

ROSS COMMUNITY CENTER

Quarterly Organization Newsletter



Mission and Vision

Our mission is to build community by providing and promoting programs, services, and activities to advance education, lifelong learning, health, and wellness in our diverse community.

Our vision is a community center that provides unique and diverse learning, wellness, and athletic programs in a safe environment where people can develop life skills, grow, and experience success.

IN THIS ISSUE

MISSION AND VISION

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

UPDATES AND RECENT EVENTS

EVENT SPOTLIGHT



Letter from the Executive Director

It is my great pleasure to present our latest newsletter. It has been quite some time since we last published a newsletter, and so much has happened in this interim. Like everyone else in the world, we have lived through the pandemic and have had to adapt to new ways of living and of serving our community. We have learned a lot over the last two years and have strived to become a better organization. We continue to carve our path as we work hand in hand with people of all ages to achieve our mission of building community as we advance education, lifelong learning, health, and wellness. It brings me great joy to be here at our center every day as we move smoothly from one program and activity to another.

In our early childhood programs, I cherish seeing the little ones ages one to three working on their developmental skills and enjoying early childhood music education. I love being with the children in our afterschool program as they engage in science, art, math, creative reading, project-based learning, and learning to play the viola and cello, their inquisitive minds creating new paths of knowledge for them every day. I enjoy experiencing the flow of languages and the harmonious bantering of adults and children learning Spanish and adult immigrant community friends learning English. I enjoy seeing our Sensei and judo students practicing with each other and our basketball players having fun together, throwing off the worries of the day. I take great pleasure in engaging with our community friends at our weekly free community market. There is so much happening every day!

I am honored to lead this wonderful center as we continue to grow, and I invite you to accompany us on this journey. Come visit us anytime!

In Friendship,

Jacquie

UPDATES AND RECENT EVENTS

We had a wonderful Summer with programming that included English as a Second Language classes, Science, Art, Sewing, Mini Master Gardeners, PBS Kids, Futsal, Judo, Youth Symphony Orchestras Strings Camp, and more. This Fall, together with our usual yearlong programs, we now have Spanish classes for beginning and intermediate students.

We are happy to welcome Christina Dunsmore as our new Community Outreach Coordinator, Amanda Ferguson as our new Social Work Program Assistant, and Joe Castillo, a new Open Door Neighborhood Ambassador who is at our center twice a week connecting individuals to resources including food stamp and health insurance enrolment, utility assistance, housing, safety, health, and wellness.

EVENT SPOTLIGHT: KATA CLINIC

On August 20, we had the pleasure of hosting a Judo Kata Clinic here at our center, led by Sensei Eiko Shepherd, an 8th degree black belt and the highest-ranking female judoka in the world. Through practicing Kata, students of judo learn the principles of techniques of this wonderful martial art. Judoka from all over the state came to the clinic to learn from Sensei Shepherd, who graciously spent the day teaching them. She is an amazing woman who is dedicated to teaching Judo, and especially Kata, around the world and we were honored to have her with us once again. She has already offered to do another clinic with us next year and we are looking forward to it! The Ross Community Center Judo Academy is led by Sensei John Hampton, a 7th degree black belt, and classes are held on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. for youth and adults.



Friends Helping Friends Through Challenging Times

by *Jacqueline Hanoman*

It was the end of another long Friday afternoon at our free community market as we gave out the last cauliflower, cucumbers, and jalapeños we had displayed on the tables. We had had a good selection of vegetables and fruit that afternoon, thanks to our partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank and the Muncie Food Hub. We had been able to purchase grapes, strawberries, apple pears, potatoes, cauliflower, cabbages, and lettuce from Second Harvest, and the Muncie Food Hub had donated tomatoes, okra, zucchini, yellow squash, tomatoes, banana peppers and jalapeños. Every Friday, we set out fruit, vegetables, hygiene products, diapers, books and more to complement the boxes of food staples that we give out in boxes. These boxes would generally have some meat (beef, pork, chicken, or turkey), pasta or rice, cereal, sauce, canned beans, other packaged foods, frozen dinners, bread, pastries, and cakes, depending on what we were able to purchase that week. We would often have milk, yogurt, and juice, and sometimes eggs and fish. These last we would have in a cooler outside, and ask people which of these they would like, just as we do with the fruit and vegetables.

For us, it is important for our community friends to be able to choose what they would like, and what they do not. Spending those few minutes sharing with them what we have to offer also gives us an opportunity to engage with them, learn a little about their lives, crack jokes, share recipes, and make a painful situation for them a little lighter, albeit temporarily.

Being in a line to get food at a food pantry, whether you are standing or waiting in your car, does a lot to bruise a person's dignity. Realizing that you need help to get food, that you can no longer afford to feed yourself and your family on your income, is very depressing. This is why we strive to make our Friday weekly food sharing more than a pantry. We call it our free community market, for at a market, people ideally come together to engage with each other, to buy and sell from each other, and to spend time together, on a more equitable basis. While we do not sell at our market, and no one buys anything, our objective from the moment we conceptualized the market in 2019, was to create the spirit of sharing, of engaging with each other, of building community together, as we walk hand in hand with our community friends to confront some of the challenges of food insecurity.

A weekly market with limited amounts of food cannot resolve food insecurity, as food insecurity is a structural societal issue of a multidimensional nature. The food and other essential items we share with our community friends are really only a Band Aid. What really makes a difference is how we engage with them.

This particular Friday, after we gave out the last vegetables and remaining box, we had nothing else on the tables and were ready to call it a day. It had been a long afternoon, standing in the hot sun as we greeted each person who came and shared what we had. As we were cleaning off the tables, a nice silver car drove up. A well dressed man who seemed to be in his forties came out of the car and gently asked us if there was any food left. He said that he had been waiting for the line to end, as there were people who needed food more than he did. We could see he was quite embarrassed. We told him that we had given out the last box and vegetables but would see what we could give him. Two of us went inside to see what we had in the freezer, fridge, and cupboard as sometimes we would put aside some food to supplement the boxes for the following week, while the others chatted with him. When he saw that we were willing to help him in any way we could, he burst into tears in embarrassment and gratitude, and told us that he was very embarrassed to have to come to ask for food, but he had lost his job and had not yet found another. He shared with us that he had resorted to often hiding his car, because people would see his nice car and call him a liar about needing help. We explained to our new community friend that we are here to help in any way we can, because our market is not charity; it is friends helping friends through challenging times. This is why we are here and continue to walk hand in hand with our community friends, sharing resources. This is the spirit of the Ross Community Center weekly free community market.





ROSS
COMMUNITY
CENTER

Upcoming Events

We host our weekly free community market every Friday from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

On October 31st, 2022, from 5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. we will host our Trunk or Treat in partnership with Avondale Methodist Church, Dialogue Church and the 8Twelve Coalition to celebrate Halloween. Cars filled with goodies, community friends in costumes and a Halloween Ball under our pavilion will complete this fun filled evening!

On December 17 from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., we will host our annual Community Christmas Party and Bazaar, the first since the pandemic began.

Donors and Funders

We thank our wonderful donors whose generous donations keep us going through the year. As a community center that depends in great part on grants and donations, we deeply appreciate their generosity.

The main part of our funding comes from grants. We thank our generous funders for the grants they have awarded us. Our main funders are: the Ball Brothers Foundation; the George and Frances Ball Foundation; Indiana University Health Foundation; Ball Memorial Hospital Foundation; the Sherman and Marjorie Zeigler Foundation; the Community Foundation of Muncie and Delaware County; the City of Muncie; and the State of Indiana.

Accepting Donations

The Ross Community Center is delighted to accept donations that contribute to the wellbeing of our community members. The donations we need the most are: hygiene products (sanitary napkins, soap, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes and toothpaste; laundry detergent); food staples (pasta, pasta sauce, rice, canned beans, meats and fish, mac and cheese, peanut butter, cereal, milk and eggs); and warm clothing for winter (coats, scarves, hats, gloves, and socks)