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A Quarterly Newsletter from Piquette Square for Veterans, 6221 Brush St., Detroit, MI 48202
Volume I September 2011

Piquette Square

News
and
Views

Help for Veterans on the Way

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs awarded Southwest Solutions a nearly \$1 million grant to help low-income veterans and their families stabilize their housing situation and connect to other services and resources they need.

The initiative will serve about 425 veterans and particularly targets veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.

The grant issues from a new VA prevention program called Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), which the VA regards as a critical component in its effort of prevent and end homelessness among veterans.

In late July, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the first SSVF grants. In total, \$60 million was awarded to 85 different non-profit community agencies across the country.

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Piquette Palooza Thanks to Masco and That 80's Band

Piquette Square for Veterans celebrated its first anniversary with a festive event on July 13 called "Piquette Palooza," which featured live music, food, games and gifts. Masco Corporation provided a full course dinner, many outdoor and board games (that will remain at Piquette), gift bags of personal hygiene products for every one of the 150 Piquette tenants, and gift certificates.

To support the Piquette Palooza, Masco employees contributed through Masco ROCKS (Reaching Out with Compassion, Kindness and Service). About 50 Masco employees and family members came to the event.

Masco is a strong and ongoing supporter of Piquette Square. "That 80's Band" played at Piquette Palooza, and their throwback music had many people dancing and singing along. Chuck Howard is the bassist of the band. Chuck is the nephew of Sister Mary Ellen Howard, who serves on the Southwest Counseling Solutions Board and who is executive director of St. Frances Cabrini Clinic.

AMVETS Riders from Post 29 in Mount Clemens also attended the event. They rode in on their motorcycles, and their enthusiasm helped energize the festivities.

"The first Annual Piquette Palooza was a huge hit and the kindness of Masco, That 80's Band and AMVETS Post 29 will long be remembered," said Chery Allen, Veterans

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Chuck Howard and That 80's Band plays at Piquette Palooza

Formerly Homeless Veterans Receive Support Services at Piquette

Piquette Square for Veterans opened its doors to homeless veterans in June 2010 in Detroit's Midtown neighborhood, on the site of a former Studebaker factory. Developed, owned and managed by Southwest Housing Solutions, this new construction, 150-unit apartment complex offers permanent supportive housing through a partnership with Southwest Counseling Solutions. Staff are located on site to assist tenants with case management, workforce development and rehabilitative and other services. Support Services staff are headed by Lisa Todd, Resident Services Coordinator, and include Anquella Buchanan, Robin Kiss, Dan Yopez and Gerald Poprawa.

In the first year of service, the Support Services team:

- Evaluated with each resident the level of service needed. Residents are seen in their apartments at least once a month and with greater frequency for

those who need. Case management, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous, Women's Group, and referrals are provided to tenants, in addition. Life skills coaching and budgeting assistance are provided. 100% of tenants developed an individualized service plan within 90 days of entering the facility.

- Coordinated with the Southwest Solutions' Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program and Detroit Greenworks Solutions program and the Michigan Department of Labor to assist residents in securing employment. 50% of tenants have participated in Job Readiness training and 43 residents have gotten jobs since moving to Piquette Square.
- Implemented health and wellness programming at Piquette through Gleaners Community Food Bank's Cooking Matters and apartment food

kits as well as through Tai Chi classes.

- Assured benefits assistance to every tenant through VBA (Veteran Benefit Administration) and U of D Law School Project Salute.
- Brought Wayne State University's VEOP (Veteran Educational Opportunity Program) 8 week course to Piquette as well as the Macomb Community College Defense Industry Training. 17 residents are currently in school.
- Provided access to multiple social opportunities including Red Wings and Tigers games, monthly bingos, and community meals hosted by volunteer groups.

The work of Support Services has resulted in a nearly 90% tenant retention rate. Also, in coordination with Property Management, seven possible evictions have been averted.



Piquette Square Wall Draws Big Response

Home Depot in Shelby Township donated employee time and effort to painting the unsightly wall along the north lot at Piquette Square. Thanks to Rob McCarthy and Paul Magros, from Home Depot, for improving our neighborhood and to Carol Morrell, Home Depot Volunteer Coordinator, for forging this relationship.

A special thanks, too, to Behr Paint for donating four large containers of paint. Floyd Brooks, Piquette Square resident, initially spearheaded the wall cleanup effort and lent his able painting skills to the wall painting project. A fresh, clean base coat has been applied for placement of a veterans-inspired mural

The Harper Woods Home Depot is also interested in making significant upgrades to the lot in front of the wall. ♦

Help for Veterans on the Way *continued from pg. 1*

With this funding, Southwest Solutions will outreach veterans at risk of becoming homeless and then provide short-term financial assistance to pay rent, rental arrearages, security deposits, utility bills, moving costs, other housing related costs, and childcare.

In addition, case managers will assist veterans and their families to obtain VA and other public benefits, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and opportunities for skill building, job training and education. Southwest Solutions' SSVF program is expected to begin in September.

To be eligible for the program, veterans must be at risk of becoming homeless soon. Risk factors include notice of eviction, living in condemned, substandard or doubled-up housing, threat of utility shut-off, sudden loss of income, or spending more than 50% of income on housing. ♦

Piquette Square Be Part of the Solution Event on September 8

Please mark your calendar for September 8 and plan to attend a "Be Part of the Solution" (BPOS) free, one-hour event sponsored by Southwest Solutions at Piquette Square. The BPOS will begin promptly at 6:00 and end by 7:00 PM. During that hour you will have the opportunity to receive a brief tour of Piquette Square for Veterans, meet some of our tenants and hear their stories. These events are a great opportunity to learn more about the work Southwest Solutions is doing in counseling, housing, workforce development and literacy.

Please RSVP with Mary Madigan at mmadigan@swsol.org or 313-297-1371. ♦

Volunteer Recognition

Piquette Square offers many thanks to our donors and volunteers who daily make our world a better place.

In the past six months, Piquette Square volunteers, including resident volunteers, provided nearly 3,000 hours of service.

A special thanks to Myriam Beltran, Carol Cleary, Mark McCarthy, Ron Mexicott, Linda Porter, Janie Robinson and Walter Wilson for their dedication to Piquette Square.

These volunteers offer a wealth of knowledge in computer skills, general office skills, writing and even clothing alterations.

We would like to acknowledge one truly outstanding volunteer. Faithfully every Wednesday, Mark McCarthy arrives at Piquette Square to support residents with computer questions they may have while utilizing the Bryan Peek Computer Center.

Mark makes himself available to teach residents how to prepare resumes or discover new websites that may be of interest to them. Mark also has been instrumental in resolving technical issues within the center. Mark is more than a volunteer – he is a true friend of Piquette Square. ♦

Chase Bank and Vanguard CDC Bring Mural to Piquette Square for Veterans

Word spread that Piquette Square had a wall that needed painting. With the support of Christine Kageff, Vice President of Philanthropy and Community Relations at JP Morgan Chase Bank, linkages were made with the Vanguard Youth Program. This program gives North End area youth the opportunity to express themselves creatively through beautiful murals throughout Detroit. After speaking to Vanguard's project manager, Alia Harvey Quinn, it was determined that a mural could be painted at Piquette Square and the

design would include military symbols representing Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard and, not to be forgotten, our POWs.

The mural consists of several wooden panels that will be mounted on the wall facing the north lot at Piquette. The project benefited from consultation by noted muralist Chazz Miller. We thank JP Morgan Chase Bank and Vanguard for their support. ♦

Mind, Body and Spirit Inspires Residents

We are indebted to the Klein Family Foundation for their sponsorship of the Mind Body Spirit series at Piquette Square, which offers workshops ranging from Cooking to Tai Chi to Journal Making. Workshop presenters Elizabeth Sutton, LaVern Homan and David Watts create fun and friendly learning environments for Piquette Square residents.

Approximately 30 tenants have participated in the various workshops and shared enthusiastic reviews on workshop evaluation forms with remarks such as

“Let’s do this more often!”, “We are learning new skills”, “This is very relaxing”, and “This brings us out of our apartments and we are getting to know our neighbors.” ♦



David Watts, (center), Tai Chi instructor, leads a class at Piquette Square. Tenants are incorporating Tai Chi into their daily routine.

Homeless Veterans Street Outreach Center to Open Soon

In recent months, plans have been forged for the Veterans Administration to begin leasing a Veterans Community Resource and Referral Center (VCRRC) at Piquette Square. The VCRRC will be located in 5,000 sq ft of commercial space fronting Piquette Street and will be open seven days per week, 12 hours per day to serve homeless veterans.

The goal of the VCRRC is to improve veterans' access to homeless services. Case management, life skills training, supportive therapy, and assistance connecting with housing and rehabilitation services will be provided by the staff of four case managers and six peer support specialists. The center will serve a variety of basic needs for homeless veterans, including showers, laundry, clothing and food, as well as referrals within the VA system and throughout the community.

The VCRRC will facilitate linkages to workforce development and housing programs including those offered by Southwest Solutions. It is expected that the VCRRC will serve 1,000 individuals annually.

Piquette Square is presently accepting donations for homeless veterans, including those served by the VCRRC. Priority items include new socks, underwear, sweatshirts and sweatpants, personal grooming supplies (liquid soap, disposable razors, shampoo, conditioner, body lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash (without alcohol), combs, etc.) Personal-size toiletries are preferred so that vets can carry items with them. ♦

Special Thanks to our Donors

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 Michelle Tanzey
 Kelly Thompson
 Craig Tillman
 UAW Local 1264
 UAW Region 1 Veterans Council
 VFW Bruce Post 1146
 Ladies Auxiliary
 Judi Lynn Duncan Yantiss



Upcoming Activities

Empty Bowls (Painting of the bowls) —
 Thursday, September 15 @ 4 p.m.



FVW Post 6691 Fraser Auxiliary, BBQ
 — Saturday, September 17 @ 12 noon

Katie Zeiter and Friends host Bingo — Saturday,
 September 24 @ 12 noon

**GM Veterans Affinity Group Charity Golf
 Outing** — Saturday, September 24



**West Point Cadets visit Piquette
 Square; Military Moms provide lunch** —
 Saturday, October 29, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**Raymond Zussman Auxiliary 333 Jewish War
 Veterans, Bingo** — Monday, October 31,
 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.



**Kiwanis of Woodhaven, Pancake
 Breakfast** — Friday, November 11,
 9 a.m.

**Concert to Benefit Piquette
 Square** — Featuring Chery Allen
 and Piquette Residents
 Saturday, November 12,
 6:00 p.m.



Piquette Palooza continued from pg. 1

Resource Facilitator at Piquette. "That 80's Band took us back to the days of big hair and rock-and-roll songs like Whip It and We Will Rock You. The weather was perfect, the food delicious and the spirit of community was everywhere." ♦



Piquette residents, Masco employees, and AMVETS Riders from Post 29 gather for a group shot

Thanks to the AmVets Post 29 Riders for Hosting a BBQ for Piquette Tenants



AmVets Post 29 gather for a group picture at the Piquette BBQ in May.

How to contact us

If you are interested in hosting an event at Piquette Square or making a donation, please contact **Chery Allen, Veterans Resource Facilitator** at (313) 874-7014 ext. 350 or by cell (313) 515-8372. For more information about Piquette Square and Southwest Solutions, please visit our website: www.swsol.org