

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Metropolitan Social Services

MSS Newsletter - January-June 2016



Executive Director's Message

In addition to serving people in need who come to the Metro Social Service, the first half of 2016 also included a great deal of work in the community. This newsletter features some of these community events and activities, including the 4th Annual Ride 2 Thrive, the release of the 7th Annual Community Needs Evaluation and the presentation of a new report, Know Your Community that provides data and maps on the characteristics of residents of each of Davidson County's 35 Metro Council Districts.

There were exciting and fun activities during this time, including performances of the Carnival of the Animals by the Nashville Ballet for the participants in the Senior Nutrition Program. There were also challenging situations, such as helping the people who were homeless and had been living in a camp near Ft. Negley before it was closed this spring.

The services provided by MSS are needed in Davidson County as much as ever, as shown in U.S. Census Bureau data described in the Community Needs Assessment. The most recent data from the Census Bureau's American Community is for 2014, with the 2015 data expected to be released in a few months. With more than 129,000 of Davidson County residents living in poverty in 2014, there is a tremendous need for people who cannot meet their basic expenses. While there are more jobs available in Nashville, many of them pay wages so low that people cannot provide for themselves or their families.

In recent years, there have been scientific findings that help explain why people who are living in poverty often experience challenges with making decisions, memory and other cognitive functions. Neuroscience continues to find evidence about how adverse experiences early in life (including living in poverty) can cause damage to the abilities of children that can last throughout their lifetimes. MSS is dedicated to using the best techniques available to serve those who need help the most, particularly families whose younger children are so profoundly affected by the poverty they experience.

Renee Pratt, Executive Director

4th Annual Ride 2 Thrive



Metropolitan Social Services sponsored the [4th Annual Ride 2 Thrive](#) at Cleveland Park on April 9, 2016.

It was attended by families who enjoyed a variety of experiences, such as the Family Fun Zone, Kid's Korner, face painting, free food, door prizes, healthy cooking sessions, music, information and resources.

Special thanks to the partners and vendors who helped make this another successful event: National Black Police Association-Nashville Chapter, Tennessee Bikers Education Association, Metro Department of Parks and Recreation, Piccadilly Restaurants, Save-A-Lot Food Stores, Salvation Army Family Resource Center and CMS Uniforms.



The Status of Davidson County's Poverty

On March 1, MSS Planning & Coordination presented the 7th Annual [Community Needs Evaluation](#) at an event held at Looby Center. MSS Board Chair, Pastor William Harris, and MSS Executive Director, Renee Pratt, welcomed the 200+ participants to the event. Mayor Megan Barry spoke about the importance of providing opportunity to the residents of Davidson County, particularly the youth.

MSS [Planning & Coordination](#) staff members (Abdelghani Barre, Joyce Hillman, Lee Stewart, Julius Witherspoon and Dinah Gregory) completed the 2015 Community Needs Evaluation. There were brief presentations about the findings on Poverty, Aging & Disability, Food & Nutrition, Health & Human Development, Housing & Neighborhoods and Workforce & Economic Opportunity. In addition, Lonnie Wade, Program Manager of MSS Family Services Program, made a presentation about the services provided by MSS. He explained how those services are designed to help people who experience poverty.



A panel of local workforce (Paul Haynes (NCAC), Betty Johnson (Goodwill), Stephanie Harris (Metro Nashville Workforce Development Program @ .ILIMP), Ellen Zinkiewicz (NCAC), Bettie Kirkland (Project

Return) and Ashford Hughes (Mayor Megan Barry's Office) and a consumer discussed an array of issues and challenges related to workforce. Following the presentations, Steven Meinbresse, a member of the MSS Board of Commissioners, facilitated a discussion to invite community participation.

Please take our survey about the Community Needs Evaluation. If you have used the Community Needs Evaluation and have not completed a survey this year, please complete the [short survey](#) to help us improve. Thank you.

"Nashville must unite to fight poverty"



The longest-serving member of the MSS Board of Commissioners is Dr. Frank Boehm (Vanderbilt Medical Center). Dr. Boehm's columns are regularly published in the Tennessean. On January 26, "[Nashville must unite to fight poverty](#)" described the extremely high poverty in the U. S. and the detrimental effects poverty has on those who experience it. He noted that many Nashvillians are not aware that one in five Davidson County residents lives in poverty.

The column stated, "Many of us in Nashville live in a bubble that often prevents us from seeing what is going on with the vulnerable citizens among us. It also keeps us from thinking of ways to help those who are not as fortunate. Because of this, I believe we should take a moment to step outside our bubble and view the world as it really is."

Financial Assistance Coalition Provider Fair

On March 9, the [Financial Assistance Coalition](#) invited local agencies to a Provider Fair designed to help these organizations have a better understanding of the resources that were available to help their customers who have/had financial assistance needs. It was also a way for service provider and their staff to find out, not only what was available, but also to get to know the people who would be working with them or their customers and to learn the criteria and how to access the services that each financial assistance organization provides.



In addition, the fair provided a great way for service providers to meet informally and learn more about other service providers and agencies as well. The fair gave service providers an opportunity to walk around to various organizations tables with questions and suggestions and receive answers and find out any changes. The fair provided service providers with an opportunity to create a log of resources for their customers along with the ways on how to access those services.

United Way of Metropolitan Nashville Campaign Awards

In April, [United Way of Metropolitan Nashville](#) held its Campaign Awards Luncheon. MSS Executive Director, Renee Pratt, representing the Metro Nashville Government received two awards recognizing the positive impact on the community and consistency and campaign excellence.



Thank you to United Way for their work to help people in Davidson County and for these awards to recognize the Metropolitan Government.

Nashville Ballet Performs for Senior Nutrition Program



In May 2016, the [Nashville Ballet](#) presented Carnival of the Animals for groups of participants from the MSS [Senior Nutrition Program](#). The participants gathered at Elizabeth Park Senior Citizen Center for the performances and a nutritious meal. Many thanks to the Nashville Ballet for providing outstanding entertainment for Davidson County's seniors.

Mayor's Youth Intern Program

In 2016, Mayor Megan Barry expanded the [Metro Summer Youth Internship Program](#) to provide learning and employment opportunities to more of Davidson County's anticipated 2017 high school graduates. Interns worked in various Metro Government agencies, after taking employment preparation classes provided through the Nashville Career Advancement Center.



MyKaila Jones, a student at Martin Luther King High School, was assigned to MSS-Planning & Coordination and worked with the program to study and report on issues of unmet need, including [Effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder on Veterans](#). At the end of the June internship program, all interns worked in groups to make presentations about their experiences.

MSS Direct Services Update (January-June 2016)

Senior Nutrition Program – served 174,484 meals to 11,238 seniors, with 269 new customers. Provided 7,487 trips for 919 seniors.

Burial Program – provided 115 burials and 26 cremations.

Homemaker Program – provided 10,415 hours of homemaker and personal care services to 96 customers.

Family Support Program -

- Provided services to 3,251 customers, including 1,848 new customers, with services provided at the main office plus community locations.
- Served 2 customers referred from the Public Defender's Office, 196 families referred by the MNPS HEROS program for homeless families, served 40 former offenders.
- Provided 61 families with financial assistance to meet basic needs.
- Provided 76 food boxes to families. Provided 29 families with food vouchers.
- Provided 1,147 MTA bus passes for customers who were seeking housing and/or employment.
- Placed 116 customers/families in housing.
- Provided referrals for additional community services: 164 to the Financial Empowerment Center, 157 for domestic violence services, 57 to Metropolitan Action Commission for rent and utility assistance (available for homeless families that are securing permanent housing of which 33 were approved).
- Customers served included 40 former offenders, 130 referrals from the Mayor's Office and 2 from Metro Council members.

Know Your Community

On June 28, 2016, Metro Social Services and the Neighborhoods Resource Center hosted an event to present "[Know Your Community.](#)" This publication provides an array of data demonstrating the differences in characteristics across Metro's 35 Council Districts.

Vice Mayor David Bailey was on the program and spoke about the importance of having and using objective data to more effectively identify and address community needs.



MSS New Employees

Amaad Dowdell, MSS Social Worker - Amaad received his B.S. in Social Work from Jacksonville State University and will soon complete his M.S. in Social Work from Southern Adventist University. A native of Opelika, Alabama (and a fan of the Alabama Crimson Tide football team), Amaad has several years of experience in Social Work, including Child Protective Services, residential treatment for adolescents, mental health and elderly services. He enjoys exercise and a variety of activities, including time with his friends and family.

Robert A. Jones, MSS Van Driver - Robert says he is the biggest fan of the Dallas Cowboys in Tennessee! He and his wife, Tonya, have two children - Davin and Dallas. He enjoys spending time at home with his family

Wandria Webb, Social Worker - Wandria and her husband just celebrated their 7th anniversary and are the proud owners of a 10-year old Chihuahua. A native of St. Louis, she received her BSW at TSU and her MSSW at UT-Knoxville, and has been involved with both TCSW and NASW. Wandria has previously worked in child welfare, mental health and vocational rehabilitation.

MSS Retirements

Last year, two long-time MSS employees retired, Pamela McEwen and Patricia Wingfield. Pat worked for the Metro Government more than 40 years, retiring as Program Manager of the Homemaker Services Program. After working at the Metro Finance Department, Pam joined MSS as Chief Financial Officer, a position in which she worked for several years. Both are now enjoying retirement and MSS misses them both.



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