

COMMON GROUND

A Newsletter Celebrating Neighborhoods

National Night Out Celebrates Neighborhood Progress

Progress, community pride, and planning for the future were all wrapped up in a big party as hundreds of Chattanoogans celebrated neighborhood achievements during the National Night Out on August 5th.

The local celebration was a collaborative effort between the Department of Neighborhood Services, the city of Chattanooga and the Chattanooga Police Department. Several local officials attended festivities at various sites, including Mayor Bob Corker, Police Chief Jimmie Dotson, and Kenardo K. Curry, Neighborhood Services administrator.

National Night Out is a crime and drug prevention event, but it also focuses on community revitalization, said Sgt. Robert

Simpson, director of Crime Prevention and Civil Enforcement for the Chattanooga Police Department.

"The goal is to encourage neighbors to come out and see the improvements that have been made in the past year and decide where they want to go in the next year," Sgt. Simpson said. "It's a celebration of what communities have achieved. We've made so much progress in so many neighborhoods this year."

The National Night Out event "recognizes that neighborhoods belong to the neighbors, not to the criminals," said Dennis Tate, neighborhood relations coordinator for the Department of Neighborhood Services.

City leaders support the program and

its focus because "we want to be involved in partnerships that make our communities places other neighborhoods look to as role models," Mr. Tate said.

Following a kickoff at East Lake Park, neighbors went back to their own communities for a wide variety of events. Activities ranged from simply turning on front porch lights to block parties. Several local neighborhoods sponsored large events, including Bushtown, East Lake, Ridgedale, Oak Grove and Highland Park.

This year was the 20th anniversary of the National Night Out. Sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch, over 30 million people nationwide participated in the event in 2002. Chattanooga has participated for the past several years.



Kenardo Curry, right, and community activist Jean Lopez visit at the National Night Out celebration at East Lake Park.



Chattanooga Police Chief Jimmie Dotson addresses the crowd at the National Night Out celebration at East Lake Park.



Vanessa Jackson, front left, and Kenardo Curry of the Department of Neighborhood Services enjoy the festivities at the National Night Out celebration at East Lake Park.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

- SEPTEMBER:**
- 2 City Council meeting
 - 6 CultureFest, Coolidge Park
 - 9 City Council meeting
 - 16 City Council meeting
 - 18 CNAC Executive meeting
 - 20 Banana Ball, Chattanooga Zoo
 - 22 CNAC meeting
 - 23 City Council meeting
 - 27 Wine Over Water
 - 27-28 Hamilton County Fair
 - 30 City Council meeting

- OCTOBER:**
- 3 Cajun Cookout, Miller Plaza
 - 4-5 Tennessee Arts and Crafts Fair
 - 7 City Council meeting
 - 14 City Council meeting
 - 16 CNAC Executive meeting
 - 21 City Council meeting
 - 22 CNAC meeting
 - 25 Highland Park Tour of Homes
 - 25-26 Fall Color Cruise and Folk Festival
 - 28 City Council meeting



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2 two Canvassing Program Educates and Motivates Residents

The city's Department of Neighborhood Services is creating a ripple effect in community pride throughout Chattanooga with its canvassing program.

"We want a clean-up effort to ripple and cover the entire neighborhood," says Vanessa A. Jackson, program manager for the Department of Neighborhood Services. "We are concentrating our efforts in a strategic strike zone in a neighborhood. As we finish with one community, we will go back and target another strike zone in that neighborhood."

A team of Neighborhood Services personnel is canvassing each of the 15 communities included in Mayor Bob Corker's Strategic Neighborhood Initiative. The teams have visited eight neighborhoods so far, and sweeps of all SNI neighborhoods will be completed by mid-October.

The canvassing project has two purposes, according to Ms. Jackson.

"We want to educate the public," she says. "This is an opportunity to go out and make residents aware of certain city code violations that may not be commonly known."

Canvassing will also bolster support for the Strategic Neighborhood Initiative. "We want to let people know we are serious about our resolve to fulfill the challenges laid out by the SNI," says Ms. Jackson.

The canvassing team involves a wide range of department personnel, including two neighborhood relations coordinators, two code inspectors, and a lead inspector. Ms. Jackson goes with each team. Department Administrator Kenardo Curry and Mark Kleiner, special projects coordinator, assist as their schedules permit.



Watch Kenardo Curry on "Neighborhood Matters" airing this fall on WTCI-TV45.

A postcard is sent five to seven days before the canvassing team visits a neighborhood, giving residents time to correct problems before the visit. The card also serves as a reminder about upcoming neighborhood association meetings and events.

The team distributes flyers at each home that identify common problems found in many neighborhoods. These compliance issues include the illegality of storing indoor furniture on porches and leaving inoperable vehicles in yards or on the street in front of homes. The flyer also reminds residents to call 311, the city of Chattanooga's hotline number, with questions and concerns.

Following initial canvassing, Neighborhood Services team members follow up with violators. "We tell them we will be back in two weeks, and our

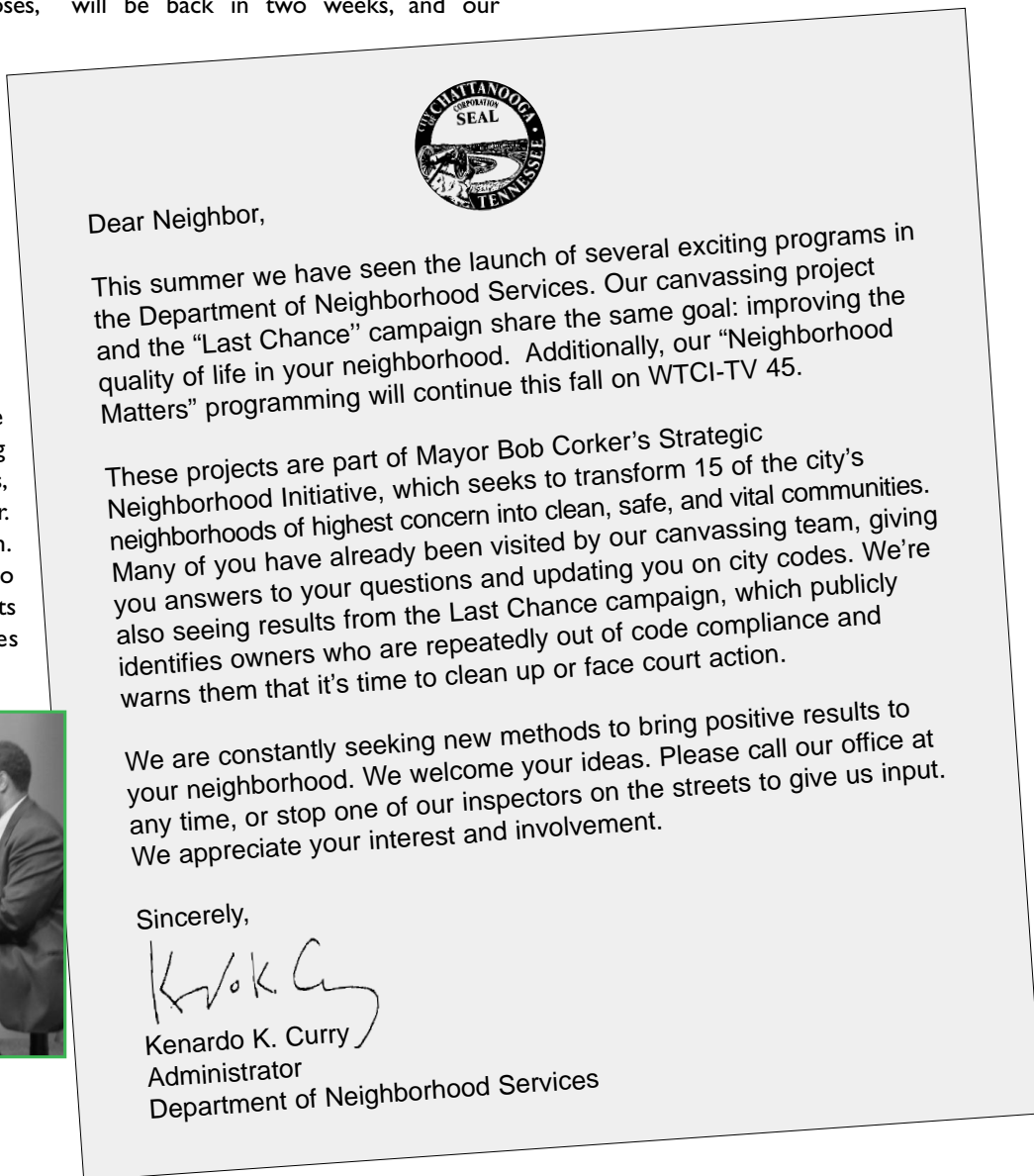


Neighborhood relations coordinators Pam Bowman, center, and Dennis Tate take a survey with a Chattanooga resident during a recent neighborhood canvassing visit.

inspectors will not be as lenient as they were in the first round," Ms. Jackson says. Citations will be issued for uncorrected problems.

Team members say they are finding most residents appreciate their efforts. They want to see recurring problems corrected in their neighborhoods.

"The majority of people are eager to comply," says Ms. Jackson. "We're meeting with cooperation for the most part." 🌿



3 three "Last Chance" Campaign a Strong Motivator for Non-Compliant Property Owners

The "Last Chance" campaign is producing lasting results for the city of Chattanooga. Property owners have been spurred to action by this aggressive component of the Strategic Neighborhood Initiative (SNI).

Launched in July, the Last Chance Campaign involves posting four-by-four-foot signs in the yards of repeat violators of city codes. The signs include the name and address of the property owner and a description of the particular code that the property owner is disregarding.

The initiative is aimed at owners with a long history of neglect towards their properties, says Kenardo K. Curry, administrator for the Department of Neighborhood Services. More than 100 non-compliant owners have nuisance properties that do not meet city code standards.

"As a department and a city, we are committed to making every neighborhood a safe, attractive and thriving community," Mr. Curry says. "We are willing to take whatever action is necessary to ensure long-standing problems are corrected. While we regret the embarrassment the signs may cause, it's not fair to residents to let dangerous properties continue to damage our neighborhoods."



The Last Chance campaign targets nuisance properties where owners have repeatedly failed to cooperate with city officials.

Code violations at the nuisance properties include:

- Indoor furniture, appliances, tires, and boxes visible on porches and in yards
- Inoperable vehicles or dismantled vehicles in yards
- Overgrown grass or vegetation over 10 inches high
- Serious neglect to the exterior of homes

Property owners are first sent a letter notifying them that the sign will be posted. They are given two weeks to correct their code violations. If no action is taken, the sign is posted and will remain on the property until corrections are made. Property owners may be cited to the city's Environmental Court and fined.

Mayor Bob Corker strongly supports the program, which is part of his Strategic Neighborhood Initiative. The Last Chance campaign has received enthusiastic backing from neighborhood leaders as well.

"We are committed to working with neighborhood leaders and community organizations to ensure that everything possible is done to make all communities in our city healthy and vibrant," Mayor Corker said in a release announcing the launch of the campaign. "The Last Chance program provides us with another tool for helping rid the community of blighted properties which drive down real estate values and slow neighborhood revitalization."

For more information on the Last Chance campaign or to report a property, please call the Department of Neighborhood Services at 425-3700. 🌿

Leadership Academy Builds Community Advocates

You could call it "boot camp" for community leaders. The Neighborhood Leadership Academy, sponsored by the Department of Neighborhood Services, will offer its fourth session beginning mid-September.

The purpose of the program is "to help people become more effective in preserving their neighborhoods," says Vanessa A. Jackson, Neighborhood Services program manager.

Grooming new leadership is another goal. "People can burn out quickly in neighborhood revitalization work," Ms. Jackson says. "It's critical to train new leaders so you can have someone to pick up the torch and carry on with the work."

While previous sessions have been targeted for certain communities, the upcoming academy will be open to residents of any city neighborhood. Enrollment will be limited to approximately 25 participants. The six-week program meets at the Development Resource Center on Market Street. Sessions are from 6 to 8 p.m. and dinner is served.

Clarence Jenkins, an Avondale resident, participated in the third academy held earlier this year so she could learn how to be a more

effective community leader. She is one of the founders of the Avondale Neighborhood Association and a seven-year past president.

The greatest benefit of the academy was learning more about the inner workings of city government, according to Mrs.



These recent graduates of the Leadership Academy learned techniques to improve their skills as neighborhood advocates.

Jenkins. "We learned about places we could go for information and resources," she says.

The 40-year Avondale resident said she enjoyed the encouragement from other neighborhood activists and learned new problem-solving skills.

Mrs. Jenkins says she would urge anyone interested in community improvement to participate in the academy. "I have a broader view and a better working knowledge of city government and how I as a neighborhood leader can work with local leaders," she says.

For more information about the upcoming Neighborhood Leadership Academy, please call the Department of Neighborhood Services at 425-3700. 🌿

Academy sessions are led by Neighborhood Services personnel and guest facilitators. Topics covered include:

- Networking
- Introduction to city government
- Mobilization and membership retention
- Problem solving
- Neighborhood safety and crime prevention strategies
- Correcting deteriorating and neglected properties
- Economic development initiatives