Now in its 27th year, National NeighborWorks® Week is a call to NW organizations across the country to bring residents together, rolling up their sleeves to clean neighborhood blocks and celebrate community engagement.

NHS Prepares for NeighborWorks® Week 2010
by Sarah Custer

From June 5-12, NHS of New Haven will be hosting the following events:

**Mural Project** Partnering with a New Haven muralist and youth from the neighborhood, we will paint a mural in Newhallville. The site is an old brick grocery store covered with graffiti. The teens will sketch ideas for the mural, themed “Our Community, Our History, Our Future.” We will combine the ideas to create a cohesive design. After a vetting process in the community, we will paint the mural as a color-by-number project.

**HOC Open House** Meet the NHS staff, enjoy music and a barbeque, and learn about our programs and services! Sponsored by TD Bank, the open house will launch the Loan Modification Scam Alert Campaign. Loan modification scams are proliferating at a rapid pace: every day, scam artists prey on unsuspecting homeowners facing foreclosure. Invited speakers from NeighborWorks® America, HomeOwnership Center clients who have been scam victims, and local elected officials will address the issue and shed light on how it impacts our communities.

**Documentary Premiere** During the open house we will feature the premiere screenings of “Stories by Our Resident Leaders” and “Real Scam Stories.” The short documentaries provide a glimpse into the experiences of New Haven residents, told in their own words, about their efforts to take on leadership roles in their communities or to keep their homes in the face of foreclosure.

Women’s Month a Success
by Jessalyn Michaels

The month of April has officially been declared women’s month—at least here at NHS of New Haven.

Five workshops focusing on homeownership and financial fitness skills for women were held at NHS throughout the month of April.

Attendees took part in classes on leadership and community, rebuilding credit and reducing debt, and participated in a homebuyer education course sponsored by Wachovia.

Hands-on classes included Windows-for-Women, a workshop hosted by the New Haven Preservation Trust that demonstrated the basics of maintaining historic windows. Whalley Hardware sponsored a second hands-on opportunity called Tool School for Women. This session focused on proper drilling technique, wall hangings, and wall patching.

The highlight of the series was the **Around the World Family Festival** which included a DJ, moonbounce, arts and crafts, a barbeque, and five live performances. Workshop participants and their families, along with neighbors of NHS, came out to enjoy a beautiful Saturday afternoon.

The entire series was made possible by a Multi-cultural grant from NeighborWorks® America.

*Please see page 2 for more photographs.*
The arrival of spring generally produces a fresh look at what the new year will bring. The harsh weather and torrential rainstorms are (hopefully) behind us and we can now focus on flowers in the gardens, greenery from the trees, and walking around without being burdened by a heavy coat.

It’s also the time to reflect back on a difficult year for New Haven’s housing market. On many blocks there are new boarded-up houses, the aftermath of a spike in foreclosures (up 300 percent from 2005 to 2009 in New Haven). Owners are less likely to reinvest in their properties in a time of uncertainty in the market, and, perhaps a house painting project that had been planned is now deferred. Unemployment is high in New Haven and there are many young people who are unable to find quality jobs. At the same time, development continues downtown, with new buildings going up and new restaurants opening.

The disparity we are noticing between downtown development and some of the problems we see in our residential neighborhoods (including the closing of Rite Aid Pharmacy, Staples, and Shaw’s, all of which served our residential neighborhoods) points up the need for NHS of New Haven’s community building and organizing initiatives. Our Resident Leadership Program is working with residents from all over New Haven to develop strategies for residents to strengthen their neighborhoods through community organizing and the cultivation of new community leaders. Our Revitalization Demonstration Project, which now comprises two micro-neighborhoods (Blake Street and Winchester Avenue) and three single blocks (Stevens Street, West Division Street, and a portion of Howard Avenue), outlines a strategy for turning around what have been considered to be some very challenging areas.

NHS is proud to be in the forefront of these activities, which complement our affordable homeownership development as well as the homebuyer education and counseling programs that are provided on a daily basis at the HomeOwnership Center. Only by working together can we build a stronger New Haven.

Clockwise from left: 1. Senior Housing Counselor, Kiomary Sotillo, answers questions from Alberta Norris during a workshop entitled “Get Credit Cents” on April 13. Sotillo was the instructor for the class, which focused on rebuilding credit and reducing debt. 2. April 24 Festival attendees join in a group salsa lesson with Alisa Bowens from Alisa’s House of Salsa. Alisa was also generous enough to raffle off two salsa lessons during the event. 3. A young guest poses for a caricature by Mike Valentine during the Family Festival. Staff member Sarah Custer also provided her artistic services that day in the form of face painting. 4. Jessalyn Michaels, organizer of the women’s month events, takes a moment to pose with good friend Jeff Turner. In addition to orchestrating events for the entire month, Michaels also taught one of the workshops on leadership and community. 5. Tool School for Women participants help each other hang hooks after learning the basics. A second Tool School workshop will be held on June 9.
Resident Leadership Series Drawing to a Close
by Sarah Custer

Imagine a room full of community leaders coming together for a common purpose: building confidence in their ability to organize and advocate for positive change in their neighborhoods. The Resident Leadership Program, sponsored by Yale-New Haven Hospital and the Yale-New Haven Lead Program and Regional Treatment Center, has been a great success, with 26 enthusiastic participants.

The goals of the program are to transfer concrete leadership skills to New Haven residents, create a space for participants to share their experiences with one another, and increase their sense of being agents of change. “Meeting other people and hearing their stories has been very inspiring,” says Claudia Herrera, a participant from Fair Haven. “It has helped me recognize the value that we have collectively.”

One key to achieving these goals is starting with the fundamental belief that participants and the communities they represent are assets. Oftentimes, leadership programs are built to fill the “missing gaps” in emerging leaders rather than to hone the strengths they already possess. This program has aimed to change that paradigm. “I’ve gotten real information and useful resources that I shared with my neighbors – and they felt so encouraged,” says Claudia.

The first four workshops have explored the topics of asset mapping, understanding power for community change, and the art and science of leadership. The final workshop, “Leading Great Meetings,” will take place on Wednesday, May 19, and will be facilitated by Susan Naimark, Director of the Community Building & Organizing Initiative at NeighborWorks® America.

“If we can work together, that’s enough,” adds Claudia. “We don’t always have to rely on others to make things happen. We can be the leaders in our communities.”

The following Sunday, Yale’s Sigma Chi Fraternity spent half a day filling up a thirty-yard dumpster while cleaning out one of NHS’ recently acquired houses slated for renovation.

Yale Students from the Environmental Studies Department assisted with spring cleaning and mulching at the Ivy Dixwell Narrows Bird Sanctuary the following Saturday. Now entering its tenth year, the sanctuary is truly a gem in the city and a fine example of residents collaborating to create and sustain a very special place.

These are only a few examples of residents and outside volunteers working together to make New Haven a better place. Please contact me at scremin-entes@newhaven.org.
On Saturday, April 10, 15 homeowners and preservationists participated in a day-long workshop about the repair and upkeep of windows in older homes. The event was collaboratively sponsored by Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven and the New Haven Preservation Trust.

Window restoration expert and business owner, Jade Mortimer of Heartwood Window Restoration, led the hands-on workshop at the Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory at NHS.

Prior to the workshop, President of the NHPT Board of Directors, Pedro Soto, explained, “The Trust is pleased to be developing this collaborative relationship with Neighborhood Housing Services in order to give New Haven’s homeowners useful information about maintaining and preserving their homes. Repairing and restoring old windows not only preserves the historic character of older homes and the City’s neighborhoods, but is cost effective as well. Homeowners who take this workshop will learn how to both fix and insulate their older windows without having to resort to cheaper and less durable replacements.”

Continued on page 5

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Continued on page 5

Houses for Sale

653 Winchester Avenue
Nearly Complete
Single-family house on three floors, high performance insulation and air sealing, two full baths, two half baths, four bedrooms, lovely fenced yard and off street parking.

335 West Division Street
Completed
Single-family house with traditional front-gable styling, lovely full front width two-story porch, 1st floor bed/full bath, 2nd floor bedrooms with generous common den area and full bath, large storage attic, pleasant, fully-fenced grass yard, off-street parking.

323 Goodrich Street
Under Construction
Two four-bedroom units, with traditionally higher ceilings on the first floor provides the owner with more than adequate space and a generous rental unit to supplement income. A grassy landscaped yard accommodates a safe, enclosed play environment for younger children.
NHS and the NHPT are looking forward to a continued collaboration in providing homeowner classes and workshops offering solutions to issues that occur in older homes.

Both organizations were pleased to continue their efforts by offering a second class held at the Fair Haven Library on May 8 called “Keeping Up Appearances: Caring for the Outside of your House,” led by New Haven restoration contractor, Christopher Wuerth. The workshop addressed the types of problems that reveal themselves on the exterior of a house, but are indicative of problems happening on the interior. The organizations hope to offer another window repair workshop in late summer or early fall.

The Mission of the NHPT is to honor and preserve New Haven’s architectural heritage – historic buildings and neighborhoods – through advocacy, education, and collaboration.

The Changing Face of NHS

NHS has experienced many changes in the past few years, including the opening of the new HomeOwnership Center offices, the Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory, and a huge expansion in staff. To complement these changes, NHS has adopted a new marketing approach. We have a new website set for launch in early summer, new signage for our campus to be installed in June, and an advertising campaign including bus ads (pictured) throughout New Haven. Our goal is to spread the word about the services we offer.

In that light, here is a brief listing of our current services:

- Affordable housing development
- Community building and organizing activities
- Home Improvement & Energy Conservation IDA Savings Program
- Housing rehabilitation services
- Homeownership promotion & mortgage origination assistance
- Home purchase counseling
- Mortgage delinquency/pre-foreclosure counseling
- Downpayment assistance
- Hands-on home improvement & energy conservation training

Project Spotlight

**678 Winchester Avenue**

*Under Construction*

Corner lot, traditional 1900’s styling, two units with generous owner’s unit on the 2nd and 3rd floors. Light, airy and spacious, with three bedrooms and generous common areas; the fenced lot has off-street parking and play space for children and adults.

**422 Legion Avenue**

*SOLD- Nearly complete*

Recently an ugly duckling on a prominent downtown gateway, this two-unit house has had its 19th century charm re-imagined, restored, and recreated. Also boasting a high performance building envelope, this urban homestead is attractive, livable, and affordable and will meet Energy Star standards when it is completed.
You want to stretch your budget, and you know you “ought to” go green, but when it comes to making your home more energy efficient, where do you start?

With utility and fuel bills so high, and advertisers telling you to “buy this” or “try that,” how can you be certain you’re spending your hard-earned dollars on improvements that make sense for your home’s specific needs? For most area homeowners, expensive window replacements or a new heating system may not be necessary to save both energy and money.

The first step is to familiarize yourself with your home’s current conditions. Do you have enough insulation or any at all? How much air leaks through your house? What appliances really need an upgrade?

These are key questions, and the best way to find out is through an energy audit from United Illuminating. A technician will come to your home and perform a series of diagnostic tests to find and seal the most wasteful air leaks. The technician will also check on your insulation and appliances, make recommendations, and discuss rebate programs based on your specific needs. The technician may also replace inefficient light bulbs, faucet aerators or showerheads.

There are different entry points to the audit depending on your town of residence, income level and whether you are a homeowner, landlord, tenant, or loss mitigation/foreclosure prevention client. Your NHS staff contact can connect you to the right person, or you can call 1-877 Wise-USE.

If you’re like many people you may need to make further upgrades after your initial audit. NHS staff can help you access a number of programs to help pay for those upgrades, too. For the best coordination, be sure to let your NHS staff contact know when you have scheduled your energy audit.

As spring blossoms and summer approaches, many home repair and improvement opportunities await the energetic homeowner. Below are just a few that you should consider:

**Home Grounds** The most important lawn care activity at this time of year is regular cutting. Grass grows rapidly and can quickly get ahead of your ability to easily cut it. If it is out of control, you will have to rake the cut grass when you are done cutting. This is not desirable because short clippings left on the lawn contribute to the lawn’s health, but removing long clippings consumes your valuable time. To prevent lawn care from becoming burdensome, keep mowing equipment sharp and in good mechanical order, watch the weather (do not cut the lawn when it is wet), and plan the cutting schedule to keep the height of the grass at 2½ to 4 inches. If you wish to reduce your time spent cutting, then reduce the size of the grass area by expanding natural areas, and adding perennial and vegetable gardens. Do not overlook the value of vegetable plants as ornamentals.

**House Exterior** While this is a great time of year for outside painting projects, it is important to be mindful of the weather, which can be wildly variable in a short period of time. Conditions that are too cold, too hot, or too wet can affect the life expectancy of the product. Always read and follow the manufacturer’s application instructions. Several paint companies now have products with a wider tolerance for wet or cold conditions. Since homeowners have limited opportunity to get these projects done, these products can increase the range of conditions under which paint can be applied. Exercise caution when working on surfaces built before 1978, since they may contain hazardous lead paint.

**Energy Use and Conservation**
This is the right time to be thinking about changes in your heating and cooling systems and improving the energy performance of your home’s exterior shell (envelope). You can get help from United Illuminating through their “UI Helps” and “Home Energy Solutions” programs. Call 1-877-947-3873 for information about these and other energy conservation programs. You can also sign up for regularly scheduled energy conservation workshops at the NHS Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory at 203-562-0598 x24.
Michael and Debbie Glover have been clients of Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven since May 2003. On May 20, Mr. and Ms. Glover will become the proud owners of one of our showcased homes in our Fairlawn Manor Development.

Debbie has both patiently and anxiously waited for this day. She has been reluctant to share the news of their impending purchase with anyone other than her immediate family.

“I just can’t stop praising God for blessing my family with this beautiful home,” said Ms. Glover. “It truly is a dream come true and we’ve worked very hard to attain it.”

Mr. Glover is happy to be moving his family into a better environment. The Grovers are parents of five girls and three boys, with three of the children still at home. LaShauna, their 14-year old, has never had a bedroom of her own and has already claimed her bedroom in their new home. She is eagerly awaiting the closing.

“We are grateful to the staff at Neighborhood Housing Services for working with us and preparing us for homeownership and the loan origination team at NewAlliance Bank that provided our financing. I was also able to take advantage of the first-time homebuyer grant offered by Yale-New Haven hospital as an employee,” said Debbie, who has worked there as a patient care associate for the past 12 years.

With spring as the catalyst for new birth, the Glover family looks forward to a new beginning with the move into their newly renovated home.

I would like to support neighborhood revitalization in New Haven!

_____ My tax-deductible contribution of $_________ to NHS of New Haven is enclosed.

Please make check payable to:
NHS of New Haven
Mail to:
NHS of New Haven
333 Sherman Avenue
New Haven, CT 06511

Or please visit our website to make a credit card contribution through Network for Good!
www.nhsofnewhaven.org

_____ I would like to be notified of volunteer opportunities with NHS.
(Please list contact info below)

_____ I would like to receive information about upcoming events.
(Please list contact info below)

Name:
E-mail:
Address:
Telephone:

Add us on Facebook to learn about upcoming events!
Upcoming Events

**NeighborWorks® Week**
June 5-12
See schedule to left

**Housing Fair**
Sat. June 19, 10 AM-6 PM
New Haven City Hall
See description to left

**Lab Classes**
Home Maintenance 101
Tue. May 18, 5:30-7:30 PM
Wed. June 23, 5:30-7:30 PM

Tool School for Women II
Wed. June 9, 5:30-7:30 PM

**HOC Classes**
Call the HOC at 203-777-6925 to find out more about the classes offered including:

- Pre-Purchase Homebuyer Education
- Budgeting & Financial Management
- Individual Credit Counseling
- Landlord Training
- Home Equity Conversion Mortgages
- Foreclosure Intervention

Contact us for more information or to get involved:
203-562-0598
www.nhsofnewhaven.org
Or find us on Facebook!

On Saturday, June 19, NHS and ROOF are hosting a Housing Fair at New Haven City Hall. From 10 AM – 6 PM, vendors will be available with answers to your housing questions regarding the purchase of a home, foreclosure prevention, and energy saving tips. Be sure to stay for the panel discussion on today's housing market and to participate in the Loan Scam Mosaic. Visit our website for more details!