



# Over-the-Rhine Community Housing Fall 2008 Newsletter

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## OUR MISSION

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing is a non-profit organization that works to build and sustain a diverse neighborhood that values and benefits low-income residents.

We focus on developing and managing resident-centered, affordable housing in an effort to promote inclusive community.

## Hurricane Ike Rips Through Over-the-Rhine

As the remnants of Hurricane Ike moved through Cincinnati, most of us were aware of its devastation. Our low-income tenants at 59 East Clifton experienced that devastation first-hand.

On the evening of September 14, 2008, our building at 59 East Clifton lost its entire roof due to the force of the hurricane-like winds. This is a building that went through a major renovation only 8 years ago, with a brand new \$40,000 rubber roof. Despite this relatively new building, the winds were so strong that the roof was separated from the attic and landed on the neighboring building to the west. Thank goodness only the first floor of the neighboring building was occupied. Amazingly, none of the low-income residents in either building were hurt!

However, the lives of the tenant households were significantly disrupted. They were not allowed to re-enter the building due to structural concerns and had to be relocated. Over-the-Rhine Community Housing was able to re-house all but one tenant in nearby properties.

We have installed a giant tarp to cover the building temporarily. Our hope is to hire a

contractor to rebuild the attic walls, roof joists and finally, a new roof, by December 31st.

Our maintenance and property management team provided professional service to the tenants at 59 East Clifton and we intend to preserve this historic building and place it back into the low-income housing market for the benefit of those households barely getting by in today's economy.

Please consider a financial contribution to assist us in rebuilding 59 East Clifton and the lives of its tenants.



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**There is so much happening in our world today.**

There is the crisis in the financial industry, with banks failing and merging, congress issuing multi-billion dollar bailouts, neighborhoods in distress as blocks of homes are foreclosed on, families losing their homes, losing their jobs and a new President elect, Barack Obama, who offers Hope and Change and promises to lead us through. In our community we experience significant change too as blocks are vacated, rehabbed and then re-populated. Schools are closed and torn down. Families disappear. Corner stores close and long time neighbors pass on.



Through all this we know we can provide some stability. We are something that people can count on in uncertain times. We will keep plugging away. We will show up to work every day. We will take applications for apartments and move people into housing. Our maintenance staff will make repairs and ready units for new move-ins. Construction of City Home will continue and construction of the Jimmy Heath House will begin. We will take on management responsibility for North Rhine I and II so that those units can remain in service to our community. We will continue to offer volunteer opportunities and internships. And we will continue to come to you for support because the gap between what people can afford to pay and what it costs to provide housing remains.

More than ever, we need to be here. We need to exist, because while we are grateful for a President who offers hope, we know that the reality of day to day living requires some concreteness – a place to live and a community of people that can be counted on to be there.

*Mary Burke Rivers*  
Executive Director

As banks fail and giant financial institutions relinquish their management, there is no fear of foreclosure here at OTRCH. All of our properties remain in our possession. At our last board retreat I felt particularly proud of the financial decisions made by OTRCH in the past that have resulted in this present state of stability in the current financial storm. Our tenants need not fear the possibility of their buildings being sold out from underneath them or their rents going through the roof.



As the Thanksgiving Holiday approaches, I give thanks for the fact that we exist and are able to provide housing for low income families and those least likely to secure a housing loan in these most tumultuous times. We all await a brighter financial forecast for the country, but we at OTRCH will be alive and well and ready to capitalize on it when it takes place.

*Roger L Auer*  
Board President

**We are grateful to the following organizations that provided major support to us in 2008:**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Cincinnati New Markets Fund                  | Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) of Greater Cincinnati | City of Cincinnati                               |
| Community Shares of Greater Cincinnati       | Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing                               | SC Ministry Foundation                           |
| Drop Inn Center Shelterhouse                 | Ohio Community Development Finance Fund                            | Spirit of America National Bank                  |
| Federal Home Loan Bank of Greater Cincinnati | Ohio Department of Development                                     | U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development |
| Greater Cincinnati Foundation                |  | PNC Bank   |

**2008 OTRCH Board of Directors**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|   | Ken Bordwell, <i>Community Advocate</i>             |
| Roger Auer, <i>Elder High School</i><br>BOARD PRESIDENT                 | Valerie Dowell, <i>Cincinnati Health Network</i>    |
|   | Melissa Currence, <i>Talbert House</i>              |
| Georgia Keith, <i>Cincinnati Public Schools</i><br>BOARD VICE PRESIDENT | India Davis, <i>Spirit of America National Bank</i> |
|   | Nick DiNardo, <i>Legal Aid Society</i>              |
| Jonathan Diskin, <i>Earlham College</i><br>BOARD TREASURER              | Fr. Greg Friedman, <i>St. Francis Seraph</i>        |
|   | Fannie Johnson, <i>Drop Inn Center</i>              |
| Bonnie Neumeier, <i>OTR Advocate</i><br>BOARD SECRETARY                 | Sharon Jones, <i>Internal Revenue Service</i>       |
|   | Bob Pickford, <i>Corporation for Findlay Market</i> |
|   | Simone Sotelo, <i>PNC Bank</i>                      |

**2008 OTRCH Staff and Interns**

- Staff**
- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Mary Burke Rivers, <i>Executive Director</i>              | DaKenya Gunn, <i>Property Manager</i> |
| Andy Hutzel, <i>Director of Operations</i>                | Betty Lyles, <i>Receptionist</i>      |
| Ken Weartz, <i>Finance Director</i>                       | Tony Morgan, <i>Maintenance</i>       |
| Sarah Allan, <i>Project Manager</i>                       | Ron Dixon, <i>Maintenance</i>         |
| Marianne Lawrence, <i>Director of Property Management</i> | Terry Nunn, <i>Maintenance</i>        |
| Charles Perkins, <i>Maintenance Director</i>              | Maurice Wagoner, <i>Maintenance</i>   |
| Denise Crew, <i>Property Manager</i>                      | Harper Andrews, <i>Maintenance</i>    |
|   | Josh Spring, <i>Resident Services</i> |
- Interns and VISTA Members**
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Bill Haigh, <i>Volunteer Coordinator (VISTA)</i> | Rob Goeller, <i>Xavier University</i>    |
| Erika Hinshaw, <i>University of Cincinnati</i>   | Kathy Kelleman, <i>Xavier University</i> |
| Kelsey Clark, <i>University of Cincinnati</i>    | Lisa Dayringer, <i>Miami University</i>  |
| Fanni Johnson, <i>University of Cincinnati</i>   |  |

# Community Development



## Meet Our Newest Board Member

**Valerie Dowell** was voted on as a resident member of OTRCH's Board of Trustees in August.

Valerie is a resident of Sharp Village Annex and lives with her 15 year old daughter on East Clifton Ave. She grew up in the West End until the age of 10 when her grandparents bought a farm and moved to Blanchester. Valerie returned to the city when she turned 18. She has always liked Over-the-Rhine for its convenience and proximity to Findlay Market and downtown. In her previous role as Advocate at the Drop Inn Center, Valerie learned about Over-the-Rhine Community Housing.

Valerie loves her apartment and where she lives. "Believe it or not, I love the neighborhood. Everybody watches out for everybody. We are working on relationships on East Clifton. I'm watching that develop." Valerie now works full time for Health Care for the Homeless and attends Chatfield College where she is working on a degree in Social Work and Counseling.

## OTR will get a newly renovated Rothenberg Elementary School!

We are making progress! The old Rothenberg Elementary School, currently vacant at the corner of East Clifton and Main in OTR, will be renovated and will re-open in 2011! Plans are underway for the new design and curriculum programming.

Over-the-Rhine for Education in Public Schools (OTREPS) is the neighborhood group taking the lead in our neighborhood efforts at Rothenberg. OTREPS is a group that consists of parents, community members, teachers, school staff and volunteers. OTRCH is one of the group's sponsors, along with Contact Center and Peaslee Neighborhood Center.



*Students and residents work to improve the Rothenberg playground*

Recently, in response to a school-wide and community survey, OTREPS put a lot of work into upgrading the playground at the current, temporary location of Rothenberg on Vine Street. We painted a football field and four square games, and a kick-ball field was added. Flowers were planted and trash was picked up. The upgrade was accomplished by parents, children, community members, teachers, school staff and other volunteers. The energy at this event was great.

OTREPS is working on planning events in which parents and teachers can exchange ideas and take action together to take pride in our kids! The entire community is excited to see the preservation of the historic Rothenberg School, and more importantly, the building of a community learning center to the benefit of all of Over-the-Rhine.

## ArtWorks Mural



*In just six weeks over the 2008 summer, ArtWorks and its teenage "Apprentice Artists" completed their largest mural in the city, 86 feet wide and 40 feet tall! It is located at 1519 Vine Street and resulted from a partnership between ArtWorks, Joseph House, and Over-the-Rhine Community Housing.*

# Volunteer Update



Betty Lyles, Sarah Allan, DaKenya Gunn, Denise Crew, Marianne Lawrence, Georgia Keith, Bonnie Neumeier, and Milton Keith.

## Woman of the Year Georgia Keith

Congratulations to board member and resident Georgia Keith! Georgia was one of 9 women honored at *Emanuel Community Center's 4th Annual "Women of Over-the-Rhine" luncheon*. This award celebrates women of diverse backgrounds who have succeeded in spite of the odds and have contributed to the betterment of Over-the-Rhine. Georgia was recognized for her work at Cincinnati Public Schools and for her work to beautify Republic Street.

## The Urban Plunge Experience

This past spring, OTRCH partnered with the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless in providing week long urban experiences to four collegiate groups from around the east coast and Midwest. Groups like those from the *University of Vermont* and the *University of Pennsylvania* lived for the week in OTRCH housing. They worked with neighborhood agencies and food pantries, all the while educating themselves on the issues of homelessness, hunger, and affordable housing. Helping facilitate "urban plunge" experiences is nothing new for OTRCH. We are pleased to see these most recent efforts further the scope of opportunities for youth to make a difference.

## Great American Cleanup Day



Volunteers at the Great American Cleanup Day!



Volunteers build a deck for a resident



Volunteers paint a resident's apartment

# Volunteer Update

## Miami Students Write and Reflect

Twelve students from Miami University are living with OTRCH as part of this year's Over-the-Rhine Residency Program. As part of the program, students participate in a weekly journaling class.

Students Beth Calvelage and Sylvia Piszczor share their thoughts about the class:

Many things happen in OTR that are new or different from what we Miami students have experienced in our hometowns or on campus. Moving to this neighborhood for a short time has changed many of our perspectives, and having an outlet to reflect on the things we experience has been very valuable to us. Weekly journaling with Bonnie Neumeier and the entire group of Miami students allows us to focus on our changing feelings about this neighborhood and the issues it faces, as well as hearing what our housemates are experiencing.

Bonnie creates an open, ritualistic environment for the journaling sessions, and for that short period of time nothing else in our busy lives matters; we can all just write what we are feeling and going through. The habit of journaling is something for most of us that would not have developed if Bonnie had not pushed us to try it in the beginning of our time here. It was a struggle at first to open up and speak about the thoughts we have, but sharing our feelings with each other about common experiences has made our group grow closer and this semester more meaningful.



Students of Miami University's Over-the-Rhine Residency Program

Looking back on previous journal entries, a transformation can be seen throughout the semester. Excitement, happiness, fear, anger, and sadness are present in each of our journals, and having these pages to look back on will be priceless to us as we make our transition back to the lives we have always known at the end of our time here. Our journals contain information about this neighborhood that we cannot capture in photographs; they speak more than an image ever could about our growth. On behalf of all of the Miami students, we would like to thank Bonnie for facilitating an outlet for reflecting on our experiences, and the entire community for welcoming us into their home.

## Mike Moroski: Volunteer of the Year

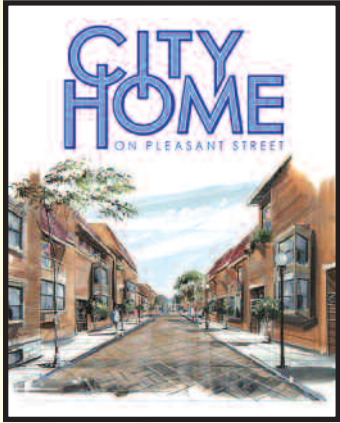
Named in honor of former resident, Board Vice President, and dedicated block club leader, Mary Johnson, the 2008 OTRCH Volunteer of the Year Award was given to Mike Moroski. Mike is a Moeller High School teacher and longtime youth service coordinator, organizing Moeller Advocates for Community Housing (MACH 1).

In 2007, Mike and Moeller volunteers completed the rehab of the first floor apartment at 1404 Republic Street. In early 2008, they renovated and opened Choices Café at 1506 Elm Street. Most recently, Mike and Moeller have partnered with Elder High School, working together to rehab the building at 1423 Republic, the "ELMOE" project. Congratulations Mike!



Mike Moroski with his parents, Dan and LaWana.

# Projects



## City Home

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing moves into homeownership with the opening of City Home, a 22-unit mixed-income development that includes community gardens, new streetscapes, renovated condos and newly constructed single-family town homes - the first to be built in Over-the-Rhine in decades. It is located on Pleasant Street, within walking distance of Music Hall, Findlay Market and the downtown central business district!

City Home is developed by Over-the-Rhine Community Housing Eber Development, Schickel Design, and the Cincinnati New Markets Fund. The first phase will be completed in February 2009 and the second phase in March 2010.

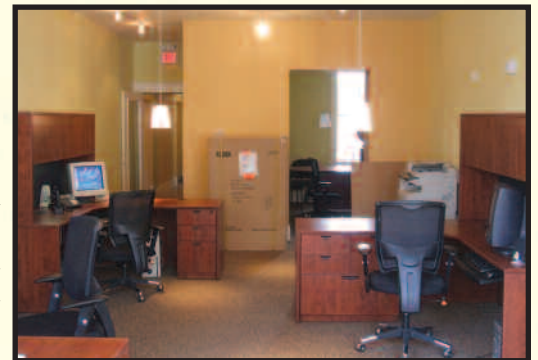
For more information please go to [www.gatewayquarter.com](http://www.gatewayquarter.com) or call Holly Redmond, HUFF REALTY (513) 479-0413.

## Cornerstone is Moving to Vine and Green Street

Cornerstone Corporation for Shared Equity & Community Loan Fund (Cornerstone) has relocated its offices to Over-the-Rhine Community Housing's storefront at 1639 Vine Street.

In light of its success, Cornerstone was in need of a larger office and community gathering space. OTRCH had a storefront available in the Community Views development at 1639 Vine that suited their needs. The only hitch was that it needed total renovation. Miami University's Design/Build Studio prepared a concept plan that included a communal kitchen, office space, meeting space, and a computer lab. The Ohio Community Development Finance Fund provided \$40,000 for furnishing and equipment through a grant to OTRCH. Cornerstone has managed the \$110,000

renovation by utilizing its construction training and employment program. The space opened in October 2008 and it will benefit the entire community. Thanks and congratulations to Margie, Carol, and the rest of the team at Cornerstone!



*The newly renovated offices of Cornerstone at 1639 Vine Street*

## Students Renovate Vacant Building

The "ELMOE" House is a joint project of Elder and Moeller High Schools. The schools have come together to renovate OTRCH's building at 1423 Republic into a first-time homeownership opportunity for a low-income resident.

Roger Auer of Elder and Mike Moroski of Moeller developed the idea and their students have been working hard with local architect John Blake and master volunteer and builder Bob Knueven to create a house that is both affordable and beautiful.

The project will be a complete renovation, with students and faculty starting with a structurally sound building that is over 100 years old. When the building is complete, it will consist of both a four-bedroom townhouse and a one-bedroom apartment. Because of the students' labor and

many of the materials being donated, the overall price of the home is able to be kept affordable for a qualified homebuyer.

Scheduled completion date of the ELMOE House is Fall of 2009.



*Elder and Moeller students and faculty with residents Mike Rogers and Georgia Keith*

# Projects



## Nannie Hinkston House

The Nannie Hinkston House, located at 45 E. McMicken, was completed in March 2008 with funding from the City of Cincinnati. It consists of 12 newly remodeled units for those in transition from homelessness to permanent housing. The Drop Inn Center provides a full-time social worker to help the residents in their transition. The Model Group/CFS served as the General Contractor.

The Civic Garden Center has reinvigorated its garden next door, and the hope is that some of the Nannie Hinkston residents will get involved next year. OTRCH also worked with the surrounding neighbors to create a "Good Neighbor Agreement" to maintain open and meaningful communication with our new neighbors.

## Jimmy Heath House

OTR Community Housing is proud to introduce an exciting new housing development called The Jimmy Heath House, a permanent supportive housing project, which will serve as a permanent solution to help end our community's chronic homelessness problem.

The Jimmy Heath House is a comprehensive, 25-unit development that revitalizes 6 historic, vacant buildings, further stabilizes the community, reduces the utilization of emergency services, and most importantly, houses the long-term homeless. It is well documented that housing of this type is cost effective and successful at improving the quality of life for people who have experienced long-term homelessness.

It is another important piece to Over-the-Rhine's rebirth as a diverse and inclusive community that offers a range of housing options which benefit existing residents and welcomes new residents at all income levels.



## Going Green

A new committee was formed at OTRCH that focuses on energy saving measures for our buildings and residents. The committee is chaired by former maintenance director Jim Luken. Jim is very enthusiastic about saving energy. He not only volunteered to chair this effort but he also volunteered to implement many of the improvements. Some of the changes we will make include using only the most energy efficient lighting in common areas, conducting energy audits of our buildings, implementing more preventative maintenance measures of building systems, hosting energy saving forums for residents, installing low-flow shower heads, and investigating the possibility of geothermal systems in several buildings. We are excited about this new effort and look forward to saving energy and resources!

## Second Annual Fundraiser, "Celebrating Our Beloved Community"

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing hosted our second annual fundraiser, "Celebrating Our Beloved Community" on October 16th in the Ballroom at Cincinnati's Music Hall. Jennell Walton, from Channel 9, served as the evenings emcee and, Dan Hurley, of Leadership Cincinnati, was the keynote speaker.

Over 200 guests enjoyed Dan's talk, "It's about People: The History and Future of Over-the-Rhine." Dan's presentation was consistent with our belief that Over-the-Rhine can be a healthy and diverse community.

Thanks to everyone who came out and made the event a success! Please contact Mary Burke Rivers if you are interested in helping with next year's event.



*From left to right:  
Andy Hutzel, Bonnie Neumeier,  
Rea Waldon, Dan Hurley,  
Jennell Walton, Mary Burke Rivers,  
India Davis*

Donate to OTRCH by sending monetary contributions directly to our office or online ([www.otrch.org](http://www.otrch.org)) through PledgeConnect. We are a 501(c)3 organization, so your contributions are tax deductible.



As a member of Community Shares of Greater Cincinnati, you can donate to Over-the-Rhine Community Housing at your workplace. If there is no Community Shares campaign at your workplace, call Chris at 513-475-0475 to learn how to start one.



**114 West 14th Street  
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[www.otrch.org](http://www.otrch.org)



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