



Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc. *NEWS*

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AUTUMN 2011

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The *NEW*
GLCAC, Inc.
Website was
launched on
Nov. 16, 2011.

Visit
www.glcac.org
and check out
these special
points of
interest:

- Featured Program
Partners/Funders
- Video of Head Start
Success Story
- GLCAC 2012-2014
Community Action Plan
(See 'About Us')

Gill Avenue Welcomes Head Start Center

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on July 20, 2011 to mark the opening of GLCAC, Inc.'s newest Head Start Center on Gill Ave. in Methuen, MA. Local, State, and Federal officials joined neighborhood residents, GLCAC, Inc. staff, parents and children to celebrate Head Start's return to the City of Methuen.

Methuen had been without a Head Start Center since 2009 when the city reclaimed the Head Start classroom space. Since losing the classroom space, Methuen children had to be transported to Lawrence Head Start Centers. The new Center will serve up to 128 Methuen children and their families.

The process of securing all the needed local, state, and federal

"An eyesore is gone, replaced by a beautiful building that provides night-time lighting making it safer to walk" said Susan Brunette, new GLCAC, Inc. Board Member and area resident. The Head Start Center will allow the area to become a Drug Free School Zone.

approvals to construct the new Head Start facility took over three years and required the cooperation and support of many individuals and organizations from Methuen, to Boston, to Washington, DC. This cooperative effort resulted in an empty building being transformed into a neighborhood resource, a key turning point in revitalizing the neighborhoods around Gill Avenue.



BEFORE....



Introducing: Mr. Christian W. Dame

GLCAC, Inc. Interim Executive Director



Christian W. Dame began his employment with GLCAC, Inc. as Interim Executive Director on June 6, 2011. With a Bachelor of Arts in History from Duke University and a Masters in City and Regional Planning from Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Mr. Dame brings a wealth of education, training, and experience to the agency.

Mr. Dame is the founder of Non Profit Transitions, LLC, a company consulting to foundations and community organizations in the areas of interim executive leadership, turnaround management, and organization transition consulting.

A Closed School Transformed



*Donovan
Center @
50 Cross Street
Lawrence, MA
978-682-3322*

In 2009, the City of Lawrence designated the closed General Donovan School as its emergency donation drop off and distribution site after the Saunders School, the former donation site, had been sold. Isabel Melendez, Director of the GLCAC, Inc. Community Service Center, was asked to continue overseeing the donation site.

Under Isabel's direction, an empty school has been transformed into a vibrant

community center, providing emergency assistance in the form of clothing and household items to hundreds of individuals and families each year. The Donovan also houses a number of local non-profits, including the Ministry of Salvation and Help, the Puerto Rican Union, NEPRA, Light of Hope, Movimiento Puertorriqueno, and the local office of Catholic Charities. The Center's two conference rooms are used for meet-

ings by many local and regional groups such as the National Senior Network, Salvation Ministry, Lawtown Voices, Committee Pro-Help Haiti, and a number of youth groups.

Responding to training requests from the community, the Center offers citizenship classes, ESL/GED classes, computer classes, literacy-alphabetization classes, as well as sewing, crocheting, and knitting classes.

Learning to sew.....

....leads to a new source of income!

The sewing class held at the Donovan Center recently completed its second year. During that time, 22 students completed Level I classes and 18 graduated from Level II. A number of the students enrolled in order to have a little 'me' time...as a way of relieving the stress of being working parents. In addition to getting their 'me' time, many of the students are now saving money by making clothes for themselves and their families; a few are supplementing their income by making clothes for neighbors, friends and co-workers.

Nelsida Rojas, pictured below, was in the Level II sewing class. She now makes extra money for her family by making scrubs for her daughter's co-workers.

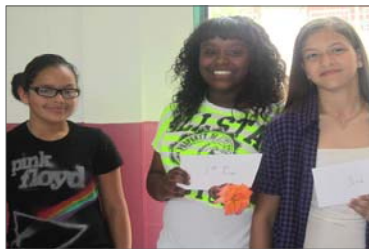
Betania Gruezo, a local business owner with five children, is in the Level I class and is already sewing lovely outfits for her mother and a First Communion dress for her daughter, both of whom are pictured below with Betania.



The lime green dress modeled above by Isabel Melendez was created by members of the Sewing Class.



Project FOCUS completes its first year!



RAP Contest winners:
Samantha Jusino, Helen Acevedo
and Brittanie. Ramirez

Project FOCUS, GLCAC, Inc.'s South Lawrence East Full Service Community School Program, is off

to a great start. Funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education, the five-year project is designed to increase student academic achievement through the provision of empirically-based wrap around support services offered to the students and their families. The goal of Project FOCUS is to unite families, neighbors and the community for student success. In addition to the academic and social service supports provided by eight collaborating organizations, Project

FOCUS offers learning experiences in a 'fun' format such as the recent *RAP contest* based on good things happening at the South Lawrence East School and the *Dirty Hands gardening Club* where students are learning about nutrition while growing produce that they can bring home to their families.



Project FOCUS "Dirty Hands Club"



GLCAC, Inc. Child Care Center



The GLCAC, Inc. Child Care Center recently completed the required bi-annual Mass. Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC) re-licensing process for its Toddler, Preschool, Kindergarten and School-age Programs. The EEC Licensor found the Center to be in full compliance. "I observed warm, sincere interactions between educators

and children that created a healthy, fun atmosphere in all classrooms. It should be noted that all of the classrooms contained evidence of a rich, strong curriculum, an abundance of materials for all to utilize, photos of ongoing program happenings, and well-structured daily schedules that created a smooth flow throughout the day...[and]....patient, profes-

sional and well-trained staff that have dedicated themselves to the children and families enrolled in the program."

The Center is also an accredited program since 1999, meeting the high quality national standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

**Child Care
Center
has perfect
licensing
visit!**

IDA Savings Program's Newest Home Owner

Racquel Mendez became a GLCAC, Inc. IDA (Individual Development Account) client in 2009. Her goal was to save \$2,000 in order to be eligible for the 2:1 matched savings account which would be used as a down payment on a home. In July 2011, Racquel met her savings goal and bought a condo in Boston, where she and her 11 year old daughter, Serenity, will live, work and go to school.

Pictured to the right with daughter Serenity, Maureen Mulcahy, GLCAC, Inc. Planning Director and Pam Marchand, IDA Coordinator, Racquel told us: "There are no words that can express how I feel today. I am a homeowner! Thank you for all the help and support that I received from the IDA program. I would not have been able to buy my first home if it was not for the training and guidance that I received in this program."



Greater Lawrence Community

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Officers of the Board of Directors:

Dr. Thomas D. Perrault, Sr., President

Cheryl-Ann Matthews, Vice President

Natalie Coon, Treasurer

Helen A. Knepper, Secretary

Administration:

Christian W. Dame, Interim Executive Director/CEO

Richard A. Robichaud, Director of Finance &
Administrative Services

The mission of the **Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc.** is

“to encourage and promote the improvement of community life for low-income residents within its service area, to help those in need as they strive to achieve self-sufficiency for themselves and for their families.”

**Visit Our New Website at
www.glcac.org**

A Message from the GLCAC, Inc. Interim Executive Director

November 2011

Greater Lawrence Community Action Council Inc. has been a valuable part of the Greater Lawrence Community for over 45 years. Providing social services and direct financial aid to over 10,000 households a year is an important responsibility. That's why we regard the findings of governance, administrative and leadership failings at GLCAC by our government sponsors with great concern and a determination to put things right.

The Board directed all staff to cooperate fully with the on-going federal government audit of our programs and to immediately begin implementing the changes called for in the Corrective Action Plan negotiated with state officials. I have done so. In the midst of

this challenging assignment, however, we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the state report also stated: "Programs... meet or exceed professional and regulatory standards (and) ...staff appear competent, mission driven, and fully committed..."

We shouldn't let the failings of a few tarnish the hard work of the many.

I am happy to report that the staff of GLCAC is excited about the future and helping me rebuild GLCAC. Together we invite everyone's suggestions about how we can

operate a better non-profit agency and how we can serve the needs of the low-income community more effectively. If you have an idea – I'd love to hear it.

This period of rebuilding will strengthen our programs and services to the individuals and families of Greater Lawrence.

In the meantime thanks for your patience, understanding, and support as we prepare for the future.

Christian W. Dame
GLCAC, Inc. Interim Executive Director