

BELOVED COMMUNITY NEWS

Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative (GBCI) at Asbury Methodist Village (AMV)

What is GBCI?

The Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative (GBCI) is a nonprofit founded by Asbury Methodist Village (AMV) residents that nurtures intergenerational relationships and promotes social justice through programs with youth, families, and older adults in the city of Gaithersburg. GBCI's goal is to realize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of a "Beloved Community," where individuals from diverse backgrounds can have equal opportunities to live healthy, fulfilling lives. Our volunteer-led programs cover early education literacy and art programs, mentorship, English conversation classes, and more. Together, we collaborate with residents at Asbury, community partners, and passionate individuals in Gaithersburg to create better outcomes for marginalized communities. GBCI's offices are located at Asbury Methodist Village.



Above Photo: A student and a GBCI volunteer Nancy McCormick Pickett enjoy creating an art project at GBCI's 4th Annual Community Day.

"Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."
— Henry Ford

A Day to Remember: GBCI's 4th Annual Community Day

Written by: Constance Teage

On Saturday, September 19th, the Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative joined Asbury Methodist Village for a celebration that was everything a community day should be. Community Day is GBCI's annual celebration that brings generations together- students, families, Asbury residents, and neighbors from across Gaithersburg- to connect, have fun, and build community side by side. Under a beautiful blue sky,



Above Photo: Students, their parents, and GBCI Volunteers enjoying a game of Bingo.

195 neighbors, families, and friends from across Gaithersburg and Montgomery County gathered at the Village Event Tent for the 4th Annual GBCI Community Day, held in collaboration with Asbury Methodist

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Village as part of their 100th Anniversary Celebration. It was a day filled with joy, laughter, food, and the kind of genuine connection across the generations that reminds us of what it truly means to be in a Beloved Community.

From the moment the first families arrived, the energy was electric. Children lined up for face and hand painting while families tested their skills at cornhole, giant Jenga, Connect Four, and giant Tic-Tac-Toe. Nature BINGO drew curious minds of all ages, and the arts and crafts tables were alive with creativity, from stone painting to clay projects led by resident volunteers Rodney Warren, Liz Luck, and Christine Luckman. Adults and children alike joined the nature scavenger hunt, exploring together along the lake and discovering the beauty right outside their door. Jump rope competitions kept the laughter going all morning, and music and celebration filled the air from start to finish.



Above Photo: Two high school volunteers have fun at one of the stations during the 4th Annual Community Day celebration.

At midday, the community gathered under the tent for a lunch that reflected the beautiful diversity of Gaithersburg, featuring Jamaican patties from Island Pride, pupusas from La Frontera, tea sandwiches from Asbury's catering team, fresh fruit, and more. Every table was full of conversation and new connections being made.

A short and heartfelt Community Day Celebration Ceremony marked both Asbury's centennial milestone and GBCI's fifteen years of building Beloved Community in Gaithersburg. It was a moment to pause, reflect, and celebrate just how far this community has come and how much more we can build together.

The afternoon closed with a spirited Hula Hoop Contest, musical chairs with the children, Community Zumba that had everyone on their feet and moving, and a raffle that sent neighbors home with smiles and gifts. Raffle prizes generously donated by local businesses, including a ukulele from Victor Litz Music Center and cupcakes from Lil' Cakes and Creamery, added even more excitement to the afternoon.

This event would not have been possible without the generous partnership of Asbury Methodist Village. Throughout the afternoon, Dorothy Mbori, Asbury's Director of Communications, moved through the crowd with her camera, beautifully capturing the day's joy and connection. Thank you to the New Neighbor Interfaith Alliance, who helped promote the event with their network of families and volunteers. A heartfelt thank you also goes to our incredible team of student and adult volunteers, who brought so much energy and enthusiasm; our resident arts and crafts leaders; photographer Gary Clark; and every single neighbor who showed up, participated, and made this day what it was.

We are deeply grateful, and we are already looking forward to next year.

GBCI's FACES OF SERVICE

THANK YOU!

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Above Photo: Sylvana assisting two Early Steps Students with a hands-on activity.

Sylvana Rinehart: Early Steps Lead Volunteer

Some people take time to settle into a new community. Sylvana Rinehart jumped right in. Shortly after moving to Asbury Methodist Village in the fall of 2024, she joined GBCI's Early Steps program, and she has been a pillar of it ever since.

Her road to Gaithersburg was anything but ordinary. Born in Rio de Janeiro to a Dutch ambassador and a French mother, Sylvana grew up in Portugal and Australia, lived in Myanmar, and spent thirty years on the West Coast before returning to Maryland.

Along the way, she taught high school Spanish and English as a Second Language, then built a career in senior living, ending as an advisor helping seniors and their families with residential care decisions.

Early Steps offered something new. "Having spent so much of my career working with older adults, stepping into a space with young children was a refreshing and welcome new chapter for me," she says. When fellow volunteer Pat Johnson learned that Sylvana speaks Spanish, she encouraged her to join, and Sylvana found a place where her languages matter every week.

On Monday mornings, Sylvana supports the Early Steps team as a liaison between Asbury volunteers and the program's Early Steps Advisors. She also translates for Spanish- and French-speaking mothers, so every parent feels welcome and understood. Though she describes herself as a facilitator rather than a leader, her presence is something the whole team relies on.

Her favorite part of the morning is simple: playing with the children and watching the mothers connect, learn, and grow alongside their little ones. "Bringing different age groups together creates a true win-win environment where both older adults and young families enrich each other's lives," she says.

She credits the program with her own learning, too, especially from watching experienced volunteers like Pat apply principles of child psychology and pedagogy with families. "Every week, I am reminded of how much strength, warmth, and resilience these young families bring to our community," she says.

To anyone thinking about volunteering, her advice is exactly what she did herself: jump in. "Whether you are a new or long-time resident, there is a place for you here."

Sylvana, thank you for arriving with such warmth and for bringing your languages, your experience, and your curiosity to our youngest neighbors and their families. You embody what a Beloved Community can be.

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Announcements

DRIVERS NEEDED

Help Deliver Food to Our Neighbors

GBCI is looking for volunteer drivers for our food distribution to families at Cider Mill Apartments. It is a simple way to make a real difference for neighbors right here in Gaithersburg.

WHEN	Every other Sunday
WHERE	Epworth United Methodist Church, 9008 Rosemont Drive, to Cider Mill Apartments (about 3 miles, under a 10-minute drive)
TIME	About 1.5 hours at most
YOU NEED	A car and a willingness to help

No heavy lifting!

Our volunteer team loads the boxes into your car at Epworth and unloads them at Cider Mill. All you need to do is drive.

Interested? Reach out to
Frank Lostumbo
 franklost4@gmail.com
 301-216-6608

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

GBCI is seeking volunteer mentors for our after-school and early learning programs

TUESDAY Elementary Mentoring
 Gaithersburg Elementary
 3rd–5th grade **3:00–5:00 PM**

WEDNESDAY Literacy Mentoring
 South Lake Elementary
 1st–2nd grade **3:00–5:00 PM**

THURSDAY Mentoring through Creative
 Expression
 Gaithersburg Elementary &
 Middle School
 5th–8th grade **3:00–5:00 PM**

WEDNESDAY Early Steps
 Asbury Methodist Village
 Ages 0–5, with parents **9:30–10:45 AM**

No experience needed, just a caring heart.

Interested? Contact Sarahi Segura, Program Manager | (301) 987-4849
sarahi@gaithersburgbelovedcommunity.org

UPCOMING EVENTS!

 Thursday, October 1st, 3:00 – 4:30 PM – **First Day of High School Mentoring**, Diamond Lifestyle Room, Asbury Methodist Village

 Tuesday, October 6th, 2026, 3:30 – 5:00 PM — **Start of Tuesday Mentoring Fall Sessions**, Gaithersburg Elementary School

 Wednesday, October 7th, 2026, 3:30 – 5:00 PM — **Start of Wednesday Mentoring Fall Sessions**, South Lake Elementary School

 Thursday, October 8th, 2026, 3:30 – 5:00 PM — **Start of Thursday Mentoring Fall Sessions**, Gaithersburg Elementary and Middle School