



# Peace Neighborhood Center

# PEACEFUL CORNERS

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Peace Neighborhood Center's mission is to provide programs for children, families, and individuals who are affected by social and economic problems.

Peace helps people discover options, enhance skills, and make choices that lead to self-sufficiency and positive community involvement.



## 45 YEARS & 45 STORIES OF PEACE

2016 marks the 45th Anniversary of the founding of Peace Neighborhood Center. In celebration of this milestone, we have spent the past year bringing you 45 different stories about the history of the organization and the lives it has touched in a series of social media posts known as the 45 Stories of Peace.

Back in the summer of 1968, racial tensions throughout the country and especially in Southeastern Michigan had resulted in some devastating effects on the region. Most of us are familiar with the riots in Detroit that occurred in 1967. One result of that civil disturbance that might have been lost to time, however, was the opening of the North Maple Village public housing site in Ann Arbor the following year. As the complex brought in a significant number of new families, mostly African American, existing residents in the area began to have concerns that what had happened in Detroit was on its way to their backyard.

Some residents, though, did not see only racial differences, but instead saw shared commonalities. These individuals, seeing the children walking to school and playing in the neighborhood merely saw children doing what children do. A few of these



*Project Neighborhood Group #1 - Mary Ann Pierce, Leader  
1. to. Villia Kelley, Vanessa Joplin,  
Laura Taylor, June Layher,  
Joanne Pierce & Renee Peters  
Spring, 1971*



resident mothers started to meet over coffee and discuss what positive things could be done to help ease the tension. In the fall of 1968, they formed Project Neighborhood as a social interest group that involved a group of 20 young ladies from the area in activities such as cooking, sewing and art. As the years went by, this began to snowball to include more and more young people (boys, too) in different clubs and activities. Large neighborhood-wide picnics were hosted and the community began to come together.

It was in this climate that Peace Neighborhood Center was born in June of 1971. Since that time, Peace has continued to evolve and expand to meet the needs of the community. We have added programs and services designed to help break the cycle of poverty and help individuals discover their true potential. Over a decade ago, thanks to dedicated supporters like you, we were able to renovate and expand our building. Just recently, Peace has set its eyes on the future with the Above & Beyond Fund, a special reserve fund that will help Peace continue its mission in the years to come.

We invite you now to read the final four stories of our 45 Stories of Peace as we conclude our look back on the history of Peace with this special print newsletter.



#### #42

In the late 1970s, Sue Muir started as the parish administrator for Bethlehem United Church of Christ. As a part of the outreach program at Bethlehem, she soon became involved with Rose Martin and Peace Neighborhood Center as she organized volunteer groups and helping out with special needs at the center. Meanwhile, Roy Muir became involved with Peace when his children started going to Haisley Elementary and he took notice of the support programs Peace was conducting for students at the school. It wasn't long after he was introduced to Rose that Roy found himself engaged in conducting a feasibility study for the capital campaign to construct a new building to house Peace. It was determined that there was some work to do to get Peace ready for such a big step, and Roy became an integral part of the committee that made it all possible.

After Roy and Sue were married, their mutual love for Peace Neighborhood Center brought them to be involved in many different capacities. "One of the things I have the most fun doing is serving the meals in the after school program," says Roy. "It is a delight to be around all of these smiling faces."

"When I think of Peace, I think of all of the people in the community that are served," remarks Sue. "Helping out with the Friday Food Distribution, it is wonderful to see all of the folks who are helped and to be a part of it," she continues, referring to the free bread and produce Peace distributes to area families in partnership with Food Gatherers. "There is serious stuff that goes into it, but a lot of laughter, too. I never leave Peace without being uplifted."

Roy is intimately familiar with the services Peace provides as it has helped his own children and grandchildren overcome some problems over the years. "Rose once sat with me and had one of the most substantive, powerful conversations I've ever had in my life with me about the situation," he recalls. "She cleared my head and gave me a sense of direction. I've experienced Peace from just about every dimension, from the board and committees, to volunteering to receiving assistance – it is the single most important nonprofit to us."

Sue agrees. "We'd like to see more people in the community get to know Peace," she says. So would we, but we are so very grateful for supporters like Roy and Sue Muir who have kept Peace going for the past 45 years. Thank you!

#### #43

Len and his family of five had fallen on hard times. His consultant business had dried up. The bills were piled high. The IRS demanded payment and soon the family home was gone. Proud and having been taught not to ask for help, Len pushed on and took his family through a difficult time sharing a small hotel room. Finally, with all other options seemingly exhausted, Len knew it was time to swallow his pride and seek assistance. His daughter kept telling him about Bonnie and Peace Neighborhood Center. Len finally made a call, and shortly thereafter, he and his family took their first steps toward a new beginning as residents of the Peace House Transitional Housing Center.

Working with Bonnie weekly on their action plan and budget, Len's family has enjoyed privacy and peace of mind for the first time in years. In addition to housing, Peace has helped them with gas for their vehicles, food for their table and put them in contact with the U of M Law School who helped to finally put their IRS tax issues to rest. Most importantly, the family has managed to stay together and form even stronger bonds despite their difficult circumstances. Len credits Peace with this. "I don't know where we'd be without Peace," he said. "Throughout, we were always alone. We aren't alone here at Peace. It has really opened up a door to reflect and rebuild."

The road to self-sufficiency has been a difficult one. With much of Len's income going toward the IRS issue, the family began to depend very heavily on his oldest son. To his credit, this young man put his family first as he worked long hours to help get them back on their feet. He has been pre-approved for a mortgage and the family plans to move out of Peace House in the next few months thanks to his hard work. "It has been humbling," Len says. "But working with Bonnie and doing weekly counseling, we really have become a closer, stronger family. There is a light at the end of the tunnel."

Since it opened in 2009, this is just one example of what the Peace House has allowed Peace staff to do while working with families. Sometimes, circumstances arise that don't offer much in the way of options in order to keep a family together and on the path to future success. Thankfully, Peace House gives us the flexibility to help families like Len's the best way we know how. As they prepare for the next step of their journey, we are happy we could be here in their time of need.



#44

Current Peace Board Member Rhonda Walker has been involved with Peace all of her life. Beginning with her mother Mary and continuing with Rhonda's children Bryce and Terra, Peace has been an important part of the lives of all the family members across several generations. Asked about Peace, Rhonda remarks, "Peace is a safe house. It is a place to go for a helping hand that has really changed my life for the better."

Rhonda's mother, Mary Young, grew up among the cotton fields of Tennessee before moving to Ann Arbor in the late 70s to pursue a better life for her and her children. Getting a job at the post office, Mary worked long hours to provide for her family. In the early 80s, she got to know Rose Martin and started to send her children to Peace Neighborhood Center. Rhonda remembers all of the fun trips and important academic help she received. She also remembers that Rose helped her out with one of her first jobs. "I couldn't really type, but I told Rose I could. She had me type up letters for her. I couldn't have been more than ten-years-old. I probably wasted more paper than we were able to use, but Rose kept using me and encouraging me to do better. She really made me feel that if she could do it, I could do it, and that has inspired me all of my life."

As Rhonda became a woman with children of her own, she found herself in a difficult spot following a divorce. On her own with two kids, Rhonda became one of the first residents of the Peace House Transitional Living Center. "Peace House was terrific. It was a shelter, but it didn't really feel like it, and it gave me the opportunity to get back on my feet after the divorce and keep my kids on the right track."

Bryce, Rhonda's oldest, is currently playing football for Grand Valley State University on a full ride football scholarship thanks to Kenya Jackson and the Peace College Prep program where he maintains a 3.4 GPA. "Paul Johnson mentored him throughout his childhood and Kenya helped him navigate everything involved with applying for college. Peace really is a big part of him becoming the successful young man he is today."

Rhonda's daughter Terra is entering ninth grade at Skyline High School this fall and is doing well in school. She spent her summer as a Counselor in Training at Peace's Summer Day Camp. Rhonda's mom, Mary is doing well, too. After raising her children, a few grandchildren and a successful retirement with over 30 years at USPS, she graduated with an Associate's in applied science from Washtenaw Community College in 2015 at the age of 70. It is generational stories like this that make us proud to be a part of the legacy of Rose Martin and the many lives she touched.



#45

As we wrap up this project with the 45th Story of Peace, we thought it would be a good idea to look ahead at the future of Peace Neighborhood Center after reflecting on our origins. At their heart, Peace programs are about transformation – the transformation of lives! Over the past 45 years, we have transformed as an organization to meet the needs of our community. These 45 stories have given a glimpse into the transformative role Peace has played in the lives of the thousands of people we have had the pleasure to get to know over the years.

The full story is rich and beyond measure. It has been supported by too many individuals, groups, families, businesses and congregations to name them all, but every one of them have been a part of an outstanding example of transformation and change.

Our belief in the greatness of the people we have served and our community has not changed in these 45 years. The Peace Family will continue to be here to address other emerging social and economic issues that our brothers and sisters will face and will be working diligently to bring about the day that we will no longer be needed.

**So, in honor of the past 45 years of effective, transformative services, we would like to ask you for a donation of \$45 (or more) to support Peace's work in the years to come. Please take a look at the enclosed pledge form to make your donation today.**

**Also, please check out all 45 of our Stories of Peace on our website and Facebook page!**

[www.peaceneighborhoodcenter.org](http://www.peaceneighborhoodcenter.org)

[facebook.com/peaceneighborhoodcenter](https://facebook.com/peaceneighborhoodcenter)

# SAVE-THE-DATE FOR THANKS FOR GIVING THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH, 2016

## ANNUAL BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE HAPPENING NOW!



If you are interested in helping start the school year right for a young person this year, consider dropping off one or more of the following:

- New backpacks (girls and boys)
- Mechanical pencils
  - Pens
- 5-Star Notebooks
  - Art Supplies
- Calculators (solar powered preferred)

## 45TH ANNIVERSARY PRINT ISSUE

