

# COMMON GROUND

A Newsletter Celebrating Neighborhoods

## Start Planning Now for Successful Spring, Summer Neighborhood Events



Careful and thorough preparation now for spring events will lead to shared enjoyment, as demonstrated by these happy participants.

Although it's January now, it's not too early to begin planning your spring and summer neighborhood events. The key to a successful tour of homes in April or a community picnic and yard sale in June is organization and involvement.

Dennis Tate, one of four neighborhood relations coordinators, suggests starting with an event timeline, working backwards from the selected date. Established neighborhood leaders should be involved in planning, but under-represented groups should be invited as well. New partners can include schools, churches, area businesses, and non-profit agencies located in a community.

Every organization targeted for participation should be evaluated in terms of what it can bring to an event. Can it offer leadership? Can it provide time,

cash, or donated goods such as refreshments or garbage bags for a neighborhood clean-up effort? Before approaching an organization, identify how it can be useful.

Contacting the media is crucial to generating publicity for a neighborhood event. A press release should be drafted, reviewed, and sent to media outlets. Follow-up calls should be made to the media to check on the possibility of coverage. A wide variety of media sources should be contacted, including television stations, the community happenings coordinator for the Chattanooga Times Free Press, and the Chattanooga.com Internet newspaper.

After an event is completed, an evaluation should be done. How well was the event run? Did it achieve its purpose? What were the results? What went well and what didn't?

Documenting the planning, implementation and evaluation of an event is helpful. This allows future planners to have an "instruction manual" to follow, explained Mr. Tate.

For more information on how to plan an effective neighborhood event, contact the Neighborhood Services Department at 425-3700 or visit the department's Web site at [www.chattanooga.gov/neighserv/](http://www.chattanooga.gov/neighserv/).

## Tips to Start a Neighborhood Group Successful Associations Learn from Veteran Leaders

Once a secluded neighborhood with little traffic and crime, the Lake Chickamauga community off Highway 153 now faces concerns raised by road construction and forest clear cutting. After two years of dealing with heavy traffic and rising property theft, residents decided it was time to unite and organize a neighborhood association.

"When the construction started on Highway 153, suddenly our quiet neighborhood was visible," said Aileen Carroll, president of the newly formed Lake Chickamauga Community Association. "We realized we needed to get together and come together."

A series of meetings last fall helped pinpoint neighborhood concerns and identify potential leaders. In December 2003, the

Lake Chickamauga Community Association held its first official meeting, with approximately 30 neighbors attending.

The Lake Chickamauga Community Association plans to focus on four key goals: to eliminate the Tennessee Department of Transportation's office on Roberts Road; organize a neighborhood watch program; secure two additional street lights in dimly lit areas; and provide information to neighbors who want to learn about city services. The association distributed its first newsletter in late December.

Mrs. Carroll said the Lake Chickamauga group found invaluable help from the Murray Hills Neighborhood Association. Two leaders of that community group, Jim King and Teresa Snyder, offered tips on how

to define concerns, how to select officers, and what type of organization to form. Dennis Tate, coordinator for the Murray Hills Neighborhood Association, also assisted with start-up efforts.

"Jim King has been like a foster parent to us, and Dennis offered us insight and direction," Mrs. Carroll said.

Any neighborhood will benefit from forming an organized community association, said Bob Graham, president of the Chattanooga Neighborhood Association Council. Such groups create cohesiveness and can bring a stronger voice to neighborhood concerns when issues are raised with elected officials.

"There's strength in numbers," Mr. Graham said.

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Neighborhoods Develop Marketability continued from page 3...

Generating interest in a community is an every-neighbor effort, said Dennis Tate, neighborhood relations coordinator for the city's Neighborhood Services Department. "All neighbors need to know the same message, speak the same language, and focus on the same features," he explained.

A community should also track and share all its successes. "People will not know what they are not told," said the NSD official. Facts that can be shared include growth and changes and the amount of public and private financial investments in a neighborhood.

Knowing your neighborhood's statistics also aids marketing plans. The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency has vital information on growth, trends, and numbers that can help a neighborhood in planning. These figures give you a snapshot of where you are as a community, how you get where you want to go, and where you were five years ago.



Nelsene Lowery is recognized in this issue by the Shepherd Community Council for intensive code enforcement. Congratulations Nelsene!

### January:

- 1 New Year's Day
- 6 City Council Meeting
- 12 RPA Meeting
- 13 City Council Meeting
- 15 CNAC Executive Meeting
- 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 19 City Council Meeting
- 26 CNAC General Council
- 27 City Council Meeting

### February:

- 3 City Council Meeting
- 10 City Council Meeting
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 16 President's Day
- 17 City Council Meeting
- 19 CNAC Executive Meeting
- 23 CNAC General Council
- 24 Flag Day
- 24 City Council Meeting



# Upcoming Events 4

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# Neighborhoods Develop Marketability through Planning and Elbow Grease

**F**inding your community's pulse, communicating that energy effectively, and capitalizing on your neighborhood's signature features are the secrets to increasing marketability in an area, according to neighborhood experts. As businesses and residents investigate a community for relocation or expansion, the first thing they will look for is evidence that a community is on the upswing, said Charlie Walldorf, treasurer/vice president for Herman Walldorf and Company.

Are fix-up efforts under way in neighborhood homes? Are the streets clean and free of trash? Are run-down commercial buildings being repaired? All of these are indicators that a neighborhood has potential, according to Mr. Walldorf.

A sense of excitement and neighborhood pride among residents are other factors in marketing a neighborhood. "If enthusiasm is generated, then businesses and residents will invest," Mr. Walldorf said.

Charles Walldorf  
Herman Walldorf and Company



St. Elmo, Highland Park, and North Chattanooga are neighborhoods that have been successful in marketing their possibilities, according to the real estate agent. He cited Tremont Street, a formerly neglected area which has transformed itself into a vibrant business and residential district. The North Brainerd area is currently considered "hot" in terms of growth and potential, Mr. Walldorf said.

### The real estate agent suggests:

\*Forming a steering committee to spearhead community marketing efforts and develop strategies.

\*Members should include people who know a neighborhood's strengths and weaknesses, what efforts need to be made to turn a community around, and who in the area can help make these things happen.

\*From the steering committee, focus groups can be used to help generate a long-range plan for a neighborhood.

\*Neighbors can pinpoint concerns, suggest solutions, and identify leaders who can help make the plan a reality.

Outside experts can be brought in to help facilitate problem-solving, Mr. Walldorf said. For example, if neighborhood security is a concern, invite officers from the Chattanooga Police Department to discuss options such as organizing a neighborhood watch program or increasing patrols in a community.

Bob Graham, president of the Chattanooga Neighborhood Association Council, suggests that a community can increase its marketability by focusing on two issues: avoiding blight and reducing crime. As a result, the value of homes will increase and "people will be attracted to the neighborhood," Mr. Graham said.

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# Effective, Faithful Volunteers Need Clear Direction, Praise



Volunteers enjoy food and fellowship at a community service event at East Lake Park.

**A**s a neighborhood leader, you can help generate visionary ideas for events that improve your community. But how do you find the volunteers needed to activate neighborhood plans? How do you follow through with them?

A clearly defined role for the volunteers, as well as continuous contact with them, are crucial elements in recruiting and retaining effective volunteers, according to Angie Hatcher Sledge, vice president of impact services for the United Way. In this role, Mrs. Sledge directs the Center for Nonprofits and its Volunteer Center.

"Volunteers need to know ahead of time exactly what you need them to do and why you need them to do it," Mrs. Sledge said. Just recruiting "warm bodies" for undefined work sets volunteers up for failure, she explained.

Mrs. Sledge suggests creating a job description for a volunteer role. Describe what the job involves, what skills are needed, and what time commitment is expected.

Dennis Tate, a neighborhood relations coordinator for the Neighborhood Services Department, offers three simple words of advice for finding volunteers: ask, seek, and knock.

Neighborhood Group Tips continued from page 1...

The CNAC president recommends visiting an established neighborhood group to learn from their experiences. CNAC has a variety of resources available to start-up groups, said Mr. Graham, and the NSD's Leadership Academy provides practical training in addressing neighborhood issues. Visit the Neighborhood Services Department's Web at <http://www.chattanooga.gov/neighserv/> to learn more about the Leadership Academy.

"There are some incredibly talented, committed, and caring people in Chattanooga," he said. "Things may not be getting done simply because we haven't asked yet."

He advises neighborhood planners to make a list of potential volunteers and their talents and resources. Who can write clearly or speak effectively? Who has good organization skills? Who can provide printing services at a reduced cost, or supply lunch for a painting crew? Who can donate lumber to repair a home in a neighborhood?

Those who are currently heading up neighborhood efforts can suggest others with leadership potential. Research can also unearth sources for volunteers. Newspaper clippings from public libraries can be searched to see who has been involved in community events in past years.

Retain volunteers by providing an enjoyable environment, said Bob Graham, president of

the Chattanooga Neighborhood Association Council. "Don't give mandates and act like a top sergeant," he said. "Try to make it a positive experience for them and provide a fun atmosphere."

A cooperative spirit is necessary, agreed Mrs. Sledge. "You want to have a team attitude—we're all players in getting this mission accomplished," she said.

Volunteers appreciate recognition, so Mr. Graham suggests announcing their efforts in meetings or through neighborhood mailouts. "Don't overlook people who have helped in any way," he said. "Brag about the accomplishments and who assisted with them."

The United Way offers several tools for neighborhood leaders to recruit and train effective volunteers. For more information, call Shula Yelliot with the Volunteer Center at 265-0514, or visit either of these Web sites: [www.cnpchatt.org](http://www.cnpchatt.org) or [www.volanooga.com](http://www.volanooga.com).

## IS YOUR HOUSEHOLD INCOME \$34,000 OR LESS?

If so, you qualify for free income tax preparation and filing service sponsored by the City of Chattanooga. Starting January 20, residents of Chattanooga and surrounding counties can have their taxes prepared at one of eight area locations. Volunteers trained by the IRS will complete and electronically file your return. Refunds arrive in as little as 10 to 14 days. For information about schedules, appointments and what to bring, call 311 for the site nearest you.



Mrs. Carroll advises other communities interested in starting their own associations to talk to their neighbors to generate interest and use the resources offered by the NSD.

"The neighborhood association is the most fundamental building block of democracy in America," Mr. Tate said. "It's when we meet our next-door neighbor, determine our concerns, and begin to address them. It's about people working together to solve common problems."

## Tips on how to start a neighborhood association:

- 1 Identify issues of community concern, such as crime, home values, or animal control.
- 2 Use the "Common Vision" handbook available on the NSD Web site.
- 3 Identify partners who can help your organization. Utilize established organizations and those who are less represented in community affairs.
- 4 Invite people to come. Knock on doors in your neighborhood to offer information on meetings.
- 5 Publicize events and meetings through signs, fliers and banners.
- 6 Find another community organization that has dealt with issues similar to your neighborhood's concerns. See what works for them and how they handle issues.



Dear Neighbor,

Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa are behind us. We've started on our New Year's resolutions—and hopefully, we're sticking to them! Although the winter months are cold, the warmth of spring and summer will be here soon. Now is the time to begin planning for the events that will showcase our neighborhoods in warmer weather.

This issue of Common Ground focuses on a "spring fix-up" plan for our neighborhoods. How can we organize an effective tour of homes event? How can we get more neighbors involved in volunteering for a community clean-up day? You will find practical answers to these questions and more in this issue.

Successful spring or summer events begin with effective neighborhood association meetings. These gatherings will spur ideas for community development, identify future leaders, and generate excitement for your future plans. Here are a few tips on running your neighborhood association meeting:

- \* Publicize your meeting widely. Put up signs and banners announcing the meeting, pass out fliers, and go door-to-door inviting neighbors to attend.
- \* Have a planned agenda and focus on the real issues of community concern.
- \* Allow everyone to have a voice but do not allow any individual to disrupt the meeting. Discuss the matter of concern with the person after the meeting.
- \* Assign an association officer to be in charge of keeping the meeting "on task" and running smoothly.
- \* Offer to put controversial issues that may come up in a meeting on the agenda for the next gathering.
- \* Delegate tasks. Assign volunteers jobs based on their strengths and interests.

It's always a good idea to visit other neighborhood associations and see how they conduct business. They may practice concepts that will benefit your own gathering. And as always, the Neighborhood Services Department is available for input and advice on leading effective meetings. For further help, visit our Web site at [www.chattanooga.gov/neighserv/](http://www.chattanooga.gov/neighserv/).

We are looking forward to visiting your community this spring. We'll see you at your event!

Sincerely,

Kenardo K. Curry  
Administrator  
Neighborhood Services Department



Watch Kenardo Curry on "Neighborhood Matters" airing this fall on WTCL-TV45/DT29.