



The Skillman
FOUNDATION

A voice for Detroit Children since 1960

Osborn Community Goal:

Families have all of the resources and support necessary to make their children successful in life.

Quincy Jones

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NEIGHBORHOOD FACTS:

Osborn is a community of 37,418 (according to the 200 Census). Osborn has a young population with 38.3 percent of the population under the age of 18. The Census reports that 4.2 percent of the population is of Asian heritage. This represents the large Hmong community living in the Osborn area. Osborn has a high percentage of single-family households at 30.1 percent. This area is represented by zip codes 48205 and 48234.

Neighborhood Statistics:

Total population: 37,418
Poverty Rate: 28%
Home Ownership: 66%
Unemployment Rate: 15%

Community Expo Will Focus On More Than Just Health

By John O'Donnell

It may be known as the Color Me Healthy Expo, but in the Osborn community, the August 1 event at The Center has come to mean much more than a day to focus on health. Now in its 9th year, the expo will welcome hundreds of families to the site on East McNichols to share a day of activities presented by Matrix Human Services, its mission partners, and community organizations and supporters.

“The purpose is to provide the community with access to resources. It’s about improving the quality of life for residents here in the Osborn community,” said Scott Gifford, Director of Community Development and Outreach at The Center for Matrix Human Services.

Access to health care and information tops the list of objectives, and lead co-sponsor St. John Health System, Henry Ford Health System, and New Horizons will be providing health screenings.

“There a real void for health services in many Detroit communities. I remember talking with someone from Children’s Hospital. She was looking at a list of pediatricians, and she could only come up with one or two from this area.

Even if people don’t get screenings that day, we provide them with information about where they can receive free health care. There are many federal and state programs for the uninsured. Sometimes people don’t know about them, particularly those for children,” said Gifford.



The Center offers several programs for youth to enjoy. Here, (L to R), Therron Montgomery, 7, Shi’ Ann Brown, 11, Johnna Taylor, 7, and Celeste Brown, 22, enjoy a Heritage Works dance class.

Wanda Howze, program manager for the Northeast Guidance Center, one of The Center’s 97 mission partners, believes the Color Me Healthy Expo is an effective way to break down some barriers.

“We look at the total person in developing healthy and whole beings – including physical and emotional health. When you have limited resources, whether it’s financial or transportation, you think you don’t have any options. Events like this give us all an opportunity to showcase the services that we offer and many of them are free.”

Howze adds that the Northeast Guidance Center

will help families and individuals with the process of signing up for insurance, which is especially important in households with youth children.

The MAN (an acronym for Maintaining a Neighborhood) Network, which has developed deep roots in the community and a regular presence at The Center in several short years of operation, is also among the presenting organizations.

“We play music and provide games and carnival activities so there are places for children to play while the adults are getting their health screenings. It makes the children more conscious of nutrition by raising awareness of healthy snacks. So we don’t focus on one age demographic,” said Marcell Copeland, an administrator for the organization, which attempts to get men active in the community.

“Many men are not engaged. There’s a need for them to be proper role models. Events like Color Me Healthy allow us to recruit men.

Even if it’s just patrolling the neighborhood and watching out for the kids, we give them a leadership role.”

In an area that is economically disadvantaged, the need for resources extends far beyond health care. Color Me Healthy provides other essentials to increase the event’s benefits to the community.

“We’re going to have food certificates in partnership with a local grocery store... Mike’s Fresh Market. We realize that healthy living right now encompasses a lot of things. People are losing jobs and they need access to resources...including food. We’re even giving away free clothing. We will add any partnership that adds more resources into the community,” says Scott Gifford.

Support has come in different forms from The Skillman Foundation’s Good Neighborhoods Initiative, ARISE Detroit!, College for Creative Studies, Molina Healthcare, Children’s Hospital – DMC, Cohen Podiatry, Great Lakes Health Plan, United Children, Family Head Start and other organizations, but more involvement and help is sought. The event requires about 100 volunteers, and donations of all kinds. Businesses and individuals that donate such items as food, school supplies, and toothbrushes can

have a significant impact in easing the toll on many families in the Osborn neighborhood.

“It’s getting harder because of the downturn and how that has impacted non-profits. We normally have about 80 vendors and we’re down a bit, but still have some time to go,” says Gifford.

With 97 Matrix Human Services partner organizations offering services, there is always something positive happening at The Center, located on East McNichols, just west of Gratiot. Community programs to promote literacy, fitness, the arts, and life skills are having an impact. But, sometimes it’s the little things that many other families may take for granted that can make a difference. “We’re giving free family portraits, which we’ve done through our father’s initiative. It’s always popular.”

Gifford says The Center will continue to welcome donations and volunteers right up to the August 1 Color Me Healthy Community Expo, which is expected to draw 1,500 residents from surrounding neighborhoods. For many, it will serve as an introduction to the many programs and resources available to those in need, reaching far beyond a one-day event that demonstrates the spirit of the Osborn neighborhood.

For more information on how to donate or volunteer, call The Center at 313-526-4001 or visit matrixhumanservices.org.

Photos: Paul Engstrom/Skillman Foundation



(L to R) Laurah Brown, 8, Imari Walker, 19, Johnna Taylor, 7, Amari Cole, 6, and Destiny Watkins, 9, perfect their drumming skills.

KIDS MATTER HERE: The Skillman Foundation’s Good Neighborhoods is a 10-year \$100-million program that provides full-scale support to six Detroit neighborhoods where 65,000 children live.

COLOR ME HEALTHY

Community Expo

Saturday, August 1, 2009

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

THE CENTER Matrix Human Services

13560 East McNichols