

# BELOVED COMMUNITY NEWS

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

## A Successful School Year and Summer Activities:

*The 2022-2023 school year was the first year the students and families fully resumed instruction and activities in person after the pandemic. While there is still significant academic, social emotional, and economic recovery ahead, this year brought great opportunities for GBCI to create spaces for meaningful connection, intergenerational learning, leadership development and navigating what it looks like to recover together. This issue includes story highlights of programs and community activities thriving after an incredible school year!*

## Elementary Mentoring Art Bot Project *By Kathy Sloan*

GBCI's 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Gaithersburg Elementary School greatly enjoyed creating "art bots," thanks to the guidance of Mr. David Winfield, who visited several classes and shared his expertise for this engaging project. The assembly process was difficult at times, as it involved some experimentation and problem-solving along the way, but every student rose to the challenge and achieved applaudable success.



*Above: GES (Gaithersburg Elementary School) students are receiving instruction from our dedicated volunteers on the fascinating topic of energy transformation.*

The art bots are small battery-powered robots that can be controlled to draw patterns on paper. Most of the required materials are ordinary objects, including plastic drinking cups, tape, popsicle sticks, small corks, and craft markers. In addition, Mr. David provided kits containing tiny motors, AA batteries, connecting wires, and couplers. As he explained and demonstrated each step of the procedure, the students followed his lead. The intricacy of stripping wires and coupling them to the batteries and motors was tricky, but our students honed their skills using Mr. David's specialized tools and fastened the parts securely into place. During the procedure, they learned some scientific terms (such as torque and multimeter) that may recur as their education continues. The art bot consisted of batteries powering a motor which spun a cork to which a popsicle-stick propeller

was attached. Students experimented by first leaving the heavy battery holder outside the art bot and leading this light bot by connected wires like a dog on a leash. This light bot was significantly rotated by torque from the popsicle-stick propeller. Then they taped the battery holder inside the cup. This heavier bot was minimally affected by the torque from the rotating popsicle-stick propeller.

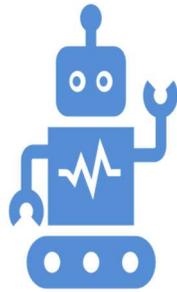
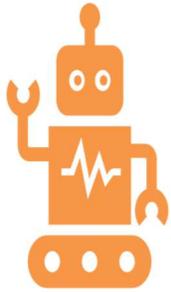
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They increased the vibration of the bot (and hence varied the patterns) by moving the popsicle-stick propeller from centered to off-center relative to the cork. Students worked side by side as teammates, helping each other when needed. When the bots were complete, they drew colorful patterns with the three markers which were its legs, so that each child had a unique work of art to take home along with the tiny bot that had created it. Bravo! Thanks, Mr. David!



## Learning English, Connecting to County Resources, and Making New Friends with the English Conversation Group *By Rebecca Cole*



*Intermediate English participants and GBCI volunteers in May 2023 out for a walk around the Asbury ponds to learn new vocabulary and explore nature.*



*Above: Intermediate English class participant enjoying the outdoor*

The GBCI English Conversation Group completed its 12th year this June. The class meets weekly on Asbury's campus with adults from the greater Gaithersburg community who are committed to learning conversational English. In the 2022-2023 year the ECG program had 15 regular volunteers who led small conversational groups for two separate class levels: **Beginner and Intermediate**. The GBCI volunteers use their life experiences, creativity, dedication, and lots of love to offer learning topics that are relevant and useful to the adult participants and their families. Some of this year's English topics included conversational practice and practical skills for going to the doctor's office and talking about healthcare, meeting with your child's teacher or a team at their school, shopping at the grocery store, going to the bank and how to write a check, vocabulary and conversation needed for a job application/interview or a meeting at your workplace, how to fill out forms, and vocabulary to order food.

At the end of the Spring semester, the beginner class had 26 regular attendees and 11 who received certificates for attending 8 or more of 10 sessions. The intermediate class had 17 regular attendees and 12 who received certificates. From the end of the year survey responses, GBCI heard from most of the participants

that they love coming to the English class. They find the lessons useful for their day to day life, very helpful, and they appreciate the love, patience, and camaraderie they feel with volunteers and the other class participants.

For years, GBCI has welcomed participants to bring their small children to class who are not currently in school. This year GBCI learned that having two adult childcare roles was not enough for the larger group of children that were attending class with their parents. We are excited to partner with leaders from Mujer Fuerza y Coraje in the Fall 2023 to offer an Early Steps program for the children while the parents are in English class.

The program will be a structured hour-long session including reading, vocabulary development, circle time, art making, and free play. Many thanks to Mujer Fuerza y Coraje, and all the volunteers for their time and effort in making this program what it is today! English Conversation Group and the English Class Early Steps resume **Wednesday morning classes from 9:30am-10:45am on Wednesday, September 20, 2023.**



*Above: English Conversation Group last day celebration where participants receive their certificates. L to R- Rebecca Cole, Georgia Portocarrero, Intermediate participants with her son, Barbara Brennan, Yvonne Crouch, and Mily Cruz from Mujer Fuerza y Coraje.*

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## From Destructive Isolation to Beloved Community. *By Jan Garman*

Reverend Tim Warner, who spoke at GBCI's June monthly meeting, has a long history with GBCI. Twelve years ago, Tim urged Asbury residents eager to relate to our neighbors "outside the fence," to mentor youth, putting us in touch with citizens returning from the criminal justice system who told GBCI to begin with children in grade school. Thus began the mentoring program.

At the June meeting, Tim spoke about another important need in Montgomery County, that of home ownership for workers in low-paying jobs, such as housekeeping, elder care or food service. He gave us a history lesson on how systemic racism has made this difficult. Tim serves as pastor of Emory Grove United Methodist Church as well as in a management position with Habitat for Humanity.

He used the example of Emory Grove vis-a-vis Washington Grove. Both grew out of the Methodist camp meeting phenomenon. Wealthy Methodists from DC spending their summers in Washington Grove, formed a covenant that no property in the Grove could be sold or rented to persons of African descent "in the interest of public health" even though these same people cooked their food, cleaned their homes and sometimes even wet-nursed their babies. The African American community members founded Emory Grove. Although Washington Grove ceased its camp meetings in 1937, it was not until 2002 that the first non-white homeowner moved there and it remains 99% white.

At one time there were a hundred African American communities in Montgomery County with their own schools, churches, businesses and entertainment centers, where children were raised by the whole community and where no one locked their doors. Only forty of these communities still exist. Many were razed by "urban renewal" which to African Americans meant "Negro removal."

Tim also pointed out that systemic racism was encountered in The New Deal, whose benefits were not available to African Americans. Nor were African Americans recipients of the GI Bill after World War Two, which gave White GIs educational benefits by which they could rise to the middle class.

Habitat, along with other agencies in the County, is working to provide communities where people with low incomes can own their own homes or rent decent housing, where social services are available and the sense of community can be fostered. One community has already been started at



4010 Randolph Road. GBCI, Tim told us, needs to be a voice for the people at the bottom. Rollie Smith pointed out that GBCI's task force is already working with the developers of the Lakeforest Mall to assure that some of the 1600 units will be available for low-income families. A representative of the Mayor's office urged folks to share their concerns at City Council meetings every Monday at 7:30.

If you are interested in GBCI's efforts to increase the availability of affordable housing for families, please contact Rollie Smith, [rolliesmth@gmail.com](mailto:rolliesmth@gmail.com) 301-216-5698.

## GBCI's Early Steps program in the NEWS! *By Rebecca Cole*



**'I'm learning how to be happy': Maryland community program bridging age, culture gaps**

by Victoria Sanchez  
Friday, Jul 7th 2023

[VIEW ALL PHOTOS](#)

*The Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative is a collaboration between elderly residents of Asbury Methodist Village and community partners to support local families. (7News)*

WJLA/ABC7 News visited the GBCI Early Steps program on June 15, 2023 to share the story of the program's impact- for the students, parents, and the volunteers. It was an honor to meet Victoria Sanchez, ABC7/WJLA-TV's Health Reporter who "works to be an impartial journalist, bringing humanity to the often faceless stories that fill up social media feeds."



*Above: Early Steps seven-month-old participant reading the book "Brown Bear, Brown Bear" in Circle Time. Photo by Victoria Sanchez/7News via <https://wjla.com/news/local/gallery/primeros-pasos-maryland-community-program-seniors-bridging-age-culture-gaps-againg-well-health-healthcare-educational-families-dmv-speak-languages-learn?photo=6>*

Early Steps, or "Primeros Pasos" is an early literacy program focused on developing vocabulary and literacy skills with young children ages 0-5. Parents of the students also attend the sessions that include activities such as reading, circle time, art making, music, and other academic based activities. The parents build community with other families and volunteers, learn about the importance of reading to very young children, and identify the skills they have within them through lived experience, prior education, cultures, language, and traditions that can be used to prepare their young children for preschool or kindergarten. Most importantly everyone involved is dedicated to cultivating a joyful spirit that exemplifies how learning is FUN!

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WJLA/ABC7 aired the **“I’m learning how to be happy’: Maryland community program bridging age, culture gaps”** story and published a written story on Friday, July 7, 2023. You can find the article at: <https://wjla.com/news/local/primer-pasos-maryland-community-program-seniors-bridging-age-culture-gaps-aging-well-health-healthcare-educational-families-dmv-speak-languages-learn>



The Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative is a collaboration between elderly residents of Asbury Methodist Village and community partners to support local families. (7News)



Above left: Pat Johnson, Early Steps Volunteer lead and two-year-old participant. Photo by: Victoria Sanchez/7News via <https://wjla.com/news/local/gallery/primer-pasos-maryland-community-program-seniors-bridging-age-culture-gaps-aging-well-health-healthcare-educational-families-dmv-speak-languages-learn?photo=3>  
Above right: Early Steps Parent Facilitator, Mirian Hernandez with her four-year-old son Diego and three-year-old student finishing the 1-5 Numbers Beanstalk Art Project. Photo by: Cathy Canning.

GBCI would like to thank: WJLA/ABC7 and Victoria Sanchez; Cathy Canning, Vice President Marketing and Public Relations for Asbury Communities, Inc. and her team for pitching the story and coordinating the details for the reporter’s visit. We are also very grateful for our five Early Steps parent facilitators who started working with GBCI this year to be trained and co-lead the program with the volunteers. And, lastly, a GREAT BIG Thanks to our amazing volunteers!



Above: Gordon Forbes engaging one year old Early Steps participant and her mother during group reading time. Photo by: Victoria Sanchez/7News via <https://wjla.com/news/local/gallery/primer-pasos-maryland-community-program-seniors-bridging-age-culture-gaps-aging-well-health-healthcare-educational-families-dmv-speak-languages-learn?photo=14>



On Friday, July 28th, the GBCI team presented a workshop titled:

**“Intergenerational Early Literacy: Engaging Immigrant Families with Older Adults to Develop Reading and Vocabulary Skills for Student Success”** at the **Generations United Intergenerational Conference in Washington, DC.**

We shared about the Early Steps co-leadership model and the learnings and lessons in this work. Congratulations to the Early Steps team!

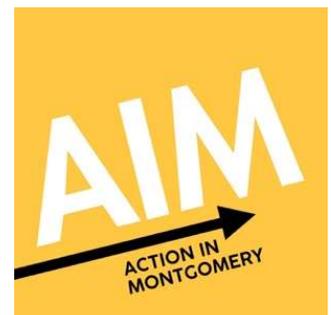
*Left: 2022-2023 Early Steps Staff and Volunteers- Front Row L to R: Maria Lainez, Lorena Joya, Mirian Hernandez, Elva Galvez, Adama Moussa Harouna, Sarahi Segura. Back Row L to R: Rebecca Cole, Fanny Pantelis, Eileen Brittain, Pat Johnson, Jan Forbes, Gordon Forbes, Sulema Ramos.*



## **Celebrating Montgomery County Council passage of rent stabilization ordinance to maintain moderate rents for many county families.**

*By Rollie Smith*

Congratulations to Action in Montgomery, with whom we work, for successfully negotiating a rent stabilization ordinance passed by the County Council. This will keep annual rent increases moderate for many families with whom GBCI works. And thanks especially for the leadership of our Council Representative Sidney Katz in making this happen.



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## Upcoming Events and Volunteer Opportunities



2ND ANNUAL  
**GBCI COMMUNITY DAY**  
Saturday, September 30, 2023  
10AM-2PM  
**SAVE THE DATE!**

WE HOPE YOU CAN JOIN US  
FOR A FUN DAY OF:  
FACE PAINTING, GAMES, FOOD, MUSIC AND FAMILY ACTIVITIES!

**Location:** THE VILLAGE EVENT TENT  
@Asbury Methodist Village  
301 Odendhal Ave, Gaithersburg MD

For more information call: 301-216-4849

## Save the Date!

GBCI will host the **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual GBCI Community Day** on **Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>** from **10:00am-2:00pm** at the Village Event Tent on Asbury's campus. There will be face painting, games, nature workshops, Zumba, food, music, and family activities for ALL ages.

All are welcome and we will share registration information soon.

### Volunteer shifts:

8:30am -10:00am Set Up

10:00am – 11:30am Game or activity tables

11:30am-1pm Lunch service or game/activity tables

1:00-2:30pm Lunch service clean up, game/activity tables, event clean up.

If you are interested in volunteering, please call GBCI office at 301-216-4090.

*We hope you and your family can join us!*

## Recruiting Mentors for Fall 2023!

It's that time again! As the new school year approaches, students are preparing to head back to school, and GBCI is gearing up for our Mentoring Programs.

This Fall, we are excited to offer two fantastic programs at Gaithersburg Elementary:

- 1) **Beloved Community Mentor Friends program**- catering to 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students (Tuesdays after school)
- 2) **Mentoring Through Art program**- specially designed for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>-grade students (Thursday after school)



At South Lake Elementary we are continuing the **Mentoring Literacy program**. This fall, the focus will be on reader's theater, engaging 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in a creative and immersive learning experience.

If you find yourself intrigued by these opportunities or desire more information, please reach out to Sarahi Segura, GBCI Program Coordinator- 301-216-4849. We are happy to provide all the details you need.

**Get ready for an enriching and inspiring mentoring experience!**