

BELOVED COMMUNITY NEWS

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

Embracing Change and Trying New Things:

Last month students from the Career Club reflected on what they learned from their conversations with GBCI older adult volunteers. Two important learnings have stuck with us over the past several weeks- “Change is inevitable, so you should embrace it,” and “Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there and try new things.” As GBCI programs continue to embrace changes necessary to meet the needs of the intergenerational community (young people, families, adults, and seniors), this issue includes some story highlights of programs that have experienced shifts and ways GBCI is trying new things!

Celebrating a third successful year of Career Club! *By Rebecca Cole*

This Spring semester was the third year of the Career Club, a program collaboration of GBCI, the ACES (Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success) Program and Link Generations. The Career Club involves high school students throughout Montgomery County and adult volunteers from AMV and the Gaithersburg community in one-hour conversations every two weeks for the duration of the Spring semester. It is Zoom-based and organized by ACES—a program of Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove that offers high school juniors and seniors a supportive pathway to a bachelor’s degree. The students are often the first in their families to plan to attend college.



Students and Volunteers create a web at the Career Club celebration. Each person was invited to toss a ball of yarn to someone in the circle and offer them words of affirmation about something they learned from them or appreciated about them in the Career Club. The yarn quickly became a web filled with encouraging, positive, inspiring words reminding us that we are connected, encouraged, and that we have a community to lean on and support us through all phases of life.

After a semester of sessions on Zoom, this year the Career Club experienced a positive change: students and volunteers were DELIGHTED to have the last session together IN PERSON! The ACES team planned & hosted an engaging end of program event at Montgomery College for Career Club students and volunteers. It was a joyous time for volunteers and students to connect, share learnings from participating in the program, and celebrate a wonderful semester!

For more information:

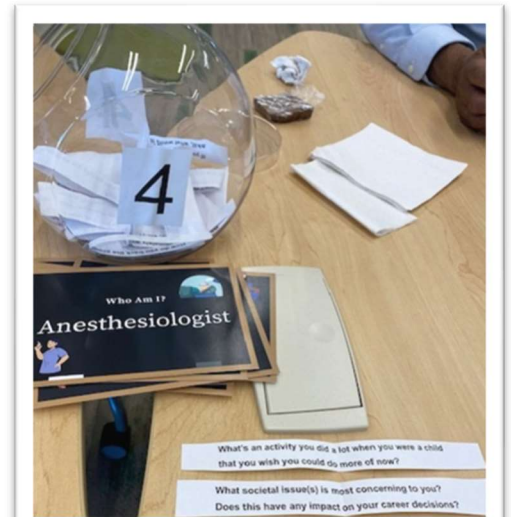
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When asked of one thing they took away from Career Clubs, some of the students shared:

- ***“It’s okay to make mistakes in life. Just learn from them and adapt.”***
- ***“Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there and try new things.”***
- ***“Change is inevitable, so you should embrace it.”***
- ***“One thing I took away from Career Club is the advantages of networking and that you should also give and take when networking.”***
- ***“I learned that it is ok to make mistakes and that I should trust my instincts more.”***
- ***“To always be proactive, and that self-improvement never ends.”***
- ***“If you’re in a career where you don’t feel the sparks anymore, it’s okay to change it up.”***



Above : Career Conversation activity at the April 12th celebration. Students created discussion questions that were put in the fishbowl at each table and discussed in small groups. Sample questions were: “What’s an activity you did a lot when you were a child that you wish you could do more of now?” and, “What societal issue(s) is most concerning to you? Does this have any impact on your career decisions?”

The Career Club program will resume next year, February-April 2024. GBCI welcomes new volunteers who want to build relationships with high school students through listening and sharing of life experiences, learnings and advice related to education and careers.

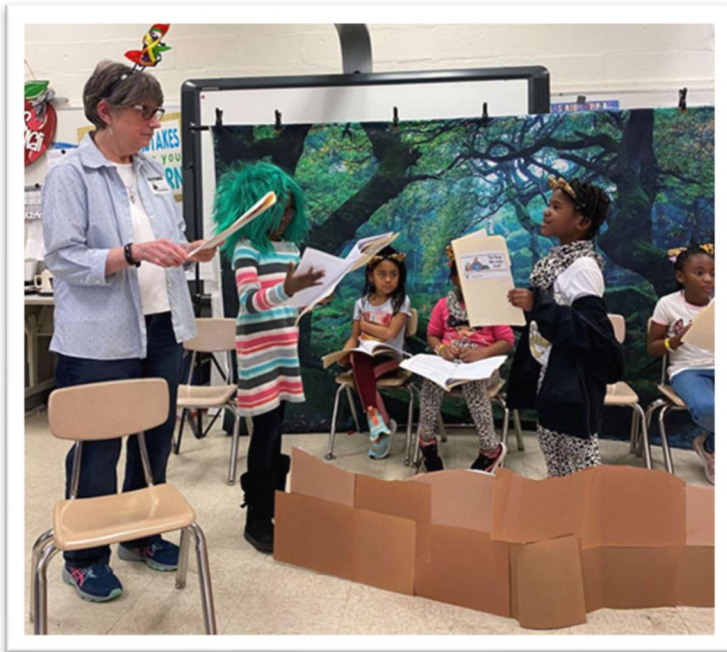


THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS AT ACES AND LINK GENERATIONS!

Let’s Put on a Play! *By Mary Jean Davidge*

This semester South Lake Elementary School first and second graders worked together to produce plays that were designed for their reading levels. The process began in January with the 15 students working in 4 groups learning to read plays aloud. They learned many new words in the process and experienced reading aloud to groups. The next step was for the groups to each choose a play to perform in March. The mentoring sessions included other reading-oriented activities but the focus for the spring was to prepare to put on plays.

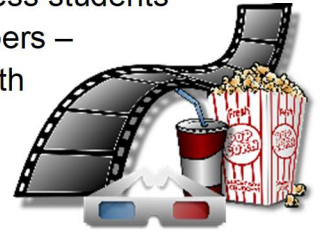




Above: Mentor Ruth Samorajczyk with her group performing "The Three Billy Goats Gruff."

Right: Mentor Carol Tyson with students in the "Let's Paint" skit 😊

At the end of March all four groups put on their plays for their families and friends. They performed in "readers' theater" style using fun minimal costumes and props and reading from their scripts. The plays were a hit with the previously giggling, restless students performing like real troupers – focused and speaking with emphasis. A cast party followed the event, and all had a grand time!



Left: Reader's Theater Cast Party group photo of GBCI Volunteers and Staff with SLES students participating in the GBCI mentoring friends program on Wednesdays.



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Afghan Refugee Update

By Candy Warner

There is very good news around the Afghan families. We now have 11 families that **NNIA (New Neighbor Interfaith Alliance)** is assisting here in the Gaithersburg/Rockville area. Two new families have come via the southern border without anything at all including work documents. About 50 Afghans are currently being helped by NNIA groups of “neighbors” and assorted friends. We have found some new jobs including as teachers, caterers, and a pharmacist.

Our amazing Afghan journalist, Naqib Arwen, has started a 30-page monthly newspaper to service the Farsi speaking community in North America. Copies are now available from Candy Warner. Copies are free as, hopefully, advertising will subsidize the effort. Education and language lessons continue to be a priority for everyone.



Arwen family celebrates the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the three day Eid al-Fitr holiday.



Naqib Arwen shows his monthly newspaper called Farsi Times. The newspaper is created for the Afghan community living in the United States.

Asbury residents have recently contributed one new car for a family, a lounge chair to one of our expectant mothers and continued financial support as our funds from our first-year efforts depleted. Rent and food costs have increased, and summer language classes will start soon. Your help is very much appreciated via a donation to **GBCI: Refugee Fund** for this purpose. Salaries are still at the low range and basic assistance with gift cards and donations help our friends to continue their adjustments.

Please keep up your wonderful support and call me with your ideas of continuing assistance to all refugees. Thank you!

**-Candy Warner
Villas 572, 301-216-5874**

Food Distribution Efforts in Greater Gaithersburg *By Frank Lostumbo*

The GBCI Monthly Meeting on March 17, 2023, featured an in-depth discussion of food distribution efforts in greater Gaithersburg.



Guests included **Pastor Jennifer Fenner**, *Epworth United Methodist Church*, **Patrick Donohue**, *the Lords Table*, **Agar Mbianda**, *Community Engagement Manager, MANNA Food Center*, and **Jenna Umbriac**, *Director of Policy and Programs, Manna Food Center*. Frank Lostumbo, GBCI Food Program Coordinator provided a brief overview of the local community partnerships involved in the food program and the evolving challenges for the future.

Since the COVID Pandemic began, GBCI works in collaboration with Epworth UMC, the Lord's Table, Safe Places Resident's Association, and other community partners to address the food insecurity in the neighboring communities. Epworth church has served as a distribution center and resource hub serving over 300 families weekly. The GBCI volunteer drivers have made weekly deliveries to the Safe Places Team at Cider Mill Apartments where 70 families received a week's supply of food. Sources of food were plentiful and included the Honduran Embassy, Gaithersburg HELP, Singh Foundation, Islamic Community of MD (ICM) and city and county sources including MANNA.

Last fall, the USDA cutback their food allocations to each state, and that impacted state, county, and city supplies. The neighborhood food distribution was reduced from weekly to biweekly for 200 families, causing the GBCI driving team to now deliver food boxes on alternate Sunday for 52 families at Cider Mill, where Safe Places distributes food to each family.

During the discussions panelists and guests shared lessons and experiences of how food insecurity issues were addressed over the course of the pandemic and how current changes in federal support are challenging for many local families who are impacted daily by food insecurity and the challenges of pandemic recovery. Most agreed that the federal government has the greatest responsibility to decrease food insecurity in the US. While the support from Montgomery County and the city is positive, there are limits to what they can do and rely on many volunteer efforts from the non-profit and religious entities that have tried to fill in the gaps.

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Three families from the Cider Mill apartments shared their experiences and insights as recipients of the local food distribution effort and their reliance on the food program.

Their sharing revealed problems that are more systemic and go well beyond food issues—problems from health conditions, rental increases, unsuitable habitats, and safety issues. These inequities present growing gaps between those at different ends of the income spectrum and the level of services they receive. Their insights demonstrate the daily living challenges among larger numbers of people experiencing not only food insecurity but economic instability pressures as well. This has a ripple effect to the entirety of our economy and the whole of society. These issues can no longer be ignored and building an inclusive recovery will be far more challenging than simply returning to pre pandemic norms. We must all work together and raise our common voices to influence change for our current community and future generations.



Mother from Cider Mill Apartments sharing her experience of the food program

GBCI Mentoring Friends Field Trip to Washington, DC! *By Janice Jones*

Twenty-two first, second, and fifth graders from Gaithersburg and 15 mentors and volunteers enjoyed a Spring field trip sponsored by GBCI on April 21. The excited group rode a school bus to the Smithsonian Natural History Museum in Washington, D.C. The children explored the museum and were excited to see dinosaur bones and skeletons; real-looking (taxidermied) elephants, tigers, giraffes, and other mammals; mummies; insects; and giant gems and jewels.



For the adults, it was fun to see what excited the children at the museum and on the trip: crossing a big bridge over the river, looking over the balcony at the museum to see the big elephant from above, watching planes fly past the Washington Monument.



After the museum, the group enjoyed a quiet lunch—with a little dancing—at Asbury United Methodist Church in D.C. The day was a memorable and fun experience for ALL!

Upcoming Events and New Volunteer Opportunity:

GBCI MONTHLY MEETING

Friday, May 19, 9:30 am

Location: HEFNER AUDITORIUM
Asbury Methodist Village Campus
(301 Odendhal Ave, enter through gatehouse.
Turn right upon entering and follow signs for
Hefner building)



**Looking Ahead with GBCI:
What have we learned and
Where are we going?**

PROGRAM

GBCI is coming to the end of an exciting and productive year of programs and activities.

Please join us to hear what we've learned from the recent Volunteer Survey and offer your ideas and visions for our future endeavors.

We appreciate your support and enthusiasm and hope you can attend!



Questions?
Contact 301.216.4090

GBCI is finishing another exciting and productive year of programs and activities. Thank you to the volunteers who offered their feedback and learnings through the recent Volunteer survey. We are eager to share these learnings at the:

GBCI Monthly Meeting: Friday, May 19th, 9:30am. The meeting is in the Hefner Auditorium on Asbury's campus. We will hear from program volunteers, and everyone in attendance will have the opportunity to share ideas and visions for our future endeavors.

We hope you can join us!

Please Note The Hefner parking will be repaved on May 18th and 19th. If you are not able to enter the Hefner parking lot, proceed to the Diamond lot (on right after Hefner entrance) for parking and enter Hefner by walking along the sidewalk to the Hefner main entrance.

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Seeking Volunteers for NEW Intergenerational Book Club

GBCI is partnering with AMV, Link Generations and MC Public Libraries to host an Intergenerational Book Club this summer! If you are interested in volunteering and participating in the program with High School students, please contact Oneka Mends-Cole (301) 216-5356, Oneka.Cole@asbury.org.

The program will have three meetings: June 20, July 25, and August 16 from 6:30pm-7:30pm at the Gaithersburg Public Library.

Transportation will be provided from Asbury Methodist Village and there are still spaces for volunteers to register.

BE AN ASBURY METHODIST VILLAGE VOLUNTEER AT OUR LOCAL GAITHERSBURG LIBRARY



Summer Intergenerational Book Club with Young People

The purpose of this book club is to bring different generations of readers together around the same book and to create space for family members to have conversations beyond the usual "So, how was school today?" We are excited to get to share great books with you and young people!

Location: Gaithersburg Public Library
18330 Montgomery Village Ave.
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Dates: May 17, June 20, July 25, and August 16 of 2023
Time: 6:30 – 7:30pm *Transportation Provided*

For information or to register: Oneka Mends-Cole (301) 216-5356

