

The Joys of Summer – NCDF Youth Program Re-Opens



The NCDF Youth Program opened for the Summer on Monday, June 28, 2021 at Houghton Village after a long, unexpected hiatus. The drop-in program was held outdoors from 11am to 4pm every weekday except Wednesday through August 23rd. Twenty elementary and middle school age residents from three NCDF communities participated. While the group of 12 to 15 participants varied somewhat from day to day, Wesley Wood, a devoted and enthusiastic youngster from Weeks House, rarely missed a day. “I really like it because it’s not like school and we play all day. I’m glad that it’s super close to my house and that my new friends are so nice to me.” Participant Adonay Efrem also commented: “It’s fun. It helps kids learn more and be competitive. My friends come to the Youth Program and everyone becomes happier.”

Youth Program Coordinator India Arnold assembled a group of summer staff to provide a wide range of fun activities and to insure health and safety. Zacch Bresilla, who lives at Weeks House and just graduated from college, returned this summer as Program Assistant. In addition, two interns helped out. Sephora Beauvoir and Chelize Foster (photo at left center, left to right: Sephora, India and Chelize), former Youth Program participants that are now in high school, took part in the Summer High School Internship Program offered by the City of Newton. India met in the Spring with Assistant Director of Youth Services Meghan Murtagh and identified two teens as good candidates for the program. Before placement, all participants went through an orientation and attended weekly skill-building workshops and presentations throughout the internship. Sephora and Chelize assisted India for five weeks and were paid a stipend by the City of Newton. India encouraged the girls to lead games and activities on their own, giving them leeway to take charge and hone their leadership skills.

Since the virus is still a limiting factor, India invited a number of people from the greater Newton community to visit Houghton Village and offer onsite programs and activities. The City of Newton has been a major partner this summer, sponsoring a number of activities. The kids really enjoyed three visits with Abby Lass from the Newton Theatre Company, which established a scholarship fund through a grant from The Village Bank to allow teachers like Abby to visit youth in the community. She led them in games to read body movements and facial expressions, and taught them about improv, the art of making things up



The Summer Youth Program kicked off with “Popsicles on the Patio,” an evening event at Houghton Village on June 24th. Residents of all NCDF properties were invited to stop by to celebrate the start of summer and reconnect with their neighbors. One little guy is faced with a dilemma: how to enjoy a popsicle while wearing a mask.



NCDF

Newton Community Development Foundation, Inc. was founded in 1968 by priests, ministers and rabbis from the Newton Clergy Association and Church Women United Organization to meet the community's need for affordable housing. NCDF works vigorously to provide reasonably priced housing in Newton, currently owning and managing six properties that house hundreds of low and moderate-income residents, many of whom are elderly. NCDF also manages several other properties owned by other organizations. Although NCDF receives local, state and federal funding, it relies a great deal on contributions from individuals, foundations, corporations and local businesses.

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From Executive Director Jeanne Strickland

As I write this, the Annual Meeting of NCDF's Board of Directors has just taken place on September 21st via Zoom video conference. It is remarkable how accustomed we have become to meeting this way over the past year and a half!

The annual meeting is a time to reflect on our accomplishments over the last 12 months and our plans for the coming year. We are sincerely grateful for the dedication, time, energy and support of our Board, a driving force in the work that we do. For almost three decades, I have been working with Board President Bob Engler, as well as other members, many of whom have been serving NCDF for over 25 years. The Executive Committee has served as mentors not only to me, but also to our staff.

Over the years, we have learned that, indeed, it takes a village – but not just to raise children. Our “village” is full of dedicated, community minded citizens, working together to make life work. Our outstanding staff has worked tirelessly to insure continued programming and services for all residents and access to funding support for those in need. The magnitude of achievements has been absolutely incredible. Our residents have held up their end of the village, remaining current with rents, adhering to COVID-safe protocols and looking out for one another. We have boundless appreciation for the emergency relief funding and community support NCDF has received during the past 18 months.

This summer, we were able to return to a degree of normalcy, and were extremely pleased to see our residents once again enjoying in-person programming. Our Summer Youth Program was a great success, in partnership with the city and a group of committed volunteers who provided a myriad of activities. MassHousing's Asset Management Reviews resumed in person, affirming how effectively NCDF has maintained compliance at the property level and met its goals for long-term viability. At the end of September we will complete our first REAC (Real Estate Assessment Center) inspection at Houghton Village since re-financing. The 2022 budget preparations are underway, and the Warren House elevator replacement project has just begun.

It is with great hope and anticipation that we have scheduled NCDF's Annual Salute to Service Community Event for June 2022, which will be held at Weeks House. Although still cautiously making our way through very trying times, we see a light at the end of the tunnel and remain optimistic and steadfast in our belief in a silver lining. #NCDFCARES and together we will prevail!



Two Leadership Team Members Step Down

Our sincere appreciation goes out to two NCDF board members for their dedicated service. Their close involvement and singular perspectives will be sorely missed!

Carol Ann Shea joined the NCDF Board in 1996, and ultimately became a member of our Advisory Committee. Her career as a Real Estate broker and concern about lack of affordability gave her a natural interest in the housing market. She headed up our annual Community Event Committee for several years. Carol Ann grew up in Rochester, NY, and majored in political science at the University of Pennsylvania. After moving to Newton, she was elected and served ten years on Newton's Board of Aldermen. She has two grown children, Daniel and Amanda, and several grandchildren.

Weeks House resident Phyllis Chait has served on the NCDF Board since 2006, joining as a tenant representative. She has been an active volunteer and enthusiastic program participant. Born and raised in Watertown, Phyllis married and raised three children. Earning a BS and Master's degree in Education from Bridgewater State College, she began her career as a teacher. She earned a second Master's in Counseling and Guidance, and worked as a Psychologist/Counselor in Miami, FL, and returning to Massachusetts, she held positions at MetroWest Medical Center in Natick and Waltham Hospital.

Touchtown Comes to NCDF

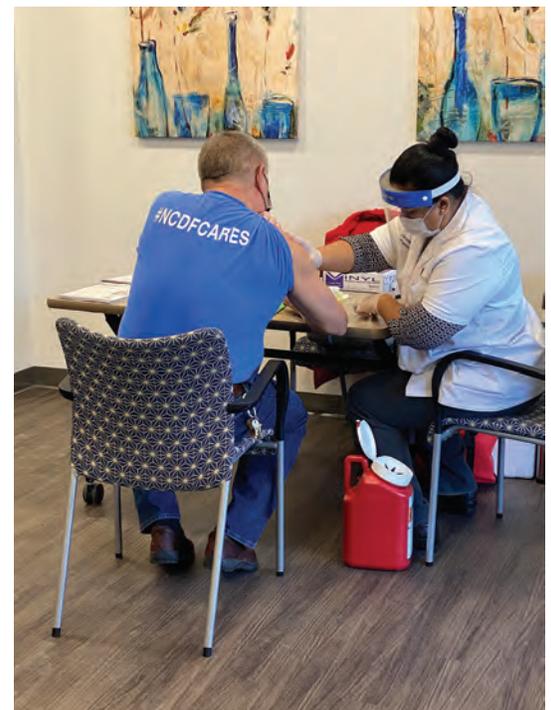
Recognizing a critical need to develop new ways of program delivery and to improve communication during the COVID-19 stay-at-home mandate, NCDF applied for and received CDBG Supplemental CARES Act Funds in 2020 to purchase Touchtown. This community engagement platform, now installed in Casselman and Weeks Houses, connects and informs residents via a designated television channel, enabling staff to deliver monthly calendars, memos and notifications specific to each property from our main office. Currently, residents with Comcast cable service are also able to receive in-



home transmission via their own TVs, and eventually we hope to livestream community events, classes, movies and YouTube videos directly into all apartments. Wall-mounted 50-inch televisions in the lobbies of both Casselman and Weeks Houses now display digital signage to inform residents and visitors about daily program highlights, important building information and reminders, and news/weather updates. The system also enhances disaster preparedness for all shelter-at-home situations, extreme weather and other hazardous conditions. While not interactive, the benefits of Touchtown reach beyond the present crisis, providing an advantageous way for staff to connect with residents.

Vaccine Clinics Held at Casselman House and Weeks House

In keeping with our #NCDFCARES precept and our efforts to insure the health and wellbeing of our seniors, NCDF Resident Services Director Marissa Wheeler secured the necessary arrangements to hold vaccination clinics on site at our two senior communities. The staff assessed our residents' interest in receiving the COVID-19 vaccination, entered the information into a large database, and set up dates for several vaccine clinics. Walgreens, under the auspices of the Federal Pharmacy Partnership program, held clinics at Casselman House on February 11th and March 4th. The Newton Health and Human Services Dept. provided vaccinations at Weeks House on March 9th and April 6th. Approximately 90% of the combined populations (130 residents) of the two properties received the vaccine at one of these locations, as did the majority of NCDF staff. Offering these clinics would not have been possible without the support and guidance of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Walgreens Pharmacy, the City of Newton Health and Human Services Department and our conscientious NCDF staff, working together to improve vaccine access for the underserved and high-risk populations of the Newton community.



Hope Springs Eternal: Cautiously Re-emerging



Above left: Judy Spar's Short Story Group heralded the gradual return to in-person programs, meeting in the Weeks House Community Room.



Above right: Casselman House residents enjoy a popular monthly canvas painting class in June.

At right: Marissa Wheeler leads a Weeks House Community Meeting in June, held outdoors and in-person!

Below: Weeks House residents Marilyn Mallock and Roz Komins attend the meeting.



At right: the NCDF staff enjoyed a day-long retreat at Ocean Edge Resort in Brewster on July 13, 2021, taking a step back from day-to-day work to reflect on the challenges of the past year and plan for the road that lies ahead.

*Front row, kneeling: Yessica Rodriguez, Marissa Wheeler, Dina Troiani, India Arnold.
Middle row: Shawn Elliott, Ellie Namvar, Joanne Fuentes, Miguel Saez, Mario Fernandez.
Back row: Wilfrido Pimental, Eddie Wegielewski, Alex Salazar, Donna Whalen, Jeanne Strickland, Mark Brown, Dave McMahon.*



Youth Program Re-Opens (continued from page 1)



on the spot. On July 12, 15 and 19, ACME Teamwork held a series of team building games and activities that promote leadership and teach ways to deal with bullying. The youngsters also enjoyed visits from the Newton Police and Fire Departments.

Outdoor games and activities, which took place at Bowen Elementary School's upper fields, included dodge ball and Capture the Flag. NCDF Board member Judy Spar's grandsons Kyler and Ellis volunteered, holding basketball and soccer programs in August. The kids spent rainy days inside the Community Center doing art projects and other indoor activities. Our Summer Youth Program took advantage of the City of Newton's Grab & Go Food Program for the first time, allowing us to provide lunches at no cost. Resident Services coordinated with the City's Social Services Department to set aside meals, which were graciously picked up at Newton North High School three days a week by Board members Sandy Kelly, Judy Spar and Susan Paley. Grab & Go, which was created in response to food

insecurity in the Newton community during the COVID-19 pandemic, is available to all residents.

India Arnold described the best aspect of the Summer Youth Program: "It's really fun to be with the kids again. They really enjoy being outdoors and have such an exuberance and willingness to let loose and play together."





#bestsummerever!

Your Gift Is Important!

NCDF continues to seek new ways for uninterrupted service to our community. Please consider a gift to support this work. There are several ways to give:

- Return your gift in the remittance envelope inserted in this newsletter.
- Make a contribution via the NCDF website: <https://www.ncdfinc.org/donate/>
- Respond to the 2021 Annual Appeal letter, to be mailed in late October.
- Visit AmazonSmile, where Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. Shop NCDF's page: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/04-2453465>
- Consider NCDF in your estate planning. If you have already done so, please let us know, as we would like to express our appreciation.

The NCDF community sincerely appreciates the kind assistance and support of the following individuals and organizations during the pandemic:

- Automatic Laundry
- Bowen Elementary School
- Chinese American Association of Newton (CAAN)
- City of Newton Human Services Program: FY20 CDBG Supplemental Funding, CARES Act
- The Computer Loft
- Beth Cronin's Class at Newton North High School
- Food to Your Table
- Indulge!
- Johnny's Luncheonette
- MassHousing
- Newton Food Pantry
- Abbie and Hannah Seeley
- West Suburban YMCA

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