

BELOVED COMMUNITY NEWS

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

The Importance of Spring Caring

This Spring our students and older adult mentors have been busy learning valuable life lessons that they can hold onto for years to come! It has been amazing for them to see how the simplest gestures of care and compassion bring extraordinary joy and memories that help us all get through the seasons that feel particularly difficult. This newsletter shares heartfelt stories from GBCI's mentoring programs of students and older adult volunteers taking actions to care for each other and the community.

From Our Hearts to Yours: Spreading Love and Kindness

By Sarahi Segura

Every Tuesday afternoon, something truly special happens at Gaithersburg Elementary School. As the day winds down and the week stretches ahead, the students gather in a circle, forming a bond that transcends the classroom. They take turns, each one saying those heartfelt words, "From my heart to yours...", followed by a wish for the group until they meet again the following week. In those moments, thoughts of love, creativity, and hope are shared freely,

creating a sense of warmth and connection that fills the room.



Above: Mentors Kathy Sloan, Medie Snape, and Meg Chandler making fleece blankets with Gaithersburg Elementary Students in the Tuesday Mentoring program. Left: Mentors Kathy and Doug Cook with 5th and 6th grade students in Thursday's Mentoring through Creative Expression program.

It was during one of these gatherings that our mentor, Kathy Sloan, had a brilliant idea. Why not take this beautiful concept and share it beyond the walls of our program? And thus, the "From Our Hearts to Yours" initiative was born. What started as a small idea soon blossomed into something truly impactful. We decided to spread our love to three groups of people in the month of February: the residents of Wilson Health Care Center, our dedicated schoolteachers, and the often-overlooked school building service staff.

Our first mission was to bring some joy to the residents of Wilson Health Care Center at Asbury Methodist Village. The students and mentors worked tirelessly creating colorful cards and heartfelt

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messages. Upon delivering these gifts to residents of Wilson, the smiles on their faces said it all. It was heartwarming for the elementary students to see how much our simple gestures brightened their day. As we read aloud the wishes from the students, words like comfort, faith, and peace filled the room. The most touching part was hearing what the Wilson residents wanted to share with us in return.

Fred advised us, **"Make your words mean something. If it isn't true, don't say it."**

Dorothy reminded us to **"continue sharing love with others always"**, and Marilyn encouraged us, saying,

Right: Sarahi Segura and Fred, resident of Wilson Health Care Center receiving his gifts from the students.

Below: Medie Snape, Meg Chandler and Tuesday Mentoring students with the From Our Hearts to Yours card they created.



"Life is an adventure, and your adventure is just starting! Be true to yourself and don't let anyone bring you down."



When we returned to school the following Tuesday, we shared the pictures of our visit and the wisdom we received. It was clear that the students were inspired to continue spreading their love to others. For Valentine's Day, the students crafted heartfelt valentines for all the teachers at Gaithersburg Elementary School, leaving them in their mailboxes to discover first thing in the morning.

Perhaps the most memorable moment came on our final day. The students, now understanding the power of kindness, wanted to surprise the building service team. They meticulously planned a special "thank-you" banner and a box of donuts to

present to the service team when they arrived in the afternoon. Waiting eagerly in the dark with their mentors, the team arrived, the lights flicked on, and the students emerged from their hiding spots, shouting, "Thank you for all you do!" It was a beautiful culmination of our initiative filled with gratitude and appreciation.

As we reflect on our journey, we are reminded of the profound impact small acts of kindness can have. **From our hearts to yours**, we hope to continue spreading love and positivity wherever we go. After all, it's simple gestures that have the power to touch lives and create lasting connections.



Right: Students and mentors making Valentine cards for Wilson Health Care residents and Gaithersburg Elementary teachers.

Exploring Art with Students: A Mentor's Perspective

By Barbara Kilby

Every Thursday afternoon, I ride the Asbury Village bus to the Gaithersburg elementary school with a few other GBCI volunteer Art Mentors. We wait in the school office until 3:30, when school is out and we can make our way to the art room. It's like swimming upriver: students who are going home stream toward us on both sides of the hall, with enormous backpacks over their shoulders, and we thread our way between the ranks, up the ramp to Room Six. I like to catch a smile from some of them when I wave and say Hi, and once a boy said, "Hello, Grandma," as he passed me.

In the classroom, we find seats and the students help distribute our individual journals and art supplies. Then we get a suggested prompt for our journal entries, such as, "If you had an Avatar, what animal would it be?" And almost all of the fifth and sixth graders know a video game or a movie with an Avatar in it, so they know what that means. Or, "Draw a picture of your favorite kind of day." One of the staff will translate the prompt into Spanish for kids who are not yet fluent in English. After we draw in our journals, each participant can show his or her own drawing and comment on it. Although it's okay to opt out, it's rare for a student to do so; they are proud of their art and their interpretations.



Mentors Phyllis Childers (left photo), Ron Crouch (right photo), and Barbara Kilby (bottom photo) with art mentoring students creating collaborative art in the mentoring session.



The main project of the day usually introduces something novel, such as a special medium like oil pastels or modeling clay. Regardless of whether it's their first time, the students always dive right into a new project.

As Mentors, we interact with the students, suggesting, encouraging, and asking helpful questions, but not really teaching Art. So it surprised me when a boy sitting next to me kept asking things like, "Miss Barbara, how would you draw a campfire?" Then he got specific, asking, "How would you draw the logs? What about the flames? And down here, what should I draw underneath the logs?" The

result of that exchange was that we both drew campfires, absolutely not identical, but very satisfying to each of us.

I am certain that all the Mentors were surprised and touched when one day — the students must have planned this — a bunch of them came into the school office where we were waiting before class, and hugged the Mentors, one by one, to say hello. This is an intergenerational program, for sure. And the kids know how to run it.

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Announcements & Upcoming Events

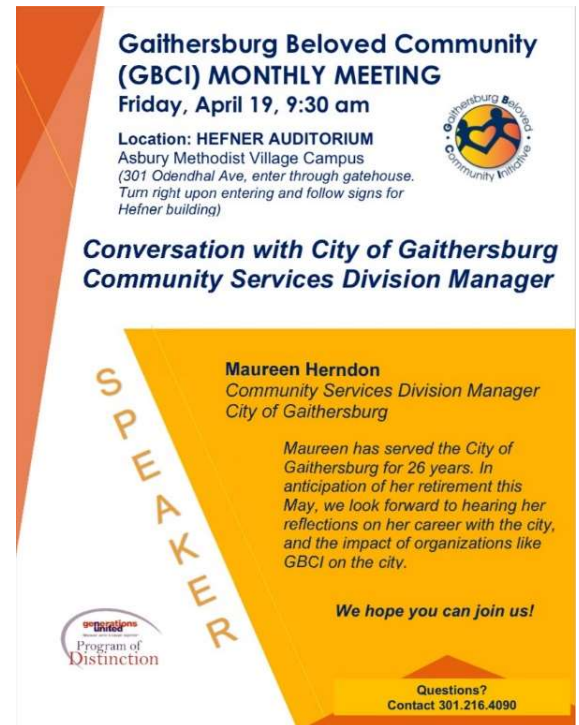
GBCI Monthly Meeting Schedule

The Next GBCI Monthly Meeting will be on **Friday, April 19, 2024 from 9:30am-10:30am: *Conversation with City of Gaithersburg Community Services Division Manager***

GBCI will welcome Maureen Herndon, the City of Gaithersburg Community Services Division Manager and her colleague Mary Armbruster who will share reflections about their work with the City of Gaithersburg and the impact organizations like GBCI have in Gaithersburg.

Maureen Herndon has served the City of Gaithersburg for twenty-six years. We are eager to hear Maureen's wisdom and knowledge as she leaves a legacy in Gaithersburg in anticipation of her retirement this May 2024.

We hope you can join us!



Gaithersburg Beloved Community (GBCI) MONTHLY MEETING
Friday, April 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)

**Conversation with City of Gaithersburg
Community Services Division Manager**

Maureen Herndon
Community Services Division Manager
City of Gaithersburg

S P E A K E R

Maureen has served the City of Gaithersburg for 26 years. In anticipation of her retirement this May, we look forward to hearing her reflections on her career with the city, and the impact of organizations like GBCI on the city.

We hope you can join us!

Questions?
Contact 301.216.4090

United Way Program of Distinction



GBCI seeks full-time Administrative and Communications Manager

GBCI is excited to announce we're hiring a full-time **Administrative and Communications Manager** to join our team! The full position description can be found here: <https://www.gaithersburgbelovedcommunity.org/work-with-gbci>

Position Summary: GBCI is seeking an organized, creative, civic minded, collaborative self-starter to manage the administrative and communications portfolio of

GBCI's work. The administrative and communications manager is a full-time position at the GBCI office that is located on the Asbury Methodist Village campus in Gaithersburg, MD. The administrative and communications manager is responsible for reinforcing current administrative and communications strategies and developing new administrative and communications strategies to help GBCI build internal systems and infrastructure, run organized programming, and engage volunteers, donors, and community members in building a "Beloved Community". This includes answering phones and email, maintaining volunteer and donor communication, processing donations and bill payments, writing grant reports, managing budgets, creating monthly print and online newsletter and flyers, and regularly updating GBCI's website.

Our ideal candidate is an excellent writer and content creator, highly organized, data driven and can work in a fast-paced environment juggling multiple projects at one time. We are looking for a candidate who is dedicated to GBCI's mission and vision and deeply committed to social justice and racial equity; someone who values relationships and works well with people of different ages and backgrounds; someone who thinks strategically in effective administrative systems; and someone who is creative and enjoys working in collaboration with staff and volunteers.

Thank you for circulating this opportunity to interested candidates and throughout your networks.