent and Board member, Martha Brown, now a food pantry volunteer, 2020*

*NH teens hear the  
perspectives of  
Milwaukee Bucks  
#24 Pat Connaughton*



Photo by KJ Eichstaedt



*Pajama day in the  
new gym thanks to  
Pat Connaughton's  
"With Us" Foundation*

a 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator, the primary two nonprofit review agencies.<sup>19</sup>

Looking ahead to the 75th celebration, Director Jeff Martinka and Board President Terry Young emphasized the fact that this financial picture would inspire Neighborhood House to continue as the city's premier settlement house. It would continue to connect and strengthen "individuals and families across Milwaukee through its cradle-to-career programming," fulfilling its mission to be a crucial "safe and nurturing cornerstone in the community."<sup>20</sup>

Laying the groundwork for that celebration, community support enabled Neighborhood House to make a series of major investments in the year leading up to that 75th benchmark. They included the VJS Construction Services' donation of the construction of a new maple sugaring cabin at the NH Nature Center, With Us Foundation's \$55,000 makeover of the NH gym, the creation of the Neighborhood House Food Pantry (which served nearly 3,000 area residents in its first year) and a complete revamping of the entire loop drive and front yard of NH.

That loop drive project, completed at the cusp of the Anniversary Gala itself and valued at \$150,000, beautified the entire north side of the center. More importantly, it dramatically improved safety for NH families and its green infrastructure features will keep nearly 10,000 gallons of





*Sidewalks and drive from 1967 replaced with Green Infrastructure, 2021*



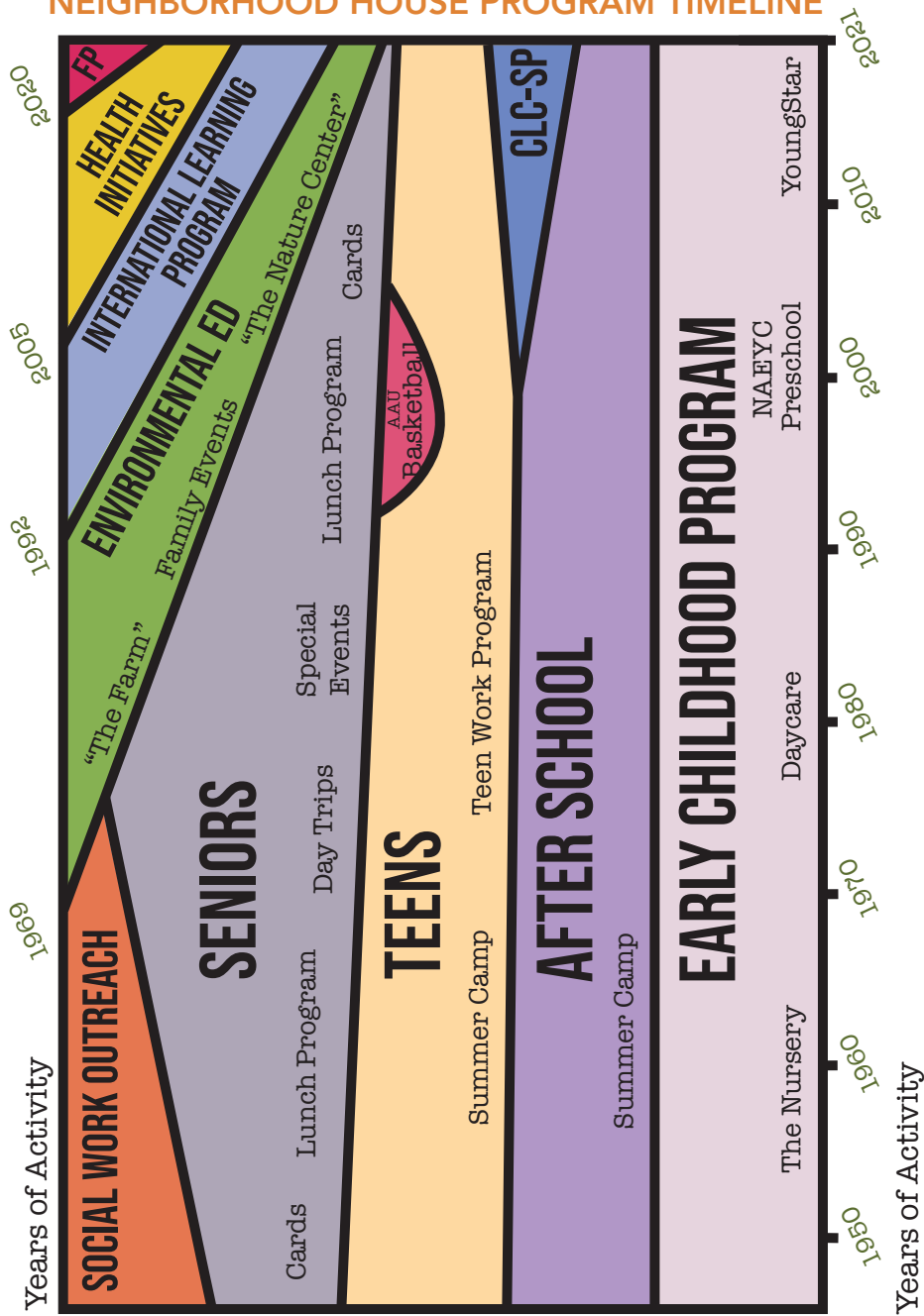
rainwater on site after each storm event. As such, the project honors NH's long tradition of environmental stewardship and will itself be an on-site environmental teaching tool for NH in the future.

Looking to the future, also in 2021, the Neighborhood House Board created a new Strategic Planning effort, led by Board member Monica Genz, to reexamine NH opportunities for growth for the coming period. That planning effort, slated for completion in early 2022, will offer strategies and outcome targets for the center's success in the next 75 years.

Throughout the 2014 to 2021 period, Neighborhood House continued its focus on top quality service to its families. Several concrete examples illustrate that effort, including the State of Wisconsin's continued top YoungStar5 rating of NH's preschools (in the top 7%), successive years of the top "Exceeds Expectations" ranking of both its preschool and teen program from the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County (in the top 10%) and a repeated fast track accreditation from the U.S. Department of Justice for NH's International Learning Program. To exemplify NH's efforts to link responsive service to safety, the community center was one of the very first of its peers to reopen after the COVID-19 pandemic, reopening safely yet face-to-face, modifying curricula to meet specific needs of multiple school partners, and even safely opening a new choice-based food pantry in the midst of the global crisis.



# NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE PROGRAM TIMELINE



**KEY:**  
 AAU Amateur Athletic Union    FP Food Pantry  
 CLC-SP Community Learning Centers - Safe Places / Satellite Centers in MPS Schools  
 NAEYC National Association for the Education of Young Children  
 (Sections on chart represent proportion of NH programming)

## NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE OF MILWAUKEE 2021-22 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<i>President</i>	C.J. Wauters	<i>Past President</i>	Kathryn A. Kuhn
<i>Vice President</i>	Monica Genz	<i>Immediate</i>	
<i>Treasurer</i>	Kevin Rich	<i>Past President</i>	Terry Young
<i>Secretary</i>	Malinda Eskra		

Joe Armeli <i>Johnson Controls &amp; AVI-SPL</i>	David Jorgensen <i>VJS Construction Services, Inc.</i>	Judith Davidson Shane <i>CAPS</i>
Malinda Eskra <i>Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren S.C.</i>	Kathryn A. Kuhn <i>Medical College of Wisconsin</i>	Brian Spaid <i>Marquette University Business School</i>
Gregory Eul <i>Pricewaterhouse Coopers, LLP</i>	Stephanie Ellis Radtke <i>Community Volunteer</i>	Maddy Tarbox <i>VJS Construction Services, Inc.</i>
Montique Evans <i>Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan</i>	Michael Ramstack <i>Froedtert Hospital</i>	Bryan Terry <i>South Milwaukee High School</i>
Monica Genz <i>BMO Harris Bank</i>	Jeff Rohrer <i>Mayville Engineering Company</i>	C.J. Wauters <i>Godfrey &amp; Kahn, S.C.</i>
Monique Jones <i>WEC Energy Group</i>	Kevin Rich <i>Marquette University Business School</i>	Terry R. Young <i>Northwestern Mutual</i>



*NH Board in the Tree House, 2020*

## NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE BOARD PRESIDENTS

1961	Rev. D.H.V. Hallock, D.D.	1994 - 1995	Ronald Zemlicka
1962 - 1963	Rev. D.H.V. Hallock, D.D. & F.S. Cornell	1996 - 1997	Donald Shane
1967 - 1970	Milo F. Snyder	1998 - 1999	David M. Goelzer
1971 - 1973	Richard Cutler	2000 - 2002	Don Wallace
1974 - 1976	Willard "Bill" Davidson	2003 - 2004	William Shaw
1978 - 1979	Thor G. Christensen	2005 - 2006	Gary Jorgensen
1980 - 1981	George W. Woodland	2007 - 2008	Rick Bliss
1982 - 1983	Robert Tillman	2008 - 2009	Susan Stoebe
1983 - 1986	Philip McGoohan	2010 - 2012	Roman A. Draba
1987 - 1989	Hazelyn McComas	2013 - 2014	Joel Brennan
1990 - 1991	Robert C. Archer	2015 - 2016	Judy Davidson Shane
1992 - 1993	Edward C. Corrigan	2017 - 2018	Terry Young
		2019 - 2020	Kathryn Kuhn
		2020 - 2022	C.J. Wauters

## NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

1956 - 1957	Rev. Reinhart B. Gutmann
1958 - 1987	Ray L. Richardson
1987	Jane Thompson, Interim Executive Director
1988 - 1992	Jose Vasquez
1993 - 1996	Judith Selle
1996	Donna Brady, Interim Executive Director
1997 - 1998	Peggy Kendrigan
1999	Carol Wythes, Interim Executive Director
2000 - 2006	Clarence Johnson
2007	Don Shane, Interim Executive Director
2008 - 2014	Richard Cox
2014 - Present	Jeff Martinka



*NH Board & Staff retreat at the Nature Center Lodge, 2020*

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*Playground on 27th Street, 1950s*



*75th Anniversary Arch on Richardson Place, 2021*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR - ELLEN LANGILL

Ellen Langill is the author of more than 30 books relating to Wisconsin business and organizational history including the City of Milwaukee's official sesquicentennial history. A graduate of Grinnell College in classical languages, she earned a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She taught history at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee and was President of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin Board of Curators. Currently Langill is a member of the board of the Wisconsin Historical Foundation and lives in Waukesha with her husband and two daughters, Kjersten and Kari.



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Amelia Davis	Morgan Leverance	Bryan Terry
Roman Draba	Widge Liccione	LuAnne Thompson
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*With Us*  
PAT CONNAUGHTON  
COURT  
AT NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

HOME	PERIOD	GUEST
7	0	6
FOULS	PLAYER FOUL	FOULS
0		0
SCORE	MATCH	SCORE



**Neighborhood House**  
OF MILWAUKEE

2819 W. Richardson Place  
Milwaukee, WI 53208  
(414) 933-6161  
[neighborhoodhousemke.org](http://neighborhoodhousemke.org)

