



# NEIGHBORHOOD ink

A newsletter of Neighborhoods Incorporated of Hammond Indiana

March 2012

Volume 5 ~ Issue 3

## “Please Have A Seat!” Celebration

**East Chicago** ~ A celebratory dinner for participants, funders and other supporters in NI’s “Please, Have A Seat!” program was held the evening of March 13 at Casa Blanca Restaurant in East Chicago. Over 70 people came to fellowship and enjoy the excellent food in the restaurant’s banquet room upstairs.

The vibe was very positive as bench recipients spoke about their experiences with their microparks. Lily Ramos, 8<sup>th</sup> Precinct Committeewoman, said, “My husband and our family absolutely love Neighborhoods Inc--we’re probably their biggest fans. I am extremely happy with the “Please, Have A Seat!” program. We initially thought it wouldn’t work for us since our property is at a “T,” but since having it installed we have had SO many people sit there, take photos, and have families there spending time together. That alone is well worth it.”



Veronica Montemayor, of the 4800 block of Baring, said, “Because I live so close to Stracks, neighbors carrying their groceries will sit down there. Kids down the street will sit down and talk with their friends. It’s nice.”

Stephanie Williams, of the 3900 block of Carey, got the bench to complement the work she was doing on her porch as part of the 2011 Fall Decorating Contest. “The bench matches the color of the stain on my porch perfectly. I am really happy with it and can’t wait until the weather warms up so I can sit out there. And my neighbor has been bugging me about getting her some information on how to get a bench in her yard.”

The evening wound up with Russ Taylor, executive director of Foundations of East Chicago, saying a few words. “I’m glad that the grant committee, through their wisdom, decided to fund this in the first place to show that building a community takes a lot of different ideas. Neighborhoods Inc. is constantly coming up with good ideas; they take a fresh approach in working with communities and we’re glad that they’re interested in continuing to work in East Chicago.”

## East Chicago Community Gardening Initiative Takes Root

**East Chicago** ~ NI and the Grow It In East Chicago Coalition co-sponsored an informational meeting at the Pastrick Library on March 20 at 6PM to gauge residents’ interest in urban farming. An enthusiastic 57 people attended, bringing along their families, friends and neighbors. Attendees were given seed packets and treated to a delicious spread of fruits, vegetables and dips from Ivy Tech’s Culinary Arts Department. Two garden-themed items, donated by The Home Depot, were given out as door prizes.

Attendees were asked to fill out a survey relating to their experiences with gardening in their own yards while Keith Speaks addressed the crowd. Many residents shared ideas, concerns and gardening tips. Speaks stressed to the audience that the meeting’s purpose was to gather information from residents on the level of interest in having areas in their neighborhoods serve as community gardens.

Dr. Elaine Kisisel of the Grow It In East Chicago Coalition also spoke and explained how their group could guide residents in establishing their own gardens, but emphasized that the project would be neighbor-led.



*Ella King, right, happily accepts the door prize she won at the meeting. The hose and extension were donated from The Home Depot.*

Residents’ comments were very encouraging and their surveys are being analyzed. Stay tuned for future developments!

## NI’s New Website is Coming Soon!

NI has had a website up and running since 2002, when we were approached by Purdue IT students as part of their coursework for graduation. Up until 2007, several student groups have added and edited content to help NI stay current and the site has seen many thousands of visitors.

Now, NI has identified the need to revise the website in-house when needed and not have to rely on volunteers. We have hired a local web designer from Highland to assist with the process and train staff to edit our own content.



**JOIN US ON FACEBOOK UNDER NEIGHBORHOODS INC.!!**

