



**HEALTHY FOOD HERE!**

270 families served with  
Summer food pantries

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**COMING BACK**

DC Adult Edu students  
learning in-person

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**WALK TO SAFETY**

'Amani Pedestrian  
Dignity Project'

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Working Together Creates Joy in Amani

*"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." ~ African proverb*

*Greetings,*

I hope you and your families are safe and well. It's hard to believe that this year is almost over. As I think about the months that have passed, my heart is filled with joy. As usual, I'm inspired by all the people who have joined our efforts to work together with Amani residents to create positive change in the community.

This summer, we've been able to:

- Build and grow a hydroponics lab in the heart of Amani, which will enable training and enterprise and will educate residents of all ages in Amani about healthy, organic food and how to grow it.
- Partner with resident group Amani United to support their Responsible Gun Ownership campaign as a way to alleviate the growing gun violence in our city.
- Kick off efforts on the Beta Blocks with the partners in the

Block-by-Block initiative. Already this spring we've engaged residents, held three clean ups and two Rock the Block events.

As 2022 quickly comes to an end, our work continues. Over the next couple of months, we will be working with our corporate partners to host holiday food distributions – providing meals for up to 200 families in November and December. The holidays can be burdensome, so we are working to provide as many supports and resources as we can to our families during this year's holiday season!

***Our work continues to be possible because of supporters like you!*** Thank you to everyone who is helping us in this work – whether you're a partner organization or a donor who gives your time, talent or treasure – you are greatly appreciated! We look forward to continuing to serve along with you as we work in tandem with residents to revitalize the neighborhood.

*Yours in service,*

Maricha Harris, DC Executive Director

*"Thank you to everyone who is helping us in this work – whether you're a partner organization or a donor who gives your time, talent or treasure – you are greatly appreciated!"*

# Let's Walk to Safety

'Amani Pedestrian Dignity Experience' explored safety throughout the Amani neighborhood with AARP and author Jonathon Stalls

October is Pedestrian Safety Month and in an effort to make the roads and sidewalks more safe for the people who walk them, AARP Wisconsin brought Jonathon Stalls, founder of Walk2Connect and Pedestrian Dignity and author of "WALK: Slow Down, Wake Up and Connect at 1-3 Miles per Hour," to the Amani neighborhood on Oct. 6.

According to Stalls, Pedestrian Dignity events center the lived experience of all who walk, use a wheelchair and take transit as their primary form of transportation. "We will move with the many gaps and opportunities facing all who walk, roll and use the bus in car-dominated build environments," Stalls said.

The group walked with Amani residents, DC and Amani United. This event highlighted the work organizations are doing in Amani to curb reckless driving and make the neighborhood safe for the people who live and work there. Previous efforts include yearly yard sign distribution and placement in heavily trafficked areas and efforts to bring traffic-calming planters to Amani.

For information on Jonathon Stalls and Pedestrian Dignity project, visit [www.intrinsicpaths.com/pedestrian-dignity](http://www.intrinsicpaths.com/pedestrian-dignity)

To sign a petition to install traffic-calming planters to curb reckless driving in Amani, visit <https://chng.it/f6CgPfchfd>





YOUTH ORGANIZING

## **Amani Youth Take On Washington.**

Monuments, museums and a scenery change lay foundations for youth community involvement in Amani neighborhood

**A** group of 21 Amani Youth and three chaperons departed in June for a trip of a lifetime to our nation's capital, one that DC Youth Organizer Amanda Clark says is much more than a vacation.

"There's a world outside Milwaukee. A lot of the youth that we service, you know, they don't even make it downtown," said Clark. "A big part of it is just finding the youth in this community, this neighborhood and getting them connected to resources and programming that can keep them out of trouble."

Youth visited museums, landmarks, DC tourist spots and historically Black college Howard University. They learned about past struggles and what they can do for a brighter future. "For me, in the future, I want to do more things," said Dayvida Brown, a trip participant.

The educational aspects of the trip were paramount, but it was also about taking youth out of their comfort zone and building relationship with their peers in the Amani community. The youth said that this experience helped them see different perspectives and will help them build relationships in the future. "I didn't know any of these people until we went on this trip. It was scary but I had fun," said Envyana Scott, another youth participant.

Amani Youth take on Washington each year, but this was the first trip since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The trip, funded by the Herb Kohler Foundation, was postponed in 2020 and 2021.

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**For information on youth organizing visit [www.dominican-center.org](http://www.dominican-center.org)**

**Fore more information on the Herb Kohler Foundation, visit <http://www.kohlerfoundation.org>**



## ADULT EDUCATION UPDATE

# Coming Back After Re-imagining Learning through a Laptop Screen

Current DC Adult Education student perseveres and shares academic journey through COVID-19 and beyond

"Education means family. Everyone has their own struggles, life gets in the way," said Barbara Wells, education coordinator for Dominican Center's Adult Education Program. "But here at the Dominican Center, we're a family."

The program has been a family for students from the Amani neighborhood and throughout Milwaukee since DC's founding. It allows students to work at their own pace with one-on-one tutor support that meets each student at their current educational level, allowing them a safe space to follow their educational journey and earn their HSED or GED. Each student has an individual academic plan to reach their goals. Learning opportunities have gone beyond the classroom in the past with monthly outings like trips to the Haggerty Museum and Discovery World, as well as social outings to the movies and the theatre. Students have also come together with DC staff to celebrate holidays and educational milestones.

But, on March 11, 2020, when COVID-19 hit and DC closed because of the government stay-at-home order, everything changed. For many, the pandemic hit hard, forcing students and teachers worldwide to turn to a new digital and technological era. This was specifically difficult in many low-income communities, shining light on the crippling and growing digital divide. Students in DC's Adult Education program had to start from scratch and develop new computer and online learning skills. They also had to adapt to learning without the close in-person support of their tutors and fellow classmates.

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struggles, life gets in the way.  
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- **Barbara Wells,**  
DC Education Coordinator

At DC, both partnerships and relationships were imperative to the environment to help push through distractions in and out of the classroom. Going from four in-person school days to only two online was an academic setback for students, even challenging the commitment for some. Through these struggles, something amazing happened. DC's students thrived and began supporting themselves and each other in a new way. Because of DC's partnerships with local organizations like Northwestern Mutual and MATC, students were able to continue to pursue their education. Northwestern Mutual donated 10 Chromebooks for DC students, and MATC began offering three online classes for students. In these online classes, DC students were able to relate and connect through their own educational struggles.



DC provides resources to students through partnerships and word of mouth. For students like Leadra Hampton, she was referred to the DC after taking the TABE test at SDC, which gives students and educators an idea of a student's educational level. She came to DC to look for improvement on reading, writing and math skills. COVID-19 placed a huge challenge on Leadra, as well as other students in classrooms. "During COVID-19, my son was virtual too, so we had to be online at the same time, so I couldn't always focus on my own education," said Leadra, a mom who wants to be a role model for her son to look up to, "If it wasn't for my son, I wouldn't be doing this. He is my reason to keep going."

Despite the hardships and challenges in and out of the classroom, Leadra expressed her gratitude for Barbara and DC for welcoming her in with open arms, providing a place of comfort, understanding and motivation as she works to complete her academic journey in hopes to become

a police officer or a nurse.

"Students need to be determined; they need motivation in order to succeed. There are no extra hours added because you decided to go back to school, it's up to you to fit it in," says Barbara. "With perseverance and consistent foundation displayed, we can expect every year to be full of changes, especially the academic curriculum at DC, but the one thing that will always remain the same is, the family like relationships and never-ending support."

*Written by Kylie Goetz, special to DC*

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**For more info: [www.dominican-center.org/education-well-being](http://www.dominican-center.org/education-well-being)**

**To donate or sponsor an adult education kit for our students visit: <https://bit.ly/DCeducationkits>**



SERVING FAMILY WELL-BEING

# 270 Amani Families Served with Summer Mobile Food Pantries

DC, Feeding America, Amani United and partners to share food & resources

This summer, in partnership with Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin, DC distributed 14,000 pounds of healthy food to more than 270 Amani families at three mobile food pantries.

Food was distributed out of Feeding America's refrigerated truck and residents could choose their items, which were then boxed up by volunteers. Residents enjoyed different varieties of fresh produce, meat, cheese, milk and pantry staples at each mobile pantry.

In addition, Feeding America supplied diapers and wipes, and DC and Amani United distributed

hygiene kits donated by Northwestern Mutual.

We also worked with partner organizations to bring services resources to Amani families. Participating partners include Amani United, the Milwaukee Bucks, Milwaukee Health Services, City of Milwaukee Health Department, Milwaukee County, Familia Dental, Legal Aid Society, Safe-Link, Department of Neighborhood Services and Milwaukee Fire Department.

None of these efforts would have been possible without volunteers from Amani United, Parsons House, Northwestern Mutual and Feeding America.





## HYDROPONICS

# Garden of Opportunity

Six-week hydroponics learning lab will provide Amani residents with homegrown collard greens distributed at Thanksgiving event

If you ever have ever walked past the Dominican Center at 24th and Locust in the heart of the Amani neighborhood, you probably have seen the glowing pink hue from the basement. These radiating lights come from a hydroponics lab also known as the "Garden of Opportunity."

Hydroponics are a method of growing food indoors that uses nutrient-dense water to grow plants without needing soil. Instead, seeds sprout from sponges that soak up water and typically grow faster than they would outdoors in soil and sunlight. DC's hydroponics lab supports the Amani Revitalization Plan's concentration areas of Education and Family Well-Being and Housing and Economic Development.

With the creation of this lab, opportunities in Amani continue to grow. Next, a six-week learning lab (AgTech) aimed at Amani youth will provide hands-on activities in the lab. Students will see how fresh vegetables and herbs are grown and will even experiment with a project that will produce homegrown collard greens that will be distributed during DC's Thanksgiving meal giveaway event on Nov. 19.

"Hydroponics promote STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, & Math) through various integral activities, from measurements and calculations, to understanding and operating safe machinery, to the simplest basics of biochemistry and more," said Shelley Mathews, CEO/Founder of FullCircle26, Inc.

"FullCircle26, Inc. is, "dedicated to schools, community groups and individuals seeking to provide year-long indoor food production on a local basis," said Mathews. "The COVID-19 virus has exposed the vulnerability of food shortages for children and families that relied on schools for food and the rates of hunger have soared since 2020," says Mathews.

Difficulty for food access doesn't stop there. Amani is a "food desert," meaning within the neighborhood's borders, there is no access to grocery stores selling fresh food. With an opportunity for residents to grow their own, this program provides a different perspective.

"Not only does this provide the kids with the ability to grow their own food, but this program also teaches students to nurture and care for other living things while developing patience and understanding for nature and the world around us," says DC Youth Organizer Amanda Clark. "Through guidance and motivation, youth will gain self-confidence, healthy lifestyle eating habits and trouble shooting skills. Our goal is to empower them to become innovative leaders of the future... Our Next Generation Innovators!"

*Written by Kylie Goetz, special to DC*

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**To support our Hydroponics program, visit:**  
**[www.dominican-center.org/hydroponics.html](http://www.dominican-center.org/hydroponics.html)**

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

# Pop Up!

## Resource fairs reach residents where they live

DC believes that people should not have to leave their neighborhoods to find the things they need. That's why DC created a summer series of Pop Up Outreach Days. The community resource fairs moved throughout the neighborhood to reach residents in the busiest parts of Amani.

The Pop Up Outreach Days were held in June, July, August and September and featured partners offering services and vital resources in the community including Amani United, COA, Safe & Sound, DHHS, MPD, Fatherhood Fire, DHHS Department on Aging Services, DNS and Wraparound Milwaukee.



## Community Members Honored at DC's Annual Fundraiser

Each year, DC celebrates successes with a luncheon thanking supporters and raising funds to continue the mission of working with Amani residents and partners to build a better future.

This year, Green & Growing, smashed expectations to become one of DC's most successful, raising more than \$50,000. Fundraising goals were exceeded thanks to the generous community members who support DC's work in the Amani neighborhood.

The luncheon was held June 26, 2022, at the Wisconsin Club. DC presented awards to the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa; Sr. Mary Menke, CSA (posthumously); Dr. Lester Carter (posthumously); DC employee Wes Landry; and Shelley Mathews of FullCircle26, Inc. Each awardee was a print of an original art piece by Amani Allison Westbrook that depicts the past and future of the neighborhood (image at right).

**SAVE THE DATE!** Green & Growing 2023 will be held April 30! Sponsorships and underwriting are available.

