# **Neighborhood Team - Activity Report 2024**

***Keeping Neighbors Connected* (KNC); *Thanksgiving Year-Round* (TYR)**

**and other neighborhood support activities**

**Members:** Jane Glaze, ORUCC, working with Loretta Swanson, ORUCC member; Eric Alvin, Joining Forces for Families (JFF) county agency; and Rick Thomas, Good Shepard Lutheran Church (GSLC) Outreach Director

**The mission of Keeping Neighbors Connected (KNC),** founded in late 2018 as a neighborhood coalition with Joining Forces for Families Social Worker, is to promote housing stability in the Southwest Madison neighborhoods. The SW neighborhoods are a diverse community of White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Refugee and Immigrant ethnic groups. We acknowledge that stable housing promotes stable community and schools and improves success for all students.

To achieve the mission, 3 KNC coalition churches had housing campaigns in 12/2020 and 2/2021. These funds have provided one-time emergency housing funds for which the JFF Social Worker (Eric Alvin) may use for families who he or other case workers counsel. In a post pandemic era of soaring house and rental prices, KNC has pivoted from allowing $250/family (pre-COVID) to now $1000/family in emergency assistance. By Fall 2024, our KNC funds (managed by Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - GSLC) were depleted to the point of restricting ability to help families. Hence, 2024 has been a year of rethinking our coalition goals and ongoing ability to offer emergency housing assistance.

In the past 1-2 years, KNC members have supported increased partnership with current programs-especially those of GSLC. Beyond financial needs, a range of volunteer opportunities has been communicated; hence KNC has become a bridge for mutual collaboration within our neighborhood.

**2024 Neighborhood Support Activities and Accomplishments for which we give gratitude include:**

1. KNC team presented PowerPoint *programs to two key Neighborhood Association Boards* to generate awareness and new ideas for providing emergency housing assistance for neighborhood families. Response was positive and we will continue to seek other Association Boards for input.
2. *Successful ORUCC Compassion Offerings* that continue to support neighborhood programs included:

* *July 2024* for the GSLC Neighborhood Food Pantry (also featured the longstanding role of ORUCC veggie garden to support the pantry)
* *October 2024* for the Thanksgiving Year-Round fund

1. Volunteer opportunities for ORUCC members highlighted in 2024: GSLC weekly Food Pantry (2-3hour shift 1x/month); Housing Navigator at the Meadowood Community Center weekly “Job Shop” (3-hour shift 1x/month\*high need) that ORUCC helped to create nearly a decade ago.
2. In December 2024, KNC received a donation from EPIC “Soft Hearts” program and a $1000 donation from the ORUCC Greeting Card Project. A *big shoutout to EPIC and our own LuAnn and Peg*! These donations to the KNC fund, combined with a few other private donations to the KNC Fund year-end balance, will enable our local JFF social worker to financially assist 2-3 families per month in 2025.
3. In winter 2024, a working protocol was developed for our internal Emergency Housing fund. This fund of <$5000 was available for ORUCC members needing one-time financial assistance and/or to neighbors *not* meeting the KNC protocol (for families only). It was decided that this fund would be closed at years end. The remaining funds of >$2000 were distributed to 3 neighbor families in December.

***We celebrate and appreciate YOU!*** The KNC team (Eric, Rick, Jane) and TYR leaders (Jane, Loretta) acknowledge the vital and supportive role of ORUCC in our Southwest neighborhood. We *celebrate and give unending gratitude* for the above listed accomplishments that include ORUCC member *volunteerism* (ie Food Pantry; Veggie Garden Mission Team; Job Shop; Card sales) and *personal donations* that support our neighborhood. **As ORUCC members, YOU have made a positive difference in aiding the stability of neighbors, local schools and neighborhood community.**

**2025 Vision:** As one can see, there are many ORUCC members and groups doing good work to meet the housing crisis, growing and distributing of fresh vegetables, basic foods and essential needs, while providing joy at the holidays through donations of children gifts and Woodman’s gift cards. **We at ORUCC must be proud of working locally to better our community**! As we partner more with GSLC to fulfill neighborhood needs, the hope for 2025 will be to formalize an ORUCC *Neighborhood Mission Team (meet 4-6x/year) to promote internal coordination and communication for our neighborhood* *related initiatives*. Partnering within other church Mission Teams and interested members may generate new ideas and enthusiasm for the concept of “*working local*”! *If this opportunity interests you, contact Jane Glaze*