

Have a seat

E.C. launches program to help gather community

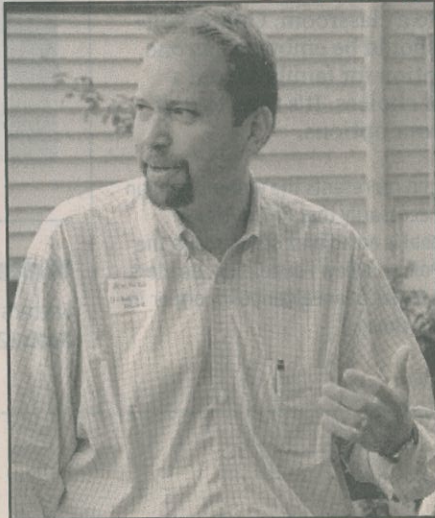


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Ascension and Jose Tristan have a seat on the new bench installed in front of their home on Homerlee Avenue in East Chicago. The bench was one of 13 unveiled Tuesday by Neighborhoods Inc. with funding from the Foundations of East Chicago. Neighborhoods Inc.'s Please Have a Seat Program creates "micro-parks" in urban residential areas by placing benches on private lawns to create gathering places for folks to sit and get to know each other.



Keith Speaks, executive director of Neighborhoods Inc., talks Tuesday about expanding the bench program into Hammond, Calumet City and beyond.



Steve Bankes, of Oak Park, Ill., started the idea for the Please Have a Seat Program by sitting in his front yard while his children played outside. This grew into a patio installation on his front lawn where friends stroll by and hang out.