

The Bulletin

Year in Review

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KNOX COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT



March 2024 - KCDC and city get grant for Reconnect Communities project

Knoxville's Community Development Corporation was awarded a \$42.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in March to implement a civic infrastructure plan to begin the restoration of cultural and economic opportunity to communities impacted by urban renewal initiatives. The seven-phase project, in partnership with the City of Knoxville, will create nearly 10 miles of connectivity improvements to link East Knoxville residents to economic, cultural and recreational amenities.



June 2024 - Transforming Western phase 2 demo begins

The first step in Phase 2 for the Transforming Western initiative got underway in June with the demolition of 12 buildings off Oldham Avenue, Reed Street and Bonnyman Street. The transformation plan for the housing site and the surrounding neighborhood features enhanced access to housing, economic opportunity, transportation and youth development.



July 2024 - Boy Scout establishes Little Free Library and picnic area at Nature's Cove

Thanks to local Boy Scout Gray Rosenblad, of Troop 757, Nature's Cove in July received its own Little Free Library and two new picnic tables. Gray did the project in part to earn his rank of Eagle Scout.



July 2024 – Guy B. Love Towers dog park officially opens

A new dog park at Guy B. Love Towers officially opened July 31 thanks to the City of Knoxville. The city project received grant funding through the Boyd Foundation’s Knox Neighborhood Dog Parks program.

August 2024 – KCDC breaks ground on third phase of First Creek at Austin

Knoxville’s Community Development Corporation officially broke ground Aug. 1 on the third phase of First Creek at Austin, the city’s first mixed-income, affordable housing community. Phase III will include 161 new housing units, including 50 supportive housing units for low-income seniors, age 62 and older. The family units will be in large buildings and townhomes and will offer one- to four-bedroom options.



August 2024 – First Creek at Austin Phase II opens

Knoxville’s Community Development Corporation, along with business and community leaders, stakeholders and residents, officially cut the ribbon Aug. 29 on the second phase of First Creek at Austin, part of the city’s first mixed-income, affordable housing community. Phase II offers 180 one- to three-bedroom units near the city’s urban center with a fitness center, outdoor green space and indoor community spaces.



September 2024 – KCDC gets grant for improved pedestrian access in Western Heights & Beaumont

KCDC was awarded a \$1.7 million Safe Streets and Roads for All Demonstration Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in September to improve pedestrian access for key neighborhoods in the Transforming Western initiative. Funding will go toward installing five signalized crosswalks for safety around Beaumont Magnet Academy and Western Heights Head Start. Funding will provide safer access to the new planned neighborhood park, including improvements to the intersection at Reed Street and Oldham Avenue, as well as additional money for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programming at Beaumont. SRTS promotes safety strategies like Walking School Bus or bike trains, where teachers or other adult volunteers accompany children on their way to school.





November 2024 - Liberty Place opens

Knoxville’s Community Development Corporation, along with business and community leaders and residents, came together Nov. 21 to ceremoniously open Liberty Place with the cut of a ribbon. The 32-unit permanent supportive housing development is specifically for veterans and offers one-bedroom units to those who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless



KCDC officially opens supportive housing for veterans

Knoxville’s Community Development Corporation (KCDC), along with business and community leaders and residents, officially opened Liberty Place, a 32-unit permanent supportive housing development for veterans, on Nov. 21.

The residential development, which is located at 3627 Division St. in West Knoxville, is KCDC’s first housing site specifically for veterans and provides one-bedroom units to veterans who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

“Liberty Place provides safe and essential housing for veterans who need assistance to stabilize their life,” Ben Bentley, KCDC executive director and CEO, said. “It’s also important that these residents have the necessary resources to maintain that stability. Liberty Place not only provides a safe home, but also on-site supportive services to help ensure a successful transition to permanent housing.”

The fully furnished units, which include 16 fully accessible ADA units, provide utilities and conveniences such as walk-in showers and on-site maintenance. Liberty Place residents are participants in the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) voucher program, a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to move veterans out of homelessness and

into permanent housing.

“Our military veterans deserve the dignity of safe, supportive places to call home,” Indya Kincannon, Knoxville mayor, said. “I want to thank all the partners who have helped make Liberty Place a reality.”

The VA also will have offices onsite to offer case management services to residents that include coordination of medical services and community resources. The combination of intensive case management and long-term housing assistance will provide resources to allow the veterans to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

KCDC partnered with Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) to include solar panels and higher efficiency equipment including heat pump water heaters, which are a first for the organization’s housing developments. All equipment and solar panels will be monitored on an ongoing basis to track performance and efficiency data.

Additional partners include civic groups, companies and individuals that have provided the soft goods for each unit, including bedding, towels and toiletries.

“When multiple entities and agencies work together to find the best solution, the result is housing like Liberty Place,” Glenn

Jacobs, Knox County mayor, said. “Veterans will receive a much-needed safety net with permanent and stable housing in a community that recognizes their service and meets their immediate needs. On behalf of Knox County, I am glad we had a role in the process.”

Funding sources for the \$15 million project include \$2 million in federal funds; \$500,000 in affordable housing funds from the City of Knoxville; \$7.1 million in tax credits from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA); \$1 million from the HOME Investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan Program (HOME-ARP); and land donated by Knox County.

Wells Fargo is providing both construction and permanent debt, and First Horizon Bank is providing tax credit equity. The architect for Liberty Place is BarberMcMurry with Jenkins & Stiles as general contractor.

VIDEO: Click [here](#) for a video of the event.



Donors help stock Liberty Place units

Local organizations rallied together Jan. 7 to fill Liberty Place units with donated soft goods to ensure they were move-in ready for veterans. Donated items, such as bedding, towel and toiletries, were placed in units local organizations adopted.

“The construction of Liberty Place provides safe housing for veterans who need assistance to stabilize their life,” Ben Bentley, KCDC executive director and CEO, said. “The organizations that donated items ensured it felt like a home, and we appreciate the community stepping forward to assist a very vulnerable population in Knoxville.”

To date, Liberty Place units have been adopted by Paris Angel, Mary Burrus, Deon Ford, RaeLynn Herbster, Kerry Lovely, Karen Milliken and Tim Vowell; Beaver Ridge United Methodist Church Dorcas Circle Women’s Group; Daughters of the American Revolution, Emory Road Chapter; Daughters of the American Revolution, Samuel Frazier Chapter; Irreverent Warriors; Larry and Donna Edwards; Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Teresa Maples/Maury Middle School; Leadership Knoxville Class of 2024; NOI; Ossoli Circle; University of Tennessee Medical Center Hospice Services- Knoxville; and Women’s Council of Realtors Knoxville Network.

Other monetary and in-kind donations came from Susan Cash; First Baptist Church Sevierville; Devoted Health; Freedom Investment

Group; Nicole Gross; Sharon Hajko; Sherri Hopper; Ron Keeton; Phillip Lawson; Gloria Loftin; Terry McKee; Richard Moon; Ossoli Circle; Warren Palmer; Planet Xchange; Senior Financial Group; Glenda Smith; Gail Snyder; The Little Red Hen; Veterans Coffee Fellowship, Maryville, Tennessee; Leah Williams; and Elizabeth Wilson.

Government and other organizational support came from the American Heart Association; City of Knoxville Affordable Housing Fund; Electric Power Research Institute; Knox County Government; Oak Ridge National Laboratory; Tennessee Valley Authority; U.S. Rep. Tim Burchett, Community Project Funding; and U.S. Department of Energy Building Technologies Office.

Welcome home letters for veteran residents were provided by Daughters of the American Revolution and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc.

Groups came back Jan. 9 to meet and greet with residents.



Toys and sports balls given to KPD

Thank you to the generosity of everyone who collected sports balls and toys for the KCDC holiday luncheon. Four bags filled with donations were given to Knoxville Police Department Dec. 18.

“I think it’s a great thing to have donations like this from KCDC to give to the kids and that KCDC gives it to the officers to hand it to the kids,” KPD Sgt. Kyle Loveday said. “It builds a rapport with the community. It helps the police department have an interaction with the community, and the kids get so excited when they see the new toys, the new balls and stuff, they’re so excited.”



Jingle & Mingle at The Manor

A Jingle & Mingle open house was held Dec. 10 at The Manor at Northgate Terrace. The event was used as way for everyone to enjoy some snacks, see the renovations made, and get answers concerning The Manor program.



Rental Assistance office holiday breakfast

Staff from the Section 8 Rental Assistance office got together Dec. 19 for a festive, fun time during a holiday breakfast at Cracker Barrel.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

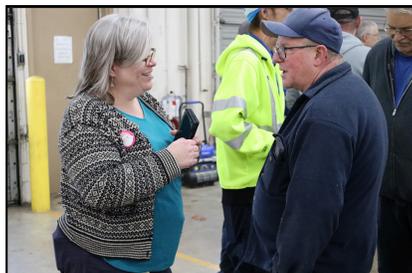
Before 2024 came to a close, KCDC employees got together for some fellowship and fun Dec. 11 during the holiday luncheon.

VIDEO: Click [here](#) for a video of the event.

“ WE HOUSE ABOUT 20,000 PEOPLE IN KNOX COUNTY AT ANY GIVEN POINT. THAT’S PRETTY AMAZING, RIGHT? THAT’S BECAUSE OF THE WORK THAT EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM DOES TOGETHER. ”



Dessert Contest Winner
Linda Thomas - Coconut Cake



Health & Wellness

Observed every February, Heart Health Awareness Month highlights the importance of cardiovascular health and encourages adopting healthy habits to lessen the risk of heart disease.

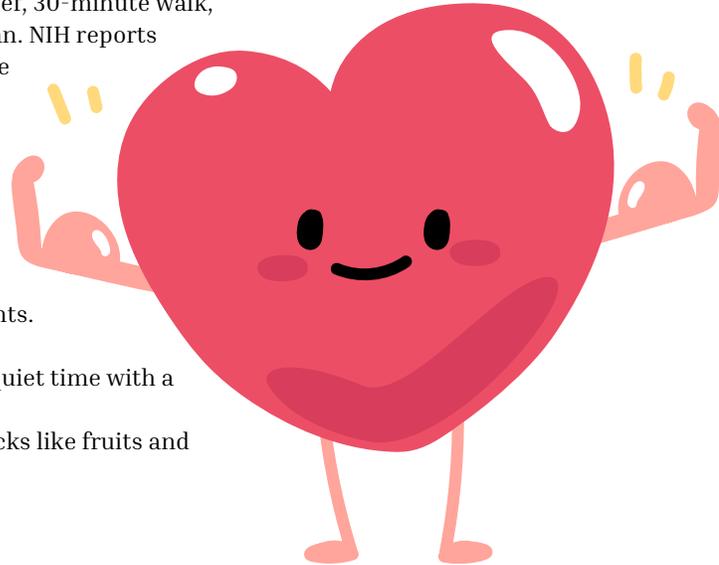
According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, but there are things you can do to prevent it. Take a brief, 30-minute walk, get some much-needed quality sleep, and cook healthier meals when you can. NIH reports doing small acts of self-care can keep your blood pressure in a healthy range and reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Ways to improve your overall health

According to NIH, here are some ways to improve your health:

- Get a daily dose of physical activity, such as a brisk, 30-minute walk.
- Cook meals that are low in sodium and unhealthy fats.
- Take your medications as prescribed and keep your medical appointments.
- Sleep 7-8 hours a night.
- Manage stress through, for example, meditation, yoga, a warm bath or quiet time with a good book or funny movie.
- Try to reach or stay at a healthy weight by moving more and having snacks like fruits and vegetables ready to grab when hunger hits.

Visit [here](#) for more information on how you can lead a healthy lifestyle.



New Hires

The following were recently hired through Dec. 31 at Knoxville's Community Development Corporation:



Xander Landrum
 Hired: 11/13/24
 Title: Maintenance Tech. I
 Place: First Creek at Austin



Paula Dixson
 Hired: 11/25/24
 Title: Legal and Customer Service Specialist
 Place: Main Office



Victor Berger
 Hired: 11/26/24
 Title: Maintenance Tech. II
 Place: Montgomery Village

Retirements

The following recently retired from Knoxville's Community Development Corporation:



Broderick Kelley
 Retired: 12/20/24
 Title: Maintenance Tech. II
 Place: Isabella Towers
 Years of Service: 22

KCDC Spotlight

The Spotlight aims to recognize the amazing things KCDC employees are doing to help make the community and workplace better. Email jnash@kcdc.org if you think there's someone we should highlight.

Darlene Farmer

Property Manager



For more than two decades, Darlene Farmer has proudly called KCDC her place of employment. On Jan. 3, she marked 25 years with the organization – a milestone she says has gone by in a flash.

“I like to stay busy because I like the time to go by fast,” Darlene said.

In late 1999, Darlene applied to KCDC as an administrative assistant, seeking a role that would keep her engaged and allow her to invest in her future.

“I was working for a private rental company and at the time they didn't have retirement benefits,” Darlene said. “I wanted to work somewhere with retirement benefits, so I applied with KCDC not knowing anything about public housing or what it really even was.”

The decision proved to be a rewarding one. Today, she spends her days connecting with residents, meeting new people, and helping them secure a vital necessity – housing at Guy B. Love Towers.

“Seeing the smiles on residents' faces when they move into their new home,” she said. “Being able to do events, activities and spending time with residents. A lot of them think of us as family. It gives me great gratification.”

Darlene treasures hearing residents' stories and learning about the paths their lives have taken. Her commitment to helping others extends beyond work. For the past three years, she has volunteered monthly at CareCuts of Knoxville alongside her husband, Aaron, and 10-year-old son, AJ. CareCuts provides clothing, haircuts and resources for the homeless. She hopes these experiences teach her son the value of humility.

Darlene began her KCDC journey in January 2000 as an administrative assistant at Montgomery Village. For two years, she supported the occupancy manager and property manager, laying the foundation for her current role. Over the years, she has served as property manager for Cagle Terrace, Montgomery Village, Lonsdale Homes and Guy B. Love Towers.

“I have enjoyed my time at KCDC,” Darlene said. “Employees over the years became my second family as everyone who worked here never left until retirement. I enjoy the close bond we all share.”

Darlene anticipates retiring in five or six years. When that time arrives, she hopes to travel the country and just have fun while she's young enough to enjoy it.

“My husband used to throw a dart and wherever the dart landed was where we'd go,” Darlene said. “We just want to get us an RV and just travel, park it wherever and have no destination. Just go.”

Farm life

Every weekday morning, Darlene starts her day at 4 a.m., feeding the dogs, making breakfast for her son, and preparing for the



hour-long drive to work from Grainger County – a place she has called home her entire life.

Darlene grew up working on her father's 200-acre farm, which focused on tobacco, hay and beef cattle. While the work was challenging, it shaped her decision to pursue a career outside of farming.

“As I kid, I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, I don't want to do this the rest of my life’,” she said. “As a kid, though, when you work hard like that it's like, ‘I don't want to do this. I'll work overtime.’ That's really how I felt – ‘I'll work overtime and get paid more doing overtime and it not be as hard as that.’ Most of that's done in the heat of the summer, the tobacco, and it's so exhausting. I didn't want to do that for my income for a living. But I love and enjoy living on a farm.”

Even now, she helps her 79-year-old father with farm chores after work when needed, though she jokes that the hardest tasks fall to her husband since he's retired. The farm still raises hay, beef cattle and sheep, though they stopped growing tobacco 14 years ago after her brother's passing.

Darlene is thankful for the strong values her parents instilled in her during her upbringing.

“I was raised with good work ethics and in a good Christian home,” Darlene said. “Watching my parents work so hard during the day and then going to the fields to work until dark. I didn't grow up knowing we were poor because we had all we needed.”

She now sees those values being passed down to her two adult daughters, Ramsey and Kimberlyn, and AJ, who has a love of farming.

“He has been driving a tractor since he was like 3,” Darlene said. “He says all those tractors are his. He loves it. He loves to put on his boots and his dirty jeans. He wants to hide his jeans so that you don't wash them because the nastier they are the harder you work.”

“He'll hide them sometimes so I can't find them,” she added, laughing. “But he loves it. He loves the hard work. I've got to say, he is a hardworking little kid.”

While she admires her son's passion for farming, she wants him

to understand that it's more than just a hobby.

"I guess because he's the only little boy, eventually he'll be the only one left to do it," Darlene said. "My daughters, I mean they like farming. We raise a garden every year and we still do, just not as big as it used to be, but my oldest daughter she really took interest in that. She's a very nature-type person. She raised peanuts one year and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, peanuts.' By the time we got done, she had a huge trashcan full of peanuts."

Children a focus

Darlene can often be found taking AJ to whichever sport is in season when she's not at work.

"My hobbies are literally my kids," she said. "My girls played sports their whole lives. They played basketball, they played softball and soccer, and so I did that, and then they went to college, and then I had my little boy before they graduated high school. It's just went from them to now him. He plays year-round. He's in basketball right now. When basketball's over, we'll start baseball, it lasts all summer. When that's over, we'll play football. We don't have time for hobbies. His sports are our hobbies."

Her daughters have gone on to pursue successful careers. Kimberlyn, 26, is now a nurse in the U.S. Air Force, while Ramsey, 24, graduated three years ago from Middle Tennessee State University with a degree in forensic science. Darlene is extremely proud of both.

Whenever she can find the time, Darlene enjoys going on cruises – sometimes as many as five times a year.

"My husband's like, 'We just need to go somewhere and do an all-inclusive,' and I'm like, 'I just like getting on the boat and just being able to do whatever I want to do,'" she said, laughing. "We cruise a lot."

They plan to take a cruise to Belize this month and another to Alaska in April.

Seeing the smiles on residents' faces when they move into their new home. Being able to do events, activities and spending time with residents. A lot of them think of us as family. It gives me great gratification.

- Darlene Farmer

'Tis the season in Western Heights

Christmas came early for many families in Western Heights, thanks to a collaboration among several organizations.

Residents were invited to enjoy an evening of crafts, food and holiday cheer, including a free gift for children aged 0-19. The festive holiday party took place 6-8 p.m. Dec. 13 at The Center at Western, for Western Heights residents.

The event was made possible by Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC), The Center at Western, City of Knoxville Office of Community Safety and Empowerment, Creative Community Cultural Arts, Knoxville Area Urban League, Justice Knox, and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

According to a CAC follow-up report, the event was attended by 48 families, with 144 children receiving a gift.



Knox County Community Health Assessment

The Knox County Health Department is conducting a community survey to gather information from residents on their overall health and well-being. The anonymous results of this survey will be compiled and used to help develop the Community Health Assessment (CHA). Released every five years, the CHA provides a detailed look at the state of health in Knox County and identifies the community's public health priorities and needs.

This survey is a critical part of the process. That's where the health department needs your help! The community survey will be open for responses from Jan. 8-Feb. 5. You can use the link below to complete the survey, which will take 10-15 minutes. No identifying information will be collected.

Click [here](#) to participate in the short survey.

Announcements

Got an announcement you'd like to put in The Bulletin? Email the information to jnash@kcdc.org. The deadline for content will typically fall on the last Monday or Tuesday of the month before publication.

Newsletter Dates

The Bulletin is scheduled to be released every two months. Here are the newsletters for 2025:

- March-April
- May-June
- July-August
- September-October
- November-December

Newsletter Ideas

Got something you think could be in The Bulletin? Email information to jnash@kcdc.org. The deadline for content will typically fall on the last Monday or Tuesday of the month before publication.

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Resident Resources

