**East Carver Heights Community Development Corporation 2022**

**The Next Chapter**

**East Carver Heights CDC** began as the Boxwood Soccer Club, a St Thomas Ministry operating out of the Boxwood Recreation Center in the East Carver Heights neighborhood. We have since evolved into the organization we are today.

This year started well as we began to return to normal. Unfortunately, the Boxwood Rec was “temporarily” shutdown in August. But as we had done in response to the pandemic, we adapted, and all our programs have continued and grown. As is often the case, when one door closes another is opened. We have begun a conversation with Columbus Parks and Recreation about purchasing or leasing the Boxwood Rec Center. The next chapter for us is the East Carver Heights Community Center?

**Boxwood Soccer Club (U8 Lightning, U10 Thunder, U12 Storm and U14 Tsunamis)**

We once again had a very successful year on the soccer field. During the spring season both our U12 and U14 teams won league titles by going undefeated. During the fall our U10 team made it to their tournament final, the U12 team won another league title and the U14 team made it to the city championship finals. Incredibly, both our U12 and U14 teams won the Georgia State Rec Cup Championship in their respective age groups. To be this successful the kids have had to learn to support and care about one another and been willing to make sacrifices.

Saturday Boxwood Soccer has become a happening for the players and their families. We now have between 50 to 60 players participating every season. Family and former players are coaches and team managers. A community that includes moms and dads, brothers and sisters, teachers and friends has evolved over the seasons. St Thomas has generously given support financially through the church and through individual donations. Parishioners purchased winter coats given by Santa to each player. St Thomas members participated in our Halloween Trunk or Treat and have given their time and effort in a myriad of ways. Know that your contributions are appreciated by the kids and their families, and your efforts are making a difference in their lives.

**Path to Shine – Columbus**

Path To Shine®, Inc. is a mentoring program for elementary school children. This year it became a 501-c3 but it was started as a Diocesan program. There are many Path to Shine’s in Atlanta area and Macon but we are the only Path to Shine - Columbus. We are housed at Carver Heights Presbyterian Church’s outreach building at 800 32nd Ave. We meet on Tuesdays of the school year from 4:30-6pm. We start out with a healthy snack provided by volunteers, we work on homework or reading then we have a curriculum lesson with a book we read or a speaker.

Students receive new books at the end of the fall and spring semesters. We take students on field trips during the year and have other activities that enhance learning like carving a Jack O’Lantern at Halloween. We have a graduation party for 5th graders with celebration. Speakers included Perrin Nicholson, Father Darius Sudayi, (after reading Beatrice’s Goat he talked to the students about growing up in Tanzania), Sebastian Villa Molina-Hispanic Heritage month, and Paul Hostetter presented a creative interpretation of Giraffes Can’t Dance with a spoken word performer, drums and a bass player.

Path to Shine mentored six students this year. Our mentors are Margo Easterbrook, Sandra Montgomery, Suzanne Burdeshaw, Charlene Rallo, LaShanda Porter and Chad Keene. Sara Ginter organizes and schedules the snack angels, and they are Jennifer Fletcher, Allyson Young Grossman, Charlene Rallo, Donna Sharp, Sherry Wade, Mandy Flynn Jessica Ezelle, Leslie Holloway and Vicky and John Partin. They provide each student with a healthy snack of a sandwich half, juice and fruit.

Our next chapter with Path to Shine – Columbus will be adding more students and hopefully more mentors! Watch us grow and children learn to love learning

**Boxwood Friends and Neighbors Network**

A Friends and Neighbors Network is where families who qualify for food assistance, work together to unload and sort food, meet, pay dues and then clean up and take the food home. A community gets formed through the work everyone does together and the meetings which include prayer, a pledge and speakers who bring information about local resources and services. The food is purchased from Feeding the Valley with healthy food in mind East Carver Heights has few grocery stores offering good produce and healthy options. The dues the group pays are pooled to purchase in bulk items like tissue, cleaning products, and laundry pods. On average this year the Boxwood F.A.N.N. has served a dozen families. This year we had speakers from the Pastoral Institute and West Georgia Health Department. The Boxwood Recreation Center was the home for the F.A.N.N. for the first part of the year. Then it closed, so the F.A.N.N. is meeting at Edgewood Presbyterian Church. Our speakers included The Pastoral Institute and the West Georgia Health Department.

Our next chapter is to find a more permanent home for the Boxwood F.A.N.N. We would like to be back at the Boxwood Recreational Center. We love Edgewood Presbyterian, but they may have to move and sell the church.

**Boxwood ESL**

Many of the parents of our soccer players speak Spanish and we asked if they would attend English classes at the Boxwood Recreation Center while the players were practicing. Many of them expressed interest and we began looking of a teacher. Then the Boxwood Recreation Center closed. We found the teacher, Martha Mullinax from St. Thomas and then we had to find a place. Pastor Gustavo Serra let us house this at Nuevo Comienzo . It took lots of calls to make this happen but now 7-10 students enjoy learning English from teacher Martha each Monday at 5pm at no cost. At first, we provided snacks for the students but now they bring their own snacks.

Our next chapter for this group is also a wish that they could meet at the Boxwood Recreation Center during soccer practice. We will continue to provide curriculum books and school materials.