



I AM AMANI

2020 NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERS'

# AMANI REPORT

NEIGHBORHOOD  
PRIORITY AREA:

# Neighborhood Safety

**WHAT AMANI UNITED WILL DO:** Increase neighbors' willingness to support self, other neighbors, and community to achieve community peace.

**INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:** • Residents report willingness to actively support the achievement of community peace. • Residents report engagement in actively supporting the achievement of community peace. • Residents report engagement in addressing public safety efforts.



## 2020 NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUPS

### Partners, Residents, Volunteers Keep Amani Clean & Safe



This summer Mark from Safe & Sound participated in weekly walks with resident Brenda Hart-Richardson and other retired women in Amani. These walks became a catalyst for organizing an Amani Clean up in the area of Burleigh and Townsend, near Hopkins, toward 26th Street.

The group said they had grown tired of looking at the amount of garbage in the neighborhood and nothing being done about it. At the end of July, the group, along with other commu-

nity partners and residents, planned the cleanup for the end of August.

Mark reserved a trailer with KGMB for supplies and coordinated with Safe & Sound to have 60 bagged lunches catered. The event was successful – 35 volunteers participated and 30 bags of trash were collected.

Partners included the Dominican Center, Wisconsin Anti Violence Effort, COA, Running Rebels, Pricewaterhouse Cooper LLC and KGMB.

## PRIORITY AREA: NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY



### SUPPORTING PRIORITIES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The COVID pandemic really put a halt to a lot of the intended work for the year but our team was able to successfully pivot by attending virtual meetings and connecting with residents in the Amani neighborhood by digital means versus the traditional in-person approach. The D5 team has also done several outreach sessions in the neighborhood that just looked a little different (rather than door-to-door, we did literature drops) but had the same goal of getting information to residents that may not have digital access to it.

Here are a couple of highlights:

• *Candidates' Forum for the 6th Senate and 16th Assembly Districts:* After several weeks of plan-

ning, the Candidates' Forum came together over Zoom. Safe & Sound asked questions about public safety and community-police relations to the candidates, and thanked the moderator, presenters, candidates and participants for attending. D5 Safe & Sound Community Organizer Mark later shared a link to the recording with his network.

• *Amani Neighborhood Walk:* Our Safe & Sound D5 Community Organizer, Mark, walked with several residents in the northern part of the Amani neighborhood as part of their regular walks to assess what needs to be reported for DNS services or otherwise.

• *MICAH/Hephatha Church Meeting:* The MICAH group from Hephatha met for their monthly meeting to share partner updates and have a check-in. One of the residents has had lots of problems with violence in the neighborhood. She provided an update on neighborhood nuisances and Organizer Mark suggested he would share one nuisance in particular with the Neighborhood Safety Coordinator.



### KEEPING AMANI SAFE

- When COVID-19 hit, MCTS placed ads throughout the city in what was known as "hotspots" (areas where there was a spike in COVID numbers), Amani was one of those neighborhoods. The purpose of those ads was to educate those in the community and reduce exposure.
- MCTS passed out masks, installed mask and hand sanitizer dispensers on buses.
- Last year MCTS was scheduled to remove certain bus routes/stops that would affect Amani. We hosted focus groups and listening sessions to receive resident feedback. We were able to keep those routes and plan to add more routes to better serve the community.

### PROVIDING EVIDENCE BASED STRATEGIES & DATA TO CREATE SAFETY

Working on the Amani Safety Initiative, we summarized and analyzed crime data and traffic safety. Presented to the project team, resident leaders, funders, and created door hangers to disseminate results. This also resulted in the Amani Youth Council using our Data to determine placement

of traffic signs designed to curb reckless driving.

We also prepared a report on underlying health conditions related to Covid-19 in the Amani neighborhood and facilitated a successful data chat with residents during an Amani United meeting.

We continue to provide partners and residents with research on evidence based strategies and data

### DATA YOU CAN USE

FROM PEOPLE YOU CAN TRUST

to create safe neighborhoods.

Partners included Dominican Center, LISC, Safe N Sound, DA's office, MPD and Amani United.

## PRIORITY AREA: **NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY**

### ■ **CULTURE, ART & SAFETY IN AMANI**

## Moody Park Basketball Court Redesigned with Youth Input

### **IMAGINEMKE**

We are working with multiple neighborhood partners (COA, Friends of Moody Park) to increase their capacity by connecting them with partners to arts and culture organizations.

Over the summer we have worked with Friends of Moody Park to transform the courts with updated backboards based on input from youth in the community. We are also working with COA to increase partnerships in design and create a sector to increase the diversity of their skill sets with the goal of cre-



ating a pathway to higher education or entrepreneurship into the design and creative workforce.

Partners included Amani United, COA, Friends of Moody Park,

Black Lens MKE, UWM Peck School of the arts, Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, UWM Documentary Program, Danceworks, ActivateMKE, Milwaukee Public Library, Greater Together.

### **RESIDENT LEADERS PROMOTE SAFETY & SPUR ENGAGEMENT**

Through the development of resident leaders, the Dominican Center is promoting Safe Neighborhoods. Two key resident leader groups are the Block Ambassadors and the Amani United Leadership Team.

These two groups of residents are charged with being aware of the needs of the neighborhood, the incidents occurring on the blocks and leading the engagement of other residents. They are armed with resources, key stakeholder contacts, elected official support and the technical assistance pro-

vided by Dominican Center staff.

This group is in the driver's seat of all intervention, innovations and changes being made in Amani. There are currently more than 20 Ambassadors and additional 10 Amani United Leaders.

Their activities have included environment walkthrough tours with Milwaukee Development Commissioner Lafayette Crump, Neighborhood Safety Survey with Data You Can Use, Weekly clean ups with Safe & Sound, and neighborhood beautification (previously Bloom and Groom) with Habitat for Humanity. Another ongoing accomplishment in this area is the relationship with the District



5 Bike Officers. Residents are aware of their presence and role in the neighborhood as evidenced by the number of residents that reach out to them directly to share concerns. In addition, they receive ongoing input regarding abandoned vehicles left throughout the neighborhood and illegal dumping.

Partners included Data You Can Use, Safe & Sound, MPD, COA, Journal Sentinel, Habitat for Humanity, Amani United.

NEIGHBORHOOD  
PRIORITY AREA:

# Education & Family Well-Being

**WHAT AMANI UNITED WILL DO:** Increase family well-being and life-long learning.

**INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:** • Amani Residents serve on decision making teams in neighborhood organizations. • Organizations serving Amani connect with residents that need the services provided. • Amani Residents have access to all services needed to have positive family well-being.



## HEALTHY FOOD FOR AMANI FAMILIES

### Food for School Pantries, Holidays Distributed in Amani



This year more than ever, it was critical to get food to families in need. While the coronavirus pandemic posed some challenges, we were still able to run the school pantries and Dominican Center mobile pantries in a safe way.

Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin, in partnership with Northwestern Mutual, hosted mobile pantries through the Auer Avenue Community School during the school year and the Dominican Center during the

summer. Combined, nearly 50,000 pounds of food was distributed.

During Thanksgiving and Christmas, Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin distributed an additional 200 food boxes, turkeys and hams to Amani families.

Thank you to the community for the support of our mission to solve hunger and helping feed our Amani neighbors in need.

## PRIORITY AREA: EDUCATION & FAMILY WELL-BEING

### TEENS GROWING GREENS

#### TEENS GROWING AND DONATING FOOD FOR FAMILIES IN AMANI

We have been active in the Amani neighborhood, hiring youth from the Amani neighborhood. We are also growing food in the COA gardens and donating the food we produce to the COA Food Pantry. In addition, we are now strategically recruiting for the 2021 internship within Amani partners.

Partners included Dominican Center and Amani United.



FOR TEEN GIRLS INC.

#### TEENS GROWING AND DONATING FOOD FOR FAMILIES IN AMANI

We hosted a 9-week virtual summer program and recruited in Amani, we also have just begun our fall programming and are hosting a virtual group based out of Hephatha and are connecting this group of girls with the Amani Youth Council for partnership, engagement and community service.

Partners included Dominican Center, Safe & Sound, Hephatha Lutheran Church.



#### AMANI YOUTH ORGANIZE

### Youth March Against Violence, Feed Homeless, Curb Reckless Driving

The Amani Youth Council's Youth March Against Gun Violence was designed, organized and hosted by The Amani Youth Council, this march against gun violence was held to raise awareness around gun violence through the voice of Amani's Youth Leaders. Various organizations from The Dominican Center, 414 Life, COA Youth & Family Centers, and host of other organizations joined Safe & Sound Youth Organizer Brooks Griffin and The Amani Youth Council for their initiative.

They also participated Justice Rally in partnership with the NAACP Youth Council, made sandwiches for the MacCannon Brown Homeless Sanctuary, passed out masks that could be decorated by the younger children, educating them on the importance of wearing



masks. They called the event the MASKerade and passed these out in Moody Park for Halloween. Lastly, the youth collected cold weather apparel to pass out to Amani Youth and Families. They partnered with COA and hosted the distribution in conjunction with the holiday food baskets being distributed.

The Council also gathered data from neighborhood partner Data You Can Use to determine placement of 50 slow down signs, purchased by LISC, to curb reckless driving in Amani.

## PRIORITY AREA: **EDUCATION & FAMILY WELL-BEING**



### **SAFE & SOUND WORKS WITH YOUTH TO BUILD COMMUNITY IN AMANI**

• Presentation to Hephatha Church's youth work ministry: Pastor Kannass with Hephatha Church invited Brooks and Mark

to be guest presenters to the church's youth work ministry, a group that was supported by the church during the summer months this year. On Tuesday Aug. 11, Mark presented, with support from Brooks, on "collective efficacy," what it is and how people can become more involved in their communities. The presentation was well-received by the group and Pastor Kannass has since asked Brooks and Mark to continue collaborating with the church.

• Basketball Game & Backpack Giveaway: Zoe (Safe & Sound DFC Organizer) helped one of the teens who is part of the DFC Youth Council with an event that she facilitated. Kaila Baskerville is a teen who has been working with the DFC since July 2019 and has been involved in two DFC events. Kaila organized this event with the help of her family and friends. Twenty-five young people came to the event to play basketball and receive backpacks filled with supplies.

### **IMPROVING FAMILIES' FINANCIAL STABILITY, INCREASE NET WORTH**

Riverworks Financial Clinic has been working with The Dominican Center & Amani residents seeking to improve financial stability in their neighborhoods. During the first quarter of our grant, the Financial Clinic explored the data that represents the reality of generational poverty within the Amani neighborhood.

The Clinic has been providing financial coaching services to Amani residents; coaching residents to make wise financial decisions, including budget, credit repair, and debt management and preparing renters for homeownership. Through a series of below activities, Riverworks Financial Clinic has started to connect with Amani families with a goal of helping them increase their credit scores and net worth, get connected to employment opportunities and become successful homeowners.

• Met with the Dominican Center

staff to discuss Riverworks Financial Clinic's coaching model and ways in which the Clinic could train resident leaders in Amani to become Financial Coaches.

- Enrolled 6 Amani residents in the Financial Clinic program.
- Attended the Amani's End of Summer Bash to connect with families who are interested in homeownership.
- Hosted a Community Resource Drive through fair; providing families with a \$50 gift card, a box of food, employment resource packet, a swag bag full of goodies, register families to vote and completed census registrations.

It's been very rewarding to partner with the Dominican Center to improve financial outcomes in the Amani neighborhoods by strengthening residents, improving their neighborhoods, and integrating income, workforce and financial coaching supports. This partnership will create immediate



## **RIVERWORKS**

and long term financial behavioral changes throughout Milwaukee.

Through our collaboration with Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund, Riverworks is launching a financial crisis 211 platform, helping residents in Amani deal with the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Riverwork's Financial Navigator will be providing remote assistance in navigating critical financial issues and making referrals to other social services and resources. Trained Financial Navigators will provide structured guidance that will help strategize around supports of disruptions to their income and other financial concerns. We have also collaborated with ACTS Housing, Housing Resources, Inc, Milwaukee Urban League, Running Rebels, Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, United Community Center and local lenders to help residents impacted by social unrest and systemic racial inequities in housing and workforce advancements.

## PRIORITY AREA: **EDUCATION & FAMILY WELL-BEING**



### ■ CONTINUING EDUCATION IN AMANI

## DC Education Program Goes Virtual, Students Succeed



Dominican Center Education program began the transition to on-line learning in March 2020, due to Covid-19. Zoom online instruction and tutor assistance are provided Monday-Thursday.

We are grateful for the MATC partnership and our MATC instructor, Mitchell Anderson, for making available resources used by MATC students including navigating BLACKBOARD, the MATC online program. Chromebooks, along with needed educational materials for students, were provided by Northwestern Mutual and MATC.

We proudly report the progress students made in successfully transitioning from face-to-face instruction to online instruction. In spite of the

pandemic, 3 students received their GED/HSED and 3 additional students were referred to the GED/ HSED programs.

DC's volunteer tutors are available to students for additional assistance over the phone or on the computer. Students in the program have also banded together to help each other succeed. Even though they can't physically be together they have helped each other with assignments, and they've helped each other adapt to virtual learning.

For more information on the Dominican Center's Adult Education program, contact Education Director Barbara Parker-Wells at [barbara@dominican-center.org](mailto:barbara@dominican-center.org).

## PRIORITY AREA: **EDUCATION & FAMILY WELL-BEING**

### **SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN AMANI DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The Jewish Community Pantry has been working diligently with our partners to support the community during the challenging times of COVID-19. First, we began serving families of Clarke Street School with the help of Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin. In addition to fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy, and shelf-stable foods that we typically provide, FA and NMF have supported our distribution of five additional fruits/vegetables to each household served. We have been distributing these items with easy and healthy recipes for families to use at home. This additional produce is available to all Amani residents who visit the Pantry. We

also created Thanksgiving boxes for Amani residents who visit the Pantry to supplement the turkeys provided by Hunger Task Force. Feeding America provided us with fresh holiday produce and dairy.

More recently, we have been able to host our first ever JCP Free Flu Clinic for Amani residents. This flu clinic has been notable in that it is available to all adults in the community, including senior adults who need a higher dose vaccine. Additionally, to protect the community from COVID-19, this flu clinic has been a drive-thru.

In mid-October, our JCC staff, Pantry volunteers, and candidates running for the Amani United Board, met at the Jewish Community Pantry for our Second Annual



**Harry & Rose Samson Family  
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER**

Pantry Clean-Up. We packed up 12 garbage bags full of trash, 20 yard waste bags, and cut down enough brush to fill the curb at the corner of 29th and Center. Our neighbors on the block came out to join the efforts and we feel proud of the way our space looks for families living near the Pantry and clients.

Partners include Amani United, Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin, Medical College of Wisconsin School of Pharmacy, Imagine MKE

### **SHARING RESOURCES WITH FAMILIES IN AMANI**

In Amani, we support the Amani Revitalization Priority Area of Education & Family Well-Being. This area focuses on identifying the resources in Amani to help families thrive, as well as providing non-profit agencies with connection to residents who need the resources they offer.

We have two staff organizers dedicated to this area (Partners Organizer and Youth Organizer). We have had great success in connecting residents to resources. Through the support of various partners, residents have been connected to food through daily bag meals (Monday- Friday), weekend food

boxes, and pantry days. Dominican Center, COA, The Homeless Sanctuary, and Several Churches have been open for meal distribution during the entire season. Combined, we have been able to ensure food availability in Amani every day since the pandemic began. We also provided frozen meals from Northwestern Mutual. One resident discussed the ease of getting home, sticking it in the microwave and being able to sit down and eat.

Lastly, we focused on ensuring adults and youth felt empowered to lead, make change, and have their voices heard. This included discussions and training around various topics. These were hosted online. Topics included voting rights and responsibilities, under-



standing the pandemic's impact on social and emotional health, and traveling safely throughout the city during the pandemic.

Partners include Hunger Task Force, Feeding America, The Homeless Sanctuary, Auer Ave. School, Hopkins-Lloyd School, The Rep, COA, Imagine MKE, Neu Life, Pearls for Teen Girls, Sojourner, WI Voices/African American Roundtable, Milwaukee Transit Authority, Tobacco Prevention Network.

## PRIORITY AREA: **EDUCATION & FAMILY WELL-BEING**

### **PROTECTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS & INCREASING RESOURCES**

Sojourner immediately pivoted to ensure services could be provided safely and effectively as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded.

The services Sojourner offers are essential and it is critical now more than ever to ensure the safety and long-term success of those impacted by domestic violence. Sojourner has worked to provide the greatest care and resources to domestic violence survivors during the pandemic despite rising referrals, growing severity of violence in cases and reports a 95% rise in deaths by domestic violence.

Our first priority was to ensure the community was aware we were open and ready to serve them. These critical services had to be delivered in innovative ways to ensure client and staff safety during the pandemic. Immediately Sojourner implemented protocols for health and safety including temperature checks and social distancing. We shifted in-person advocacy services located at the Milwaukee County Courthouse to Sojourner when the courthouse closed and helped survivors file restraining orders using the new e-filing system. This allowed Sojourner to provide needed in-person assistance and create access points to services from other partners that closed due to COVID. Also, we started a free hotline for legal advice from volunteer attorneys for Sojourner clients to prepare for court and answer

questions. As expected, restraining orders have increased as domestic violence has increased throughout the pandemic.

In order to continue offering safe housing and support services, Sojourner renovated areas of the center to install dividers and reconfigure the space. This allowed services to be delivered six feet apart, prevent larger gatherings, and allow individual services to occur in a safe space. Meal times were also staggered to avoid large groups and rigorous housekeeping protocols were instated.

The pandemic has presented unique challenges for our clients which increased funding will help address such as additional funding for food, short term shelter options, laptops for children needing to attend school, and cell phones to assist with accessing services. Concerning our children services, staff are working with residential children by assisting them with school work, creating activities, and providing emotional support.

Our major challenge was uncovering all the different ways COVID-19 was impacting our clients so that we could pivot services effectively. We conducted a survey to learn about survivors' COVID-related challenges so we could deliver services to meet their needs. We learned that unemployment, food insecurity and getting evicted were the main concerns and we have provided assistance and support services to help with these issues. Though we know that domestic violence



**SOJOURNER**

is rising we experienced a decrease in calls for information and walk-in clients. We suspected two reasons: 1) Any plans survivors had prior to the virus were put on hold; and 2) many survivors questioned whether Sojourner was still open and accessible. To contend with these issues:

- We launched a public safety campaign that Home is Not a Safe Place and that Sojourner can help with safety planning, emergency shelter services and restraining orders, despite COVID and safer-at-home orders.
- We enhanced our website to be more search-engine and mobile-device friendly for survivors seeking information and support.
- We shifted from a safety campaign to a public awareness campaign called #UntilSheCan that includes a rally video and social media challenge.

For the cases Sojourner's staff are currently engaged with partners on, we are providing recommendations on all of the cases; weekly referrals to additional services, Tues/Thurs DVHRT, and follow up on the recommendations from partner stakeholder meetings.

We are currently collaborating with the Milwaukee Police Department, Milwaukee District Attorney's Office, and Safe and Sound.

## PRIORITY AREA: **EDUCATION & FAMILY WELL-BEING**

### **COA OFFERS PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT STRONG FAMILIES IN AMANI**

COA's Goldin Center is open for in-person programming, operating under strict health and safety guidelines. Our youth program is focused on supporting youth in distance learning. COA is currently open daily from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., with extended before and after care. Youth are using COA's computers in the morning to attend online classes and complete school assignments with the assistance of COA teachers. Afternoons are open for recreation, arts, and other activities. This also lifts some of the burden of childcare from parents. While not part of the Neighborhoods Project, COA's Burke Early Education Center continues to provide childcare.

Since the onset of COVID, COA has significantly expanded its food pantry in Amani in partnership with the Hunger Task Force and is currently open three days a week to ensure families have access to nutritious groceries. From March to October, COA provided more than 31 tons of food to more than 13,600 individuals. COA also partnered with the Milwaukee Center for Independence, Hunger Task Force, and Dominican Center to launch a new summer meal program at COA's pavilion in Moody Park. From April to August, we provided nearly 31,000 meals through the program.

This summer and fall COA has offered socially distanced community events and family program-

ming in Moody Park. In July, the Amani Youth Council held a March Against Gun Violence in Moody Park, uniting over 50 teens from partner organizations Safe & Sound and the Dominican Center. The Amani Youth Council also recently organized a food drive for the Mac-Canon Brown Homeless Sanctuary. COA supplied food from its food pantry. Other events include a Light & Unite Red substance abuse prevention resource fair in partnership with the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division, Stories in the Park with HIPPIY and Niche Book Bar, Gardening with Teens Grow Greens, Wild Indigo Nature Explorations, kickball, and more. In August, more than 400 families participated in Beyond the Book Bag, COA's back to school event that provides children with school supplies. Families registered in advance, picked up supplies, and visited resource tables from dozens of partners like the Children's Hospital, Feeding America, Safe & Sound.

COA is connecting families with vital resources through the Family Resource Center, including healthcare referrals, energy and legal assistance available through partner agencies, free PPE, and winter jackets. Milwaukee County has provided families healthcare resources for coping with challenges of COVID. Aurora Healthcare is adapting COA's Centering Pregnancy and Parenting Initiative for virtual programming. COA is partnering with Riverworks MKE on a new financial clinic to help Amani residents manage their finances at no cost. The Goldin Center is also an official polling place.



COA participates in monthly 53206 Stakeholder Meetings via Zoom. Through the meetings, partners have developed collaborative strategies for responding to COVID, organized the Amani United Election, and discussed opportunities for partnerships. COA is increasing outreach in Amani to engage more children & families.

COA is expanding its Family Resource Center to accommodate the growth of the food pantry while continuing to provide programming. COA is also renovating the gym to add acoustical paneling to reduce noise. Renovations will include a movie screen, projector, and speakers. This will enhance family nights and create opportunities for programming like free community movie nights.

Partners include Amani United, Dominican Center, Northwestern Mutual, Friends of Moody Park, Medical College of Wisconsin, Hunger Task Force, Feeding America, Safe & Sound, Community Advocates, Data You Can Use, UNCOM, City of Milwaukee Health Dept. & Office of Violence Prevention, Milwaukee Public Schools, Auer Ave. School, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Center for Independence, 53206 Drug-Free Communities, the COLE, UW-Extension, Aurora Healthcare, Riverworks MKE, Milwaukee County.

NEIGHBORHOOD  
PRIORITY AREA:

# Housing & Economic Development

**WHAT AMANI UNITED WILL DO:** Improve housing conditions through the model block strategy in the Amani Neighborhood.

**INDICATOR OF SUCCESS:** • Improve housing conditions on 2 model blocks by 2021.  
• Increased reported resident participation in Amani Beautification Efforts by 100%.



## ■ SUPPORTING BLOCK BY BLOCK

### Amani United Brings Beauty, Warmth to the Neighborhood



Amani United has supported a number of activities this year under the Amani Revitalization Plan priority area of Housing and Economic Development.

Amani United continued their work and support with partners on the Model Block despite the pandemic. The group worked to recruit Amani residents to receive training to help revitalize the block and improve their career outlook. In addition, Amani United participated in a number of events on the Model Block, including an End of Summer Bash in partnership with the Dominican Center. The

bash was held on the Model Block and both celebrated the work completed to this point and beautified the block with flowers.

When the weather started to turn, Amani United members and Model Block residents decorated trees with scarves, hats, gloves and other winter gear for anyone who needed it.

Lastly, Amani United worked with Community Warehouse to provide funds to residents all over Amani to improve their homes. Residents who applied were able to shop for goods needed for DIY projects.

## PRIORITY AREA: HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### BUILDING, BEAUTIFYING AMANI'S MODEL BLOCK

Currently Ezekiel is working on finalizing our CDBG funding request from the City of Milwaukee. These funds will assist us in making the repairs on our Pilot Block. Since July, we have held two community engage-

ment events, where we provided resources, food, solar address plates, and plants to beautify Amani. We have replaced a porch, two homes received windows (entire house), defective porch rebuilt, garage door replaced, two families' fences were defective and new fencing was provided. One resident developed roofing



issues, we repaired the leak and replaced the roof.

### LEGAL AID SOCIETY OFFERING WEALTH OF SERVICES IN AMANI

The Legal Aid Society continues to partner on the Amani Model Block with the Dominican Center, Ezekiel CDC, LISC and NML team. Legal Aid attends biweekly leadership team meetings to discuss strategy and advancement of the project that is revitalizing housing and economic development for the neighborhood one block at a time. Legal Aid provides representation as needed on issues involving estate planning (transfer on death documents in particular), pardon applications, consumer matters and other civil legal concerns. Legal Aid staff attended the October 3, 2020 model block party and provided information and guidance to residents who made inquiries that day. On Oct. 16, Legal Aid provided an overview of Legal Aid's services to approximately a dozen Ezekiel trainees at the model home on the model block and consulted with 4 of those individuals on specific legal issues. That event generated the scheduling of an in-person seminar on "How to Start a Successful

Business" via Legal Aid's pro bono business partner, the von Briesen law firm. The von Briesen firm frequently represents residents after these seminars and have assisted in successfully launching several to date. Legal Aid is also spreading the word about these businesses to expand customer base.

Due to the pandemic, Legal Aid's outreach efforts are now virtual, with referrals received from the listed community partners. Our neighborhood lawyer in 53206 has opened 65 cases in these last 4 challenging months. Those matters have assisted residents with housing and economic issues in a host of ways during a global public health crisis with accompanying financial fallout.

For instance, Legal Aid's neighborhood lawyer has handled cases addressing housing issues that have kept families safe and secure in their homes, preventing evictions and connecting residents to public funding, ensuring housing code violations are corrected, securing security deposits and addressing foreclosure issues. Additionally, our neighborhood legal advocacy



addresses consumer law matters during a period of mass unemployment and financial distress, particularly around unemployment insurance and employment discrimination matters as well as consumer, tax and estate planning to aid in wealth preservation for the next generation.

Legal Aid continues to be proactive on behalf of the Amani neighborhood and to provide services as needed. That includes a budding project to intervene in tax foreclosures in 53206 before they get filed in partnership with ACTS Housing and the City of Milwaukee. And we provide education on how best to exercise one's rights on our Facebook page.

Partners include Dominican Center, LISC, Ezekiel CDC, COA-the Goldin Center, House of Peace, MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary, ACTS Housing,

## PRIORITY AREA: HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



### HOUSING AND BUSINESS FOR RESIDENTS

## Block by Block, DIY Fund & Business Workshops Aid Amani



Dominican Center is participating the Block by Block initiative that is piloting the renovation of a block that includes over 30 parcels that are a mix of owner occupied and rental properties, as well as, connecting families to needed resources to support their lives. Dominican Center is serving as the resident liaison working to engage residents in every step of the process, decision making, and housing improvement.

Also, Amani residents that do not live on the pilot block have participated in a resident led- Do It Yourself (DIY)-program. Homeowners can apply for a shopping stipend that allows them to purchase home goods from Community Warehouse to complete home improvement projects. To date there have been nearly 10 homes improved with DIY funding. A key item for purchase has been doors and locks as residents attempt to stabilize their homes and secure their families' safety.

Additionally, in the area of economic development, two business owners have completed the small business workshops presented by Legal Aid Society and their partners. Both business owners have been paired with a legal professional who has assisted in various steps of small business ownership launching. Business owners Dana Williamson and Sherry Green have reported the support to be invaluable in helping them launch their dreams! Since completing the workshop, Dana Williamson also completed the construction Lead Training and has been certified to assist with Lead Abatement. Sherry Green's cookie business has also received great exposure as well.

Partners include Community Warehouse, Milwaukee Job Works, Legal Aid Society, Habitat for Humanity/ Rock the Block, Riverworks Financial Consultants.

## PRIORITY AREA: HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### ACTS HOUSING HELPING AMANI RESIDENTS BECOME HOMEOWNERS

When COVID hit, we looked at numerous scenarios to plan for how the Acts Lending loan portfolio might perform. We expected that if unemployment remained high, our portfolio could have 25-50% delinquencies. We're incredibly proud to report that currently Acts Lending has delinquencies of 3.1% across our 102 loans, \$2.5 million portfolio. This is not because our borrowers are not suffering (most are), but because their monthly mortgage is always less than \$500, and they are paying us first, knowing that if they lost their homes, the rental market would be far worse.

Our board quickly approved a measure to offer mortgage relief in the form of interest-free deferred payments to Acts Lending borrowers. Acts Lending currently has 2 borrowers in Amani (1 has opted in to the forbearance option on their loan) and 5 borrow-

ers in Muskego Way (no requests for forbearance).

One bright spot is that COVID-19 forced us to create a virtual orientation that is accessible online instead of in-person. Since we launched this course at the end of March, we've seen a dramatic increase in participants. Currently there are over 700 families across Milwaukee and Beloit actively working with an Acts homebuyer counselor, more determined than ever to move from renting to homeownership. Our homebuyer counselors are actively working with 5 families who currently live in Amani, 6 who currently live in Metcalfe Park, and 32 who currently live in the Muskego Way neighborhood.

Families are still moving through the program and receiving pre-approvals from traditional lenders and Acts Lending. While we have over a dozen families currently in the search process, limited housing stock and marketing conditions have a major impact



on closing deals. Today, there are 6 City foreclosures listed in Amani. Unfortunately, the available property volume is the inverse of demand from our families, with very limited options.

In March, Ana Melo joined the Acts team as Community Relations and Marketing Coordinator. Ana, along with Acts' Chief Development & Marketing Officer Kelly Andrew, have engaged with Amani United and The Dominican Center to stay updated on neighborhood priorities and opportunities as needs change due to COVID-19. We also serve as a homebuyer counseling partner in the Milwaukee Christian Center Affordable Housing program. Finally, we've started building a relationship with the Children's Wisconsin Community Engagement Team.

### LISC PROVIDES SUPPORT TO MODEL BLOCK, SLOW DOWN DRIVER INITIATIVE

LISC is providing support for the Amani Block Project including: (1) HUD Section 4 for Ezekiel CDC. Through the HUD Section Ezekiel CDC served 10 individuals and 30 housing rehab scopes of work. (2) Participating in bi-weekly Model Block working group and ongoing meetings with the City of Milwaukee to discuss reprogrammed

CDBG funds for model block. (3) Working to provide technical assistance for the use and administration of HOME funds. (4) Completed the Innovations for Community Based Crime Reduction grant. (5) Provided funds as part of the Sustainability Plan. We funded door signs promoting the survey results as well as a call to action for residents to become involved in Amani safety initiatives. In addition, funds were to be used for slow down signs placed



throughout the neighborhood. Partners include Dominican Center, Data You Can Use, Safe & Sound, District Attorney's Office, Ezekiel CDC, Northwestern Mutual, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Christian Center, Amani United



THANK YOU 2020 NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERS FOR  
**CELEBRATING ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN AMANI**



RIVERWORKS

