



NEIGHBORHOOD ink

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Hundreds Lend A Helping Hand to Gary

Gary ~ In May, NI, supported by Catholic Charities, began organizing partners for a cleanup project in the Midtown area of Gary. Rees Park was cleaned up and refurbished and was adopted by the McDonald's restaurant at 5th and Grant. Borman Square Park was cleaned up over several months by Grace Center Outreach Ministries for Christ, Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., the Lake County Work Release Program unit, a volunteer from Hammond and others. These volunteers have donated close to 300 hours cleaning, repairing and refurbishing these two parks.

A further step of the cleanup process took place in September and October. Three student groups cleaned up 20 vacant lots on the 500-800 blocks of Harrison and the 700 block of Van Buren.



For their first effort here, over 65 Hammond Baptist School students and their supervisors arrived at the corner of 7th and Harrison in Gary the morning of October 9 to clean up garbage, cut down overgrowth and spruce up the area's vacant lots. Before starting, Keith Speaks thanked them for coming and reminded the parochial school students that Jesus helped those in need by performing miracles that required physical work.



Grabbing gloves, tools and using their strong work ethic, these volunteers jumped right into their tasks. Neighbor Bill Richardson arrived shortly thereafter with a chainsaw and started cutting up small trees that had taken over the lots. Several of the boys cleared sidewalks of overgrown grass with shovels and ice scrapers. A neighbor whose property is adjacent to the cleanup site provided rakes and other tools to assist the volunteers.

Five hours and 25 pizzas later, the workers called it a day and loaded back onto the bus for the ride home. Ten lots were transformed and approximately 250 feet of sidewalks were now visible and safe.

Another busload of volunteers, this time from City Baptist School in Hammond, arrived one week later to continue the job. Over 85 middle and high school students were unleashed at the corner of 8th and Van Buren. These workers zealously attacked the overgrown sidewalks, weeds, trash and other refuse on seven lots, using hundreds of bags and dozens of tools to do so.

Bill Richardson came to the rescue again with his chainsaw, clearing the way for workers to pick up trash and other discarded items. Tires, siding and mattresses were just a small sample of the items the volunteers piled up for the city to pick up. Scores of vehicles passing on 8th Avenue slowed while their passengers gawked at the massive cleanup.

All that hard work on a warm day really worked up an appetite. Nearly 50 pizzas and six cases of water were quickly consumed at lunchtime.

Wrapping up the event around 2:00 PM, bus ministry youth pastor Ricky Torres loaded up the students on the bus and thanked Neighborhoods Inc. for the opportunity to serve Gary's community. Many of the kids are from Chicago, he said, and wake up at 4:00 AM to be picked up by their transportation system at 5:00 so they could make it to school on time. Going home they face the same long ride, he said.

Since then, NI has received numerous phone calls from Gary residents who wish to continue the cleanup efforts. Grateful and inspired, they hope to pick up where NI left off and beautify their city, little by little.



PLEASE DONATE TO NI!

Neighborhoods Inc. is in full fundraising mode! Please consider sending a tax-deductible contribution to help us continue our mission of improving Calumet Region communities. We cannot do it without your help!

Please mail your donation to:
Neighborhoods Inc.
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