

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.

Above: AMV Resident and student volunteer at GBCI's Summer Volunteer Program show their artwork.

"At this age and stage in my life, GBCI has opened the door for me to continue to use my gifts and be enriched by the experiences of all I meet" – GBCI Volunteer

A Day of Connection and Culture at GBCI's Community Day

by Georgia Portocarrero

My name is Georgia Portocarrero, and I have volunteered at the registration table at GBCI's annual Community Day for three years. Community Day is an annual event where Asbury residents, community members, and GBCI partners gather to enjoy games, food, and educational activities while creating meaningful connections. This year the job was especially poignant for me for several reasons. Helping participants register for the event provided an opportunity to appreciate the diversity of our community. As I welcomed neighbors from Middle Eastern, African, Central and South American countries, as well as neighbors from AMV, I interacted with people who spoke a variety of languages and who represented many different cultural traditions. Volunteers representing various community organizations and church groups provided important support for this event.



Above: Cesar and Georgia Portocarrero managing the sign-in table.

For more information:

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Watching families from different cultures share a meal, enjoy entertainment, and interact with one another reinforced the value of living in Gaithersburg, one of the most diverse cities in the U.S.. A resident at Asbury Methodist Village commented on the growth of GBCI's Community Day, saying "It was great to see the community participate, particularly the off-campus community, and to see the growth since last year"



Above: Kids playing Jenga at GBCI's Community Day.



Above: Milagro Flores from Mujer Fuerza y Coraje holds celebratory flowers after receiving a recognition award at GBCI's Community Day.

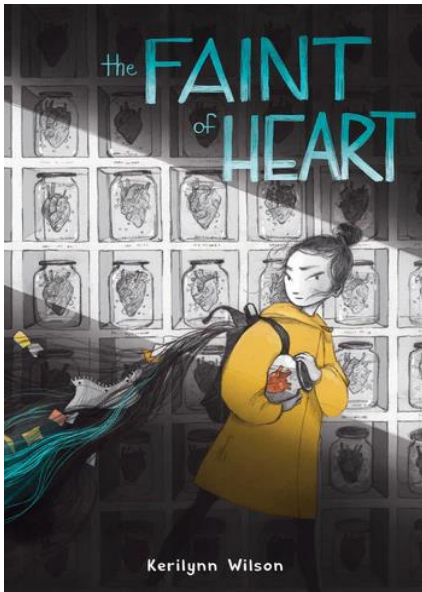
This year I was especially moved by the attendance of several current and former students from the GBCI English Conversation Group that I have been working with for the past nine years. Many of these women belong to Mujer Fuerza y Coraje, (Strong and Courageous Women) a non-profit group, organized by Milagro Flores, that supports Latino women and families in the area. They were not only at the event to congratulate Mily, who received special recognition from GBCI for her more than 12-year collaboration with the organization, but also to promote Mujer Fuerza y Coraje and community activism. I have watched these women grow over the years from being very shy and speaking almost no English, to women who are confident, and comfortable expressing themselves in English, and who are now active participants in GBCI and the community. They provide a strong support system, especially for Latino families, and enjoy being part of GBCI and the AMV community.

These women are wonderful role models for their children, many of whom accompanied them to this event. Some of the children volunteered to help with the games, others provided entertainment as members of De Colores, a local Gaithersburg Mexican folk-dance group. One proud mother has four children who are in the dance troupe. My husband Cesar, who also volunteered at the event, was able to reconnect with some of his former mentees from Gaithersburg Elementary School. GBCI's Community Day has been a great success and provides a wonderful opportunity for AMV residents to experience a wider sense of community by meeting our Gaithersburg neighbors.



Left: Mexican folk-dance group, De Colores perform at GBCI's Community Day.

Exploring The Importance of Emotions in the Intergenerational Book Club *by Natasha Kalitsi*



What would you do if you could no longer feel? This month, the Intergenerational Book Club explored sadness, avoidance, and emotional processing in the graphic novel “The Faint of Heart” by Kerilynn Wilson. This story is set in a world where a celebrated scientist has discovered how to make emotions like sadness, anxiety, and anger disappear—removing your heart! Almost everyone in town has decided to remove their hearts, placing them in a numbing solution where all their emotions, even the good ones, are suppressed. All except for a high school student named June. June remains adamant about keeping her heart and mourns the time she spent with her friends and family before their procedure. One day June finds an abandoned heart in a jar on her way home. This story follows June as she helps her sister, and her classmate Max get their emotions back.

The Intergenerational Book club is a partnership between GBCI, Asbury, Gaithersburg Library, and Link Generations that brings together older adults and middle and high school students to discuss topics and themes that they read in the monthly book selection. The October session offered an interesting discussion on the themes present in the graphic novel, “The Faint of Heart.” Many participants noted that while the townspeople and the scenery were all in black and white, June was the only character with color in her design. Characters and objects that reflect emotion were drawn in color, highlighting the intensity of the emotions portrayed in the scene. Then the group questioned whether it was better to have emotions or to not have any at all. Most participants agreed that it was better to have your emotions and process through difficult ones so that you can learn from them and become stronger. Participants also had an introspective discussion about whether they were more sensitive or stoic. Some participants leaned more towards stoicism, saying they tend to think more logically than emotionally. Some adult volunteers shared they were originally more stoic but after going through life experiences like having children they became more sensitive.

Overall, the main message that the group learned was to not run from your emotions, and that challenging moments can get better with time. The discussion fostered deep reflection on the value of embracing emotions and underscored the importance of growth through emotional experiences, a message that resonated with participants of all ages. The Intergenerational Book Club meets monthly at the Gaithersburg Library. The next session is November 19 at 6:30pm, all are welcome!

Interested in discussing themes and lessons in books with readers of all ages? Contact Rebecca Cole at rebecca@gaithersburgbelovedcommunity.org or 301-216-4090 to learn more about the Intergenerational Book Club.

For more information:

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Announcements

GBCI MONTHLY MEETING Friday, November 15, 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)



**Thriving Communities for Our Future
AIM November Statewide Action**

PROGRAM

GBCI will soon attend Action in Montgomery's Statewide Action to meet with state legislators, Maryland Secretary of Housing, Comptroller, and more to put forth a 2025 legislative session agenda prioritizing:

- Diverse, attainable housing options
- Renters' rights
- Clean energy for healthy communities
- Pre-K for every child

We hope you can join us to learn ways you can get involved and take action this November!



Questions?
Contact 301.216.4090

Join Us at the GBCI November Monthly Meeting

Date: November 15th, 2024

Time: 9:30 AM

Location: Hefner Auditorium at Asbury Methodist Village, 301 Odendhal Ave., Gaithersburg, MD 20877.

GBCI's next Monthly Meeting is on **November 15th at 9:30 AM in** at Asbury Methodist Village, 301 Odendhal Ave., Gaithersburg, MD 20877. Join us as we discuss how GBCI will join Action in Montgomery's Statewide Action to meet with state legislators, the Maryland Secretary of Housing, the Comptroller, and other key officials to advocate for a 2025 legislative agenda.

Monthly meetings are open to everyone! Come learn more about the Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative and Action in Montgomery.

Spread Holiday Cheer to Families in Need w/ NNIA!

This holiday season, give low-income immigrant and refugee families a safe and joyful holiday by contributing to GBCI's New Neighbor Interfaith Alliance (NNIA) refugee fund. Last year, NNIA provided food and rent assistance to 150 local family members in need thanks to the generosity of Asbury residents and GBCI volunteers. Continue to spread holiday cheer this year by making a financial contribution through GBCI:



New Neighbors Interfaith Alliance

When writing a check:

1. Please make checks payable to: GBCI
2. Write "GBCI Refugee Fund" in the memo line.
3. Mail to: 201 Russell Ave., Gaithersburg, MD 20877 or put in Asbury campus mail if you live at Asbury Methodist Village

Thank you in advance for your support! To learn about more volunteer opportunities at NNIA, please contact Candy Warner at 301-216-5874.



Shop and Support GBCI at National UMC United Methodist Women's Fall Bazaar

We are excited to announce that GBCI was selected as one of six beneficiaries of the National United Methodist Church (UMC)- United Methodist Women's (UMW) Fall Bazaar! On November 1st & 2nd, you can support GBCI programs by shopping at the UMW's pop-up thrift shop and bake sale at National UMC, Metropolitan Memorial Campus: 3401 Nebraska Ave. NW, Washington DC 20016. All proceeds of the bazaar will be divided between the six charitable organizations of which GBCI is part. This is a great opportunity to enjoy seasonal shopping while helping fund GBCI's intergenerational initiatives. Make sure your purchases benefit GBCI by visiting during the following times:

- **Friday, November 1st, 2024: 1:00 PM – 7:00 PM**
- **Saturday, November 2nd, 2024: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM**
- For more information on the bazaar, please visit:

<https://www.nationalchurchumw.org/bazaar.html>



Drivers Needed for Food Distribution Program!

We are seeking compassionate volunteers to deliver meals and groceries to families in the Gaithersburg community through GBCI's Food Distribution program! This is a great way to give back while meeting members of your community. Drivers meet every Sunday at 3:00 PM at Epworth United Methodist Church, 9008 Rosemont Dr, Gaithersburg, MD 20977.

Volunteers will be available on-site to load your car with food boxes. Once the cars are packed, volunteer drivers drive to Cider Mill Apartments to meet Safe Places Resident Association leaders and families who will be gathered to receive the food boxes. If interested, contact **Frank Lostumbo** at **301-987-6608** or **franklost4@gmail.com**



Right: GBCI Food Distribution volunteers Oscar Alvarenga and Frank Lostumbo prepping to transport food boxes to the community.

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Interested in Volunteering with GBCI?

Since 2011, dedicated volunteers have been at the heart of GBCI. They have made a tremendous impact in local schools and neighborhoods. If you have a passion for your community, interest in connecting with young people and adults, want to meet some new friends, or have time and talent to offer, we'd love to connect with you!

2024-2025 Volunteer Opportunities (varying commitment levels):

- “Early Steps” early literacy program (Monday AM or Wednesday AM at Asbury)
- Mentoring elementary school students (Tues, Wed, or Thurs after school- 4 different programs available)
- Working with adults who are learning conversational English (Wednesday mornings at Asbury)
- Organizing with the Neighborhood Action team to work on affordable housing, equitable education, neighborhood safety, and other community concerns.
- Writing articles for GBCI’s Newsletter
- Taking photos for GBCI programs and/or events
- Volunteering to support administrative, research, program evaluation and impact work.

..... and much more!

Each day, our caring and passionate volunteers are making a difference in the lives of children, youth, families, and the community!

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact
Rebecca Cole, rebecca@gaitersburgbelovedcommunity.org or 301-216-4090.