



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 that nurtures intergenerational relationships and promotes social justice through programs with youth, families, and older adults in the city of Gaithersburg. Created by residents at Asbury Methodist Village (AMV), 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.

"Volunteering with students brings me joy as I watch the students develop mental and social skills, as well as increasing self-confidence and a willingness to try new things." - Kathy Cook, GBCI Volunteer and Park View resident at AMV.

GBCI Welcomes Natasha Kalitsi, Administrative & Communications Manager

We are excited to announce the newest addition to GBCI's staff, Natasha Kalitsi! Ms. Kalitsi will serve as the Administrative & Communications Manager. This new role will help GBCI strengthen our communication strategies, manage grants and reporting, and foster stronger relationships with GBCI supporters, parents, and volunteers, ensuring the news about our work reaches target audiences.

Natasha graduated from Towson University in 2021 with a degree in Mass Communications. She holds diverse working experiences, working as a Marketing Assistant creating email campaigns for a yearbook company, a Digital Communications Intern at The George Washington University, and a Communications & Development Associate at a nonprofit for students with emotional disabilities and autism. In her free time, she enjoys listening to live music and taking nature walks at local parks. We look forward to the many ways Natasha's work will impact GBCI in the future!



Above: Natasha Kalitsi, Administrative & Communications Manager at GBCI

For more information:

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Summer Volunteers Weed Out Invasive Plants at Asbury w/ Habitat Action Committee *by Janet Neumann*



Above: Student volunteers working hard at removing invasive plants!

This summer, GBCI Program Coordinator, Sarahi Segura coordinated with the Habitat Action Committee (HAC) to provide volunteer hours for local students affiliated with GBCI at Asbury Methodist Village (AMV). Over four mornings in early July, the students helped HAC members pull invasive mile-a-minute weeds in the AMV wildlife area. These weeds can grow up to 25 inches long and rapidly smother other plants in the area they invade. This combined team of ‘weed worriers’ cleared a large area along Summit Avenue where fall seeds of native plants and flowers will be planted.

We couldn’t have cleared this area without these hard-working students. They pulled these invasives during some of the hottest mornings so far this summer. Our goal was to pull mile-a-minute before it went to seed which

greatly reduces the amount that will grow again next year. It was so thick in the area along Summit Avenue that it was impossible to walk through. We hope that some of these students will return next year to help the AMV HAC continue to get invasives under control and allow our native plants to thrive. I cannot stress enough our appreciation for these students’ efforts and the benefit to our nature area.

In return, HAC members taught the students about how invasive plants can outcompete desirable natives, why native plants are beneficial, and about the natural area at Asbury. Students also received student service-learning hours for their volunteer efforts. It was a wonderful experience for everyone!



Above: High school and middle school GBCI student volunteers prepared to start their early morning volunteer session at Asbury.



Above, L to R: Sue Fthenakis and Janet Neumann show student volunteer techniques for removing invasive plants/vines.



Fun Activities at the Kindly Summer Program *by Sarah I., Natasha Kalitsi*

Though students are out for summer break, GBCI's fun activities continue at the Kindly Summer Program. From June to August, middle and high school students gather on Saturdays at Asbury Methodist Village for immersive group activities to build social and creative skills with Kindly residents. This summer, students participated in sing-along sessions with instruments, art projects, theater presentations, and more. Our programs would not be able to run without the hard work of our volunteers. Residents, students, and community members of Gaithersburg dedicate their time to assist with lessons and set up activities so that our programs can run smoothly. Read about one of our student volunteer's experience volunteering in the Kindly Summer Program:

Hello Beloved Community readers, I am Sarah, a 10th grade student at Albert Einstein High School and I have been volunteering with Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative for two years now. My experience has been enlightening, to say the least as I developed important skills in communication, patience, and most of all compassion. I have been passionate about volunteering since I was young. When I was in elementary school, I testified in front of the board of education to support after-school programs at my school (EBB), packed food boxes for food-insecure individuals during the pandemic, and distributed diapers to families in need. Recently, I have testified for the county council to put South Lake Elementary School back on the budget for school construction. Since volunteering at GBCI, I have grown fond of the Asbury Methodist Village residents. Ms. Beverley, who always strikes up fascinating conversations, Mr. Richard whose determination makes me laugh, and Ms. Barbara's cleverness, especially during a game of bingo, were among the many reasons I enjoyed my volunteering experience at Kindly. I loved speaking with residents about their jobs, school life, and children. It was interesting to hear what they did at my age and in the end, I felt much closer to them. Working in intergenerational programs has been a great way to form relationships with diverse groups of people and see new perspectives. Thank you to Mrs. Sarahi and Ms. Rebecca for providing me with this opportunity. I will definitely be volunteering next year!



Above: Sarah I. handing food to a Kindly resident at AMV during the GBCI Summer Volunteer Program.



Above: Student volunteers of the Kindly Summer Program (Sarah in middle)



Above: Student volunteers making bird figures with Kindly residents

For more information:

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Announcements



GBCI MONTHLY MEETING
Friday, September 6, 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.

2024-2025 Programs Kick-Off

GBCI Staff, along with lead program volunteers will share outcomes from the Board Retreat in July 2024, and program plans for the 2024-2025 year.

We will also welcome **Natasha Kalitsi**, Admin & Communications Manager who joined GBCI staff in July.

We hope you can join us!

Questions? Contact 301-216-4090

GBCI Monthly Meetings Return

Mark your calendars, GBCI's Monthly Meetings return on Friday, September 6th in the Hefner Auditorium! The September meeting will focus on our upcoming program plans for the 2024-2025 school year and the outcomes of the annual GBCI board retreat that took place this summer. The Monthly Meetings are on the third Friday of every month (September-June) from 9:30-10:30 AM. The September meeting was switched to the first Friday. We will resume the third Friday schedule in October. All are welcome!

Games, Food, and Family Activities at the 3rd Annual GBCI Community Day!

The highly anticipated GBCI Community Day is approaching fast! On Saturday, September 21st, GBCI families and Asbury residents can connect with members of the community while enjoying exciting activities like face painting, nature activities, games, food, and music. We hope to see you there! Check out our scheduled activities and RSVP by calling 301-987-6635 or completing the online form here: <https://forms.gle/kveKq3AZC2QgvJUd7>



GBCI COMMUNITY DAY
Saturday, September 21, 2024 10AM-2PM
COME JOIN US FOR
FACE PAINTING, GAMES, FOOD, MUSIC AND FAMILY ACTIVITIES!

Scheduled Activities:
10:00am Nature Bingo, Games, Arts & Crafts, Face Painting
11:00am Native Meadows Info Session w/Common Ground Earth
11:30-12:30pm LUNCH
12:00pm Community Day Ceremony
12:45pm Community Zumba
1:30pm Drum Circle

Location: THE VILLAGE EVENT TENT
@Asbury Methodist Village
301 Odendhal Ave, Gaithersburg MD
<https://forms.gle/ErEb2ndSPK3kGPN4A>

RSVP: 301-987-6635 or complete online form

Make a Difference: Join our Volunteer Team

Are you passionate about giving back to the community? Join our group of enthusiastic volunteers making an impact in local schools and neighborhoods across Gaithersburg. GBCI offers a variety of volunteer opportunities including mentoring, early literacy, English conversation programs, neighborhood action organizing, newsletter writing, administrative support, and more. Come make a difference! Contact Executive Director, Rebecca Cole at rebecca@gaitthersburgcommunity.org or 301-216-4090 for more information.

Upcoming Dates:

- **Friday, September 6th: GBCI Monthly Meeting, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM - Hefner Auditorium**
- **Tuesday, September 10th: Mentoring Program Orientation, 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM – Hefner Auditorium**
- **Wednesday, September 11th: English Conversation Volunteer Orientation, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM- Wallace Community Room**
- **Saturday, September 21st: GBCI Community Day, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM Village Event Tent @ Asbury**