

Community Connection

March 2015

Cold Weather Response

A coordinated community effort helped with sheltering people who are homeless this winter.

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MSS News Briefs:

A New Partnership with the Downtown Library

Metro Social Services entered a new partnership with the Nashville Public Library this year to serve the large population of homeless customers who frequent the Downtown Library, at 615 Church Street. Two MSS social workers will be available to provide information and resources to customers Tuesdays from 9 am to noon. The goal is to meet people where they are and link people who are homeless with ongoing case management services at Metro Social Services.

2014 Christmas Giveaway

Metro Social Services together with the National Black Police Association-Nashville Chapter, and the Tennessee Bikers Education Association served 134 families including 340 children by providing toys and bicycles. Almost 100 bicycles went to kids of all ages.

On December 3rd, the partners held the annual toy run, bringing the toys and bicycles to Metro Social Services, and on December 20, the Christmas bag distribution was held with volunteers from all three organizations helping to hand out the gifts bringing smiles, hugs and tears of joy to all participants.

Ride 2 Thrive

The third annual free family event will be held Saturday, April 18 at Cumberland Park, from noon to 6 pm

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Message from the Executive Director

I am pleased to announce that we will release our 6th annual Metro Social Services Community Needs Evaluation (CNE) this spring.

The CNE uses a broad array of data from the U. S. Census Bureau, the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as local data from United Way's 2-1-1 Call Center, the Grassroots Community Survey and the service data from Metro Social Services.

Community Needs Evaluations are provided to enhance awareness of poverty and identify and project unmet social/human service needs.

Over the past few years the CNE has become a very viable document to the community and more so to the department.

The information provided by this series of CNE documents offers guidance for social-oriented organizations to identify public and private funding sources and for policy makers to improve the quality of life for people who are most in need.

In addition, the CNE presents information about the importance of using evidence-based practices, so that organizations can provide

services using methods that are proven to work.

How have we, at Metro Social Services, benefitted from using the CNE? Data obtained from the 2013 CNE assisted the department with the development of our MSS strategic plan along with how we provide essential services to the community at large. Consequently, we made modifications and expanded our Nutrition Program to serve a new 50-59 population along with assisting more children and families with meals.

MSS has also incorporated the needs identified in the CNE with developing our strategic plan for the next 3-5 years. Our primary goals are to align programs with the needs identified in the CNE.

The CNE describes the challenging circumstance of those in poverty, with inadequate housing or in disadvantaged neighborhoods. 87% of the customers that seek assistance with Metro Social Services are in need of housing and related assistance. The lack of affordable housing in the Davidson County area presents a major problem when attempting to serve low income customers.

To better assist our growing



Renée Pratt
Executive Director

customer base and the residents of Davidson County developing and maintaining strong partnerships in the community continues to be a priority at Metro Social Services.

Since July we have established seven new partnerships. The new partnerships have allowed us to expand our case management assistance to a variety of populations.

With the expansion of our customer base and the additional new partnerships we look forward to the opportunities the next few years will bring.



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Planning and Coordination Update

The 2014 Community Needs Evaluation provides a great deal of detail about the social, socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of Davidson County. A few of them are mentioned below and are described in greater detail in the needs evaluation document.

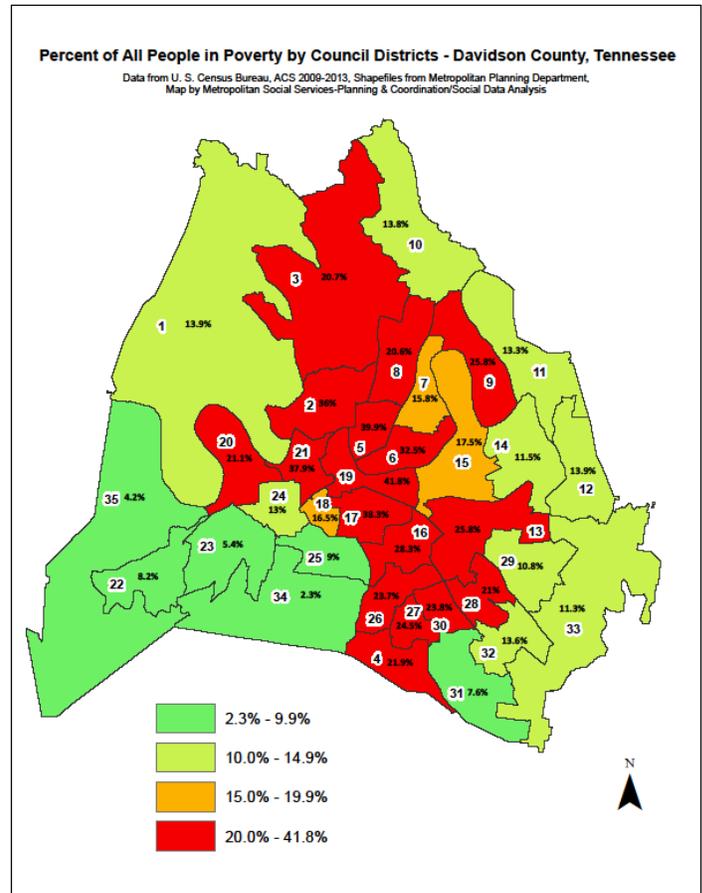
Consistent with national trends for recovery from the recession, there was a decrease in the rate of poverty from 18.9% to 17.8% for Davidson County. However, poverty in our community remains higher than the 15.8% rate for the U. S., according to the U. S. Census Bureau’s 2013 American Community Survey.

Socioeconomic data shows that poverty is much worse for people with some characteristics, with a 30.5% poverty rate for Davidson County residents under age 18. Single mother households with children under age 5 have an even higher poverty rate of 39.6%.

In 2014, MSS compiled and analyzed data from Davidson County agencies that provided financial assistance to residents in need (Ladies of Charity, Nashville Financial Empowerment Center, NeedLink, Project Return, Rooftop, St. Luke’s Community House, Metropolitan Action Commission). The findings are included in the Community Needs Evaluation and show that far more people need financial assistance than there are resources available in Davidson County.

A cumulative total of about 7,000 Davidson County Residents have been surveyed during the 6 years the Community Needs Evaluation has been completed. Two issues continue to be identified as a gap in services: Housing & Related Assistance (assistance with rent and utility bills) and Workforce & Economic Opportunity (job training and job placement services).

The map below shows the elevated rate of poverty in some areas of Davidson County. Seventeen of Metropolitan Government’s Council Districts have



higher rates of poverty than for Davidson County’s and 19 have poverty rates higher than the U. S. The Council Districts in red each have more than 20% of the residents who live in poverty.

The damaging effects of poverty can be seen in many ways (described in greater detail in the 2014 Community Needs Evaluation):

- The population of Davidson County and the U.S. is aging rapidly and the rate of disabilities increases dramatically for those who are older. It is projected that at least 70% of people over age 65 will need long-term care services and support at some point. Government-funded services are far from adequate and few have saved the money to pay for such services.

Planning & Coordination Update continued from Page 3

- The lack of healthy food can create health problems, especially for children and those with medical conditions. In Davidson County, nonprofit and government food providers could not provide what was needed, with 21% of people who needed emergency food assistance being unable to receive it.
- The lack of adequate, affordable housing is a predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in children.
- In 2014, Davidson County was ranked by County Health Rankings as the worst county in Tennessee for Physical Environment (noting concerns about air pollution, drinking water quality and severe housing problems). Davidson County was ranked highly for some factors such as health behaviors and clinical care.
- In Davidson County's 119,095 renter occupied housing units, 54,294 were considered cost-burdened. This means these households paid more than 30% of their incomes for housing related expenses, making it difficult for them to afford other basic expenses. In rental households with incomes below \$20,000, 86.1% were cost burdened.
- Unemployment in Davidson County, like the U.S., decreased in recent years. However, because of the large number of low-income jobs in Davidson County and Tennessee, many workers cannot support themselves and their families. Unemployment for those without a high school education is more than twice that for those with high school educations.



Meet the Metro Social Services Planning & Coordination Staff



DINAH GREGORY serves as the Planning & Coordination/Social Data Analysis Director at Metropolitan Social Services. She has been with MSS since 1988, working as Refugee Services Program Manager and in other capacities.

In her current position she has provided leadership for the department's series of annual Community Needs Evaluations. She and other Planning & Coordination/Social Data Analysis staff members research and report on social/human service issues, needs and poverty.

She has a B. S. degree in Psychology from MTSU, an M. S. in Guidance and Counseling Psychology from TSU and a J. D. from the Nashville School of Law. She has been licensed to practice law in Tennessee since 1994, and she serves on the Board of the Center for Refugees & Immigrants of Tennessee.

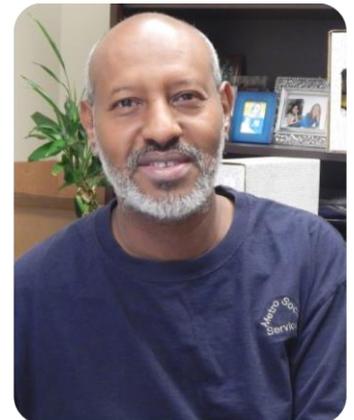
ABDELGHANI BARRE was born, reared and educated in Somalia, in a small town called *Qoryooleey*. He received Honors *Laurea* in Economics from the Somali National University and came to Nashville in 1989 and obtained a Master's of Arts in Economics from Vanderbilt University with an emphasis in economic development and international trade.

After graduation, he worked as caseworker for Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement program, with responsibilities of intake and assessment for newly arrived refugees' employability, provide American work ethic sessions, recruit area businesses that hire refugees, provide on the job training for clients and interpreting for clients with limited English proficiency.

Abdelghani has been employed with Metro Social Services since 1994, first with the Refugee Services Program and currently with Planning & Coordination Unit, which completes annual Community Needs Evaluations.

The needs evaluation documents the needs of the low-income and unmet need, so that priorities can be established to assist those who are most in need. Abdelghani was instrumental in Mayor Dean's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants.

Abdelghani serves the Board of Directors of Tennessee Office for Refugees of Catholic Charities and Tennessee Fair Housing Council. He is a founding member of the Family of Abraham, a local group that promotes interfaith





JOYCE HILLMAN has worked more than 30 years in social work and knows that has been her calling. Her social work career has been in health care, nonprofits, private and government. Originally from Nashville, Joyce has practiced in California, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

She is a licensed advanced practice social worker, with a M.S.W. in social work from the University of Tennessee, and a B.S.W. from Tennessee State University. Her graduate study also included Temple University and the University of Memphis.

Joyce notes that social work helped her to understand and appreciate the ups and downs of life, which inspired her as a wife, mother, grandmother, family member and worker. One of her favorite sayings is, *“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”*

LEE STEWART was born in a small Indiana town like the one in the movie Hoosiers. He earned a B.A. in psychology and statistics at Hanover College in southern Indiana, and an M.A. with emphases in social psychology, statistics, and early education from George Peabody College. His early experience includes the Nashville Urban Observatory, a HUD-funded program to bring the resources of universities to bear on the problems and goals of cities. His projects there included housing discrimination, home energy conservation, and highway safety.

Lee’s other experience includes supervising residential services at a non-profit developmental disabilities agency, directing family services at a similar agency, and directing operations at a case management organization. Before coming to Social Services in 2005, Lee headed up the MIS and Quality Assurance departments at the Greater Nashville Area Agency on Aging. He authors the Housing & Neighborhood Development part of the annual Community Needs Evaluations.



JULIUS WITHERSPOON was born in Nashville, Tennessee. He attended Metro Nashville Public Schools and graduated from Pearl High School in 1974. He attended Tennessee State University, majoring in Education and History, graduating with a Bachelor’s of Science degree in 1979. After spending a year teaching, Julius returned to school to pursue his Masters in 1982. After receiving a full scholarship from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to major in Public Administration, Julius received a Master of Science degree in Public Administration in 1984.

Julius has been involved with several nonprofit organizations including Eighteenth Avenue Family Enrichment Center, Project Return, Inc. He also served as Director of Nashville Health Corps, an affiliate of AmeriCorps National and State Programs. During his tenure at Metro Social Services, Julius served as Richland Village Community Services Director and Program Manager of the Senior Nutrition Program at Metro Social Services. He is now a Planning Analyst with MSS’s Planning & Coordination/Social Data Analysis.



Customer Success Story

A 26 year-old African American woman, let's call her A., came to Metro Social Services pregnant and with nothing but a bag of change. A. had been homeless for roughly 3 years.

As a young woman with intellectual disabilities, A. had fallen through the cracks until she came to Metro Social Services. She had little social support and was physically abused by the father of her unborn child. A. did not have income or transportation and had been denied assistance with SSI and employment at several other organizations.

The MSS case manager working with her, found that A. had difficulty navigating service delivery systems, and consequently she had been turned away from other agencies.

However, with the help of her MSS social worker, A. was able to:

- Sustain temporary shelter;
- Obtain an ID, social security card and birth certificate;
- Obtain food stamps, WIC and a Safelink phone;
- Obtain Presumptive TennCare and adequate prenatal care;
- Participate in the Strong Start Program for education on prenatal care and caring for newborns;

- Obtain a Section 8 Voucher from MDHA through the *How's Nashville* campaign;
- Obtain vouchers to obtain clothing and luggage to carry personal items;
- Obtain a Vocational Rehab Counselor for work/skill development;
- Was connected to SSI/SSDI Attorney to secure income;
- Obtain permanent housing (without income), but has resources to help her sustain her housing and other housing related bills; and
- Attend a nine week parenting program called Tied Together.

When A. moved into permanent housing on October 1, 2014, she received assistance with her move-in costs, bedding, furniture, and other basic household items. Only two weeks later, on October 15, A. gave birth to a healthy baby boy.

The MSS social worker who served as her housing navigator also connected her with ongoing in-home support services through Centerstone and linked her with Healthy Beginnings. A. currently receives weekly home visits to ensure she is connected to resources, education, and parenting support.

3rd Annual Ride 2 Thrive

Metro Social Services along with National Black Police Association-Nashville Chapter (NBPA), Tennessee Bikers Education Association (TBEA), Piccadilly Restaurant, Metro Parks & Recreation and Save A Lot Grocery Store are sponsoring the 3rd Annual Ride 2 Thrive Event on Saturday, April 18, 2015, from noon to 6 pm. This year the event will be held at Cumberland Park on the River. This is a free event with information, resources, screenings, music, food, entertainment, prizes, a kid's zone and family fun for all.

In 2013 we had approximately 1,000 individuals in attendance and in 2014 we had approximately 800 individuals. For the past two years, the event was held at Hartman Park on Tucker Road. However, Metro Social Services determined to host it in different locations each year. We strive to serve whenever we can in an effort to educate and inform people of all of the services and resources that are available to them here in Nashville to help them.....**Thrive in their homes, Thrive in their community and Thrive in our city.**

Cold Weather Community Response Plan

After an extremely cold winter during the 2013/14 season, community providers including Room In the Inn, the Nashville Rescue Mission, Oasis Center, Open Table Nashville, Safe Haven Family Shelter, the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, and other agencies came together under the leadership of the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission and created Nashville's first comprehensive Cold Weather Community Response Plan.

The plan outlines what type of additional resources each organization brings to the table and how these resources are being employed during extreme cold spells. The provider agencies created a four-level response with Level 1 being the season from November 1 to March 31 when Room In The Inn holds its shelter program.

Level 2 is triggered when temperatures fall to 27 degrees Fahrenheit or below, Level 3 kicks in when temperatures are 19 degrees or lower, and Level 4 includes a Metro response when temperatures are extremely low for a lengthy period of time and/or shelter bed capacity in Nashville raises concerns

that people who would like to come indoors do not have space to do so.

It was understood from the beginning that this was a working plan. The group will continue to discuss how to fill gaps such as sheltering people with pets or couples who will not separate or people who due to their mental health issues won't go to available, larger shelters.

This past winter, Level 2 went into effect on 28 days, Level 3 on 7 days, and Level 4 on 7 days. Metro Social Services took the lead in staffing Metro's emergency overflow shelter at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds during Level 4 phases.

The Cold Weather Response Plan also implemented a texting system to improve communication, an intense outreach and canvassing effort to find people during dangerously cold nights, and a transportation pilot with the Metro Transit Authority. MTA distributed 250 transportation cards for people to use bus services to emergency shelters during levels 2-4.

Visit www.coldweathernashville.com for more information

Metro Social Services

800 2nd Avenue North, Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37201
(615) 862-64000

2015 Board Meetings:

April 22

June 24

August 26

October 28

December: TBA

at 3 p.m. at MSS offices.

Contact Numbers:

Administrative Offices
(615) 862-6400

Adult and Family Support Services
(615) 862-6432

Information and Referral
(615) 862-6458

Brief Counseling
(615) 862-6432

Adult Homemaker Services
(615) 862-6480

Senior Nutrition Services
(615) 880-2292

Burial Assistance
(615) 862-6458

Relative Caregiver Assistance
(615) 862-6432

Homelessness Commission
(615) 880-2360

Planning and Coordination
(615) 862-6419

The best number to call to find out about services available through MSS and elsewhere in the Nashville community is (615) 862-6458. More information is available online at www.nashville.gov/social-services