



NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR
COMMUNITY DEVELOPEMENT CORPORATION

History of Neighbor to Neighbor Community Development Corporation

Mission Statement

The Neighbor to Neighbor Community Development Corporation strives to bring the community, businesses, elected officials, faith based and educational institutions together in order to stimulate economic, social, and educational development and to foster personal and family growth. Collectively, we will be the transformational conduit without regard to race, creed, or nationality.

In 1994, Pastor Richard A. Dent began to transform First African Baptist Church from clubs to outreach ministries. To make the most impact in the community, a faith-based, non-profit, First African Community Development Corporation, was created under First African's 501(c)3. The organization's name was changed, in 1995, to Neighbor to Neighbor Community Development Corporation, under its own 501(c)3 status. The mission was to "bring the community, businesses, elected officials and religious institutions together in order to provide urgently needed community services to low-income individuals and families and to express our commitment to social responsibility and community development."

Rev. Melvin McAllister became the first executive director of Neighbor to Neighbor. The following members made up the first Board of Directors: Pastor Richard A. Dent, chairman; Steven Bradley, vice-chairman; Beatrice Dent, secretary; Estelle Izzard, treasure and office manager; George Eldridge, Sr., Claude Edney, Jr., Delores Ellison, Marie McFadden, Linda Lomax, Lee Taliaferro, Wilma Robinson, George Eldridge, Jr., Gloria Griffin, Joscelyn Keeve-Bagley, Deborah Moore, James Moore, Deborah Ross, Janie Strong, David Thorpe, Maurice DeBeary, Rev. Alexander Thompson, Sr., Laverne Turner, Thomas Whitsett and JoAnne Wilder. Advisory Board members came from community, civic and religious leaders.

First African Baptist Church donated \$35,000 to renovate the old parsonage into office space to accommodate Neighbor to Neighbor offices and the afterschool/LATCH key program, one of our first on-site programs, developed by Deaconess Wilma Robinson and later headed by Sister Andrea McAllister and Sister Roberta Greenhowe. The last directors were Sister Audrey Gill and Sister Edith Mosely. All of these directors were professional educators and members of First African Baptist Church. This program was certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Swarthmore College students, Neuman College students, teachers from Southeast Delco School District and Elwin of Philadelphia Remedial Program provided tutoring and instruction for the students in the William Penn and Southeast Delco School Districts. Neighbor to

Neighbor served as part of the taskforce that controlled Head Start in Delaware County and brought the first Head Start program to Darby Township.

Neighbor to Neighbor acquired the deeds of seven properties, on Clifton Avenue, with plans to build a community life center. A HUD grant was secured for needed demolition but this endeavor was unsuccessful because the community residents would not agree to the project. The properties were then used to build the new church edifice at 901 Clifton Avenue.

Along with the HUD grant, many grants and gifts were received, included but not limited to: The Houston Foundation, along with the Ford Motor Company, gifted the organization with a new van; IBM and Fidelity Bank donated computers and furniture for the computer lab and offices. Taylor Hospital, Boeing, Ridley YMCA, PNC Bank, Philadelphia Baptist Association, The William Penn Foundation, The Philadelphia Foundation, The United Way, Senator Rick Santorum, Mayor W.Wilson Goode, The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, US Department of Agriculture, Citizens Bank, Wells Fargo, WW Smith Foundation, Philadelphia Community of Hospitals, NBC-10, Coca Cola Bottling, SEPTA, Ridley YMCA and Higher Education. By establishing relationships with influential people and other organizations, Neighbor to Neighbor became the benefactor of a variety of private and community organizations willing to help our mission to efficiently and effectively provide needed community services.

Neighbor to Neighbor provided both part-time and full-time staff to QVC, PNC Bank, UPS and Taylor Hospital. Employment applicants were screened, interviewed and qualified applicants were recommended, by us for hire. Once hired transportation was provided, by Neighbor to Neighbor to transport employees, to and from the work sites. University of Pennsylvania Nursing programs sent students to intern in many of our youth programs. Delaware County District Attorney's Office recruited male volunteers to encourage and inspire male teens caught in the juvenile justice system. Many non-violent offenders completed community service hours at Neighbor to Neighbor.

In 1993, Camp Joy, a 6-week, Summer Day Camp, for students, age 5 to 12 years began at First African Baptist Church. In 1995, the camp was placed under the leadership of Neighbor to Neighbor and continues until now. This camp began as a vision of Pastor Dent's to bring education, culture and recreation, at a reasonable cost, to the families of Darby Township and surrounding communities. For the first 10 years, the camp was under the direction of Sister Patricia Epps-Evans, Brother and Sister James & Sandra Rodgers and for many years, enrollment reached over 200 campers each summer. Camp was staffed by certified instructors and offered a variety of academic and recreational opportunities for campers. The camp also created valuable first job opportunities for the teens in the community. Ridley YMCA provided low-cost or free swim instruction to over 100 of our children.

One of the visions of Pastor Dent was to challenge each "club" in the church to become more involved in an outreach ministry. The Emergency Food Cupboard was established

with members of Heart In Hand, led by Sister Beverly Donaldson and the Flower Guild, led by Sister Ethel Tucker joined in an endeavor to feed “the least of these” in our community. The Emergency Food Cupboard became a part of Neighbor to Neighbor in 1995.

The Emergency Food Cupboard was originally funded by First African Baptist Church. Later, we received donations from Boeing and PA Department of Agriculture, Giant Food Markets, ShopRite, Walmart, WAWA, Philabundance, Fruit Guys, Share Food Program, Pathmart, Manhattan Bagel, Panera and BJ’s Warehouse. These donations allowed us to distribute, not only non-perishable food items but fresh and frozen meats, seafood and poultry, assorted dairy items and bakery goods. Other donations, especially during COVID-19, came from The Foundation of Delaware County, The Philadelphia Foundation, WWSmith, The Community Foundation and Wells Fargo that gave us the opportunity to provide essential items, such as, baby diapers and wipes, adult diapers, paper good and cleaning supplies, male and female personal products, winter coats and book bags with school supplies. The Emergency Food Cupboard and its volunteers are coordinated by Sister Linda Eldridge. In 2020, the cupboard distributed 227,129 pounds of food to 4.586 households, which translates to 14,694 individuals.

Volunteers are the force behind Neighbor to Neighbor! Since our inception, services have been provided, continuously, by a small paid staff but mostly by a large, devoted volunteer staff. Volunteers from our church family, Southeast Delco School District, community residents and friends of Neighbor to Neighbor consistently ensured maximum community and client impact. During the early years, there were many other programs staffed by volunteers, such as: Friday Night at the Movies; Christmas Toy Drive; homebound/senior services; computer training & instructions; transportation for after school, youth programs, emergencies, meal delivers, medical appointments, community recreation; clothing closet; furniture store; Girls Scout/Boy Scout Troops; community health services; community job fairs; adult literacy; community service/volunteerism; information and referral service; First Books Program and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s Day of Service.

In 2013, the need to stay relevant, as we moved forward, made it necessary to discontinue some services/programs while initiating and/or expanding others. The following programs were created/continued,

- **Camp Joy**, a summer day camp for children between the ages of 5 and 12 allows youth from low-income families the experience of a camp. Not only do we provide recreational fun but there is also academics to help reduce the summer learning loss. This program has run continuously since 1994.
- **Come Together Communities** is a monthly networking meeting where for profit and nonprofit businesses, political and school district officials, residents and community leaders share and receive valuable resources that benefit the individuals, families and communities they serve.

- **Community Day** a celebration of Darby Township/Sharon Hill Boro with music, games, resources, vendors and food for the entire family.
- **Computer lab** was furnished with all new computers, made possible with a donation from Trustee Kenneth Lockett and family.
- **FAB (Fabulous) Explores** Summer Day Camp was developed for youth ages, 12-15, to help lessen the summer learning gap. Many of the youth enrolled were transitioning from Camp Joy.
- **Food Cupboard** with new partners, we were able to expand to distribution of food items to include, not only staples but, fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh meats, dairy and bakery goods. Grants also allowed us to replace old, outdated food storage equipment with 4 new freezers and 3 refrigerators, give winter coats, book bags and school supplies to the children of our clients and community. In 2021, we served 8,500 people distributed 115,400 pounds of food. From our abundance, we were able to share with Chester City Team, Mt. Zion Food Cupboard and Good Neighbor Senior Center. This program has run continuously since 1994.
- **Girls Scouts and Brownies** have increased to 9 troops.
- **N2N Wardrobe Basics** offers a variety of men's and women's work attire for those entering the workforce who cannot afford the "work attire" for the first time.
- **PearsonVue Authorized Test Center** allows secure testing for GED and over 135 certifications and recognized positions and titles.
- **TechGirlz** introduces middle school girls to informational technology.
- **VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)** offers free federal and state tax assistance. In 2020, over 250 returns, property/homeowners' rebates were completed.
- **Work Study** hosting site for students from Delaware County Community College, Widener University, Haverford College, Lincoln University and Bryn Mawr College.
- **Young Lives** support group for teen moms.

Just as we are supported, we give back by supporting others in various projects and events, such as, BWWatkins Scholarship Ministry, Chosen 300, Youth Harvest party, Chester City Team, Good Neighbor Senior Center, Mt. Zion AME Church, Thanksgiving Caring and Sharing and several community kitchens in Delaware County.

During COVID-19, our services were curtailed but Neighbor to Neighbor never closed. By streamlining and revamping our services we continued our emergency food cupboard and our testing site.

Black equity, in our organization, means opportunity, respect and power. Covid-19 has, once again, brought to the forefront the inequity of the American system. We saw the first vaccines given to communities that did not look like us. When vaccines were given to our communities, we saw people, again who did not look like us, infiltrate our communities and pushed us out. N2N saw how our minority community was being denied this life saving vaccine, we took it upon ourselves to find our own source of vaccines, and we did. Neighbor to Neighbor reached out to Divine Province Village to

host a COVID-19 vaccination event where over 200 community residents received their 1st and 2nd dose of the Moderna vaccine along with 2 booster vaccines. American Red Cross Blood donations are also scheduled.

Over the years, Neighbor to Neighbor has received many awards, such as “Outstanding Non-profit of Delaware Valley” recognized nationally by President George W. Bush with the “Points of Light” award and National Volunteer of the Day award. Articles of our work have been published in the Spirit Newspaper, Delaware county Magazine, Franklin Mint Federal Credit Union Magazine, Penn Medicine’s First Call and many others.

Neighbor to Neighbor owes a debt of gratitude to Pastor Richard A. Dent for his vision and guidance and to First African Baptist Church membership for their tremendous support to our mission.

Under the past leadership of Rev. Melvin McAllister (1995-2005) Deacon George Eldridge, Jr. (2005-2009) Deacon David Thorpe (2009-2013) and current leadership of Sister Beverly Donaldson (2013-present), Neighbor to Neighbor continues to be a non-profit frontrunner within Delaware County and surrounding communities.

Contributors to this document:

Rev. Dr. Richard A. Dent
Sister Beverly Donaldson
Sister Andrea McAllister
Rev. Melvin McAllister
Sister Janie Strong