

# East End Neighborhood House

An Established Organization Extending into the Future



By: Stephanie Poland

Walking into East End Neighborhood House my sophomore year, I didn't quite know what expect. With eager anticipation I opened the doors under the green awning of the off-white colored building to figure out what my role as a volunteer would be. With slight ignorance I underestimated the affect the Hathaway Brown volunteers would have on East End, but even more so the impact the children would have on us. Caught up in my current affiliation with East End I didn't even fully comprehend the historical background of the organization. Only when you completely understand the past of something, you can understand the future.

The strong and stable East End Neighborhood House standing today is still the same building as in 1916 when the founder, Hedwig Kosbab, moved the program to the larger location, which was once the home of the Van Sweringen Family<sup>1</sup>. Originally Miss Kosbab had founded the program in 1907 with the intention of teaching immigrant women how to sew, but as demands increased, so did the location of the program. The importance of settlement houses sifted from Europe to the United States and East End quickly adopted helping the Hungarian population<sup>2</sup>. East End was there as more than just a place to learn how to sew, but a place where immigrants felt comfortable in beginning their journey to assimilate into the American lifestyle. The main purpose of a settlement house like East End was to, "educate the community, while trying to solve urban problems."<sup>3</sup> East End was created to help the entire community from within. From the time East End was created, the foundation strived and continued to succeed throughout the Cleveland community, and the federal funds granted in 1970 helped the program prosper more<sup>4</sup>. Transitioning into the 1980's and 1990's, however, there were diminishing federal funds. Fortunately, the City of Cleveland, the public school systems,

churches, hospitals, and the Cuyahoga County Metropolitan Housing Authority helped fund and promote East End.<sup>5</sup> Due to the fact that East End, “strives to provide direct services to individuals and families, integrated with neighborhood organizing, networking, supportive services, and outreach efforts to facilitate a process of cooperation and self-help”, the Center is constantly changing to meet the needs of the city.<sup>6</sup> East End has expanded the age of residents from eighteen months to one hundred years<sup>7</sup>. The large age intervals have corresponding programs that individually help each person. East End has not only changed by broadening the typical age of the participant in program, but the type of resident has changed as well. Although the shift in ethnicity from Hungarian to primarily African American has altered certain aspects of the program, East End still maintains the settlement house mentality by offering classes and programs that help bring the Cleveland community together. The strong historical influences have put East End in the position it is in today.

East End’s main goal is to meet the needs of the community and the reason this organization has garnered success is because it is an organization in the community that actually helps the community. Through appropriate leadership and inspiration, East End Neighborhood House’s effects have spread throughout the generations. East End has successfully formed six major programs that meet the needs of the different aspects of life. While still CEO of East End, Paul Hill Jr. stated in their informational video that, “East End serves as an oasis within the area that is providing a safe and caring space for those who are going through the circle of life.”

Establishing a passionate and intelligent team of managers, Paul Hill Junior was able to make the organization possible as well as pinpoint issues in the community that

needed resolutions. Senior Care manager Kimberly Robinson was and still is able to help elderly residents stay involved in the community, take care of themselves, and ultimately enjoy life. The Meals on Wheels program provides seniors with a nutritional meal<sup>8</sup>. As senior citizens grow older, their health tends to diminish, and because medications are commonly expensive, the Food Pantry Program at East End provides the seniors with seven days of groceries out of the month, so that they don't have to compensate groceries in order to pay for their medication<sup>9</sup>. Seniors who are bored with their routines at home are also able to come in to East End and enjoy themselves. They can participate in activities, such as Bingo, crafts, cards, and ceramics, meet new people, and eat lunch. Traveling on field trips also provides the seniors with a sense of change and allows them to try different things. The senior programs not only create a better community, but “cut out isolations and loneliness”<sup>10</sup>.

The seniors are such a large part of the community and they also help shape the future by influencing Cleveland's youth. Through the Foster Grandparent Program seniors who are fifty five or older help mentor and guide younger generations at East End by sharing their wisdom.<sup>11</sup> This is such a strong relationship that truly impacts both groups, because not only are the seniors positively shaping the future generations, but the youth shares their contagious and inspiring energy. The Foster Care Manager, Denise Draper, has made this program into a success by combining different perspectives that positively benefits the youthful generation and provides seniors with a “fresh outlook”<sup>12</sup>.

Family services are provided through East End to help create better environments for the children. The System of Care's Family to Family Program helps families obtain more idealistic living situations by providing permanent homes for children and offering

parenting classes<sup>13</sup>. This program helps families avoid confrontation with the Department of Children and Family Services by offering social workers' services, home visits, and foster parent placement<sup>14</sup>. This service can also work in collaboration with another powerful program, Alcohol Anonymous: New Beginnings. This program helps aid the problem of alcoholism and the effects it has on the community.

The generational struggle is addressed in all of the programs at East End and in 1993, the current CEO at the time, Paul Hill Jr., continued to advocate for children's transitions by creating the Rites of Passage Program<sup>15</sup>. Change is a scary factor in a young adolescence's life, but ultimately change is inevitable. Paul Hill Junior's goal was to alleviate the gap between youth to adulthood. He says, "The journey of life is a series of passages that must be bridged to fulfill our purpose for being"<sup>16</sup>. Therapy sessions were encouraged through the Foster Grandparents Program and African "coming-of-age rituals and ceremonies" were also done through the Rites of Passage Program.<sup>17</sup> Fanon Hill, the son of Paul Hill Jr., describes Rites of Passage as, "A support system that recognizes the power of community and authentic contribution."<sup>18</sup> The Rites of Passage program puts such an emphasis on support because the Cleveland community needs to support adolescence's as the experience adversity and change throughout their lives.

The ideology that children are our future could not be any truer or accurately depicted than at East End. The daycare and head start program, accepting children from eighteen months to six years, serves as a safe place for children in the community where children learn, "who they are and what they believe in".<sup>19</sup> The importance of having a safe place for these children at such a young age is crucial because East End instills a close-knit family mentality into them. The children feel safe and the seven principles of

Kwanzaa are instilled early on, so that they understand and accept their heritage. Tatiana Wells, the Child Care Director, makes sure she establishes a family atmosphere for the children. Although her day is occupied by supervision and management responsibilities, she still finds time to make personal connections. She, “not only knows the children by face, but by there favorite color.”<sup>20</sup> Being a manager at a non-profit organization mastering multitasking is essential. Tatiana Wells can figure out how to fix a broken sink and a make phone call about bus transportation all while comforting a crying girl and braiding her hair for picture day. Her job extends far past data assessments and attendance reports; she says that one of her favorite and most important parts of the day is when she, “does a walk through the classroom”<sup>21</sup> The love the children have for her is so evident each time one the kids walks past her office and says, “Hi Ms. Tatiana!” or run into the room to give her a hug before the day ends. Tatiana Wells describes how one of her worst days was turned around when one of the children, “ran up to me, gave me a hug, and then while looking up at me gave me a big kiss.”<sup>22</sup> Tatiana’s organizational skills, personality, and intelligence is most likely why Paul Hill Junior encouraged her to leave her previous teaching position at a charter school to come join the East End Team. The history of East End lives through Tatiana Wells as she maintains important aspects of the organization, but people like her are definitely the future of East End.

After the children surpass the age of six, they enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Youth and Family. East End serves as a safe place to go in the morning to be taken to school, and a positive outlet to return to after the school day is over. This program offers tutoring and encourages students to complete their homework. Joseph Clark, one of the teachers at East End, says that as an employee of East End he, “wears many hats.”<sup>23</sup> He drives the

bus in the morning to take the children safely to school and then returns to plan the activities for the kids. Joseph Clark started his position this year in October because he “wanted to work with at risk youth.”<sup>24</sup> As a teacher, Mr. Clark has to identify his position in a child’s life. He says, “I am a teacher, so I have to establish my authority first, but second I am their friend...” he continues, “I have to earn their trust and then I actually become somewhat of a parental figure.”<sup>25</sup> He acts as a life coach and helps the children in whatever aspects they need. “Each student is different... I don’t know what kind of day they have had, but I try to redirection their problems so that the can act more positively... I just really try to show them that someone truly does care.” Joseph Clarks says.<sup>26</sup> Education really “puts a print” on a child’s life and with the help of Joseph Clark and other teachers, East End has the ability to not just put a print, but leave permanent steps on their lives.

As federal funds became diminished, East End, as a nonprofit organization, had to find new methods upon bringing in income and resources, so they formed partnerships with organizations, hospitals, churches, and schools<sup>27</sup>. One of the schools East End formed a budding relationship with was Hathaway Brown. Hathaway Brown High School students have been volunteering at East for quite a while now, helping both with the child head start area and the 21<sup>st</sup> century tutoring program. Rachael Persky, a Hathaway Brown senior, has been volunteering with the East End children since her sophomore year. She transferred placements from volunteering with the elderly to helping out with the child care center at East End because she “wanted a hands on experience and wanted to wok with kids.”<sup>28</sup> She enjoys working with the toddlers because she is able to help them with fundamental skills. This includes teaching them the alphabet, playing basketball on a

warm day, or solving a puzzle in the classroom. Rachael's presence offers another teaching device though. Tatiana Well says that, "Hathaway Brown provides East End with different cultures and helps prevent the kids from facing a culture shock."<sup>29</sup> One of the main beauties of children is that they don't judge; they don't care about external differences; they are just curious about why people have these variations. Rachael's long blond hair and fair skin tone makes the children question her exterior, but after they ask why her hair is so soft they continue their games and forget that there are even any differences between them. The relationships that Rachael has formed over these last three years have helped her grow as a person because she has seen the impact she has on the children. When she leaves the kids always ask, "Can I go home with Rachael" and when she kindly tells them they can't, she walks to the door and their parting words to her are, "I love you".<sup>30</sup> Their mutual relationship is so powerful because Rachael has given them guidance as a positive role model and in return they have given her life lessons, but most importantly their love.

Another powerful program at East End is the 21<sup>st</sup> century child learning center where kids come after school. Here students eat a well rounded meal that they could possibly not have gotten at home, complete their homework from that day, and get additional help from teachers and volunteers. I was fortunate enough to be involved in this program my sophomore year. I tutored kids and helped them complete their English, math, and science worksheets. The relationships formed extended past tutoring and because I learned the kids' names and interests towards the end of the year they even felt comfortable enough to open up and tell me about their current problems. The kids are

genuinely very bright and motivated students, and East End really encourages the children to work hard by offering a safe place to learn and be themselves.

The importance of the East and Hathaway Brown partnership only extended and intensified with the creation of the Peer Education Program. During Hathaway Brown's first Innovation Summit Mr. Christ, Hathaway Brown's head of school, asked the faculty to think of innovative programs. Heath peer education immediately came to Denise Keary's mind. As she was proposing this program she contacted Stephanie Hiedemann, who quickly came aboard. They met with Zulma Zabala, the current CEO of East End, as well as Tatiana Well and they were both very excited, so they approved the program. Peer education is so effective because the program allows kids to teach kids about the importance of nutrition and physical fitness. Denise Keary says that, "the peer educators are more invested and they're teaching methods are very informal."<sup>31</sup> The relationship is stronger because there is less of an age gap and the kids at East End can relate to the students at Hathaway Brown because they are just high school students. Vanessa Smith, a senior at Hathaway Brown and member of the Peer Education Program says, "the program allows us as older kids teach kids we care about", she continues expressing unity by saying, "we are all part of the greater Cleveland community."<sup>32</sup> The Peer Education Program, which I have been involved in for two years, addresses the pressing issues of nutrition in fun ways. The kids at East End always enjoy themselves and the students at HB are able to act as mentors, but also form friendships with the kids. The affectivity of this program will only grow as the years progress because Denise Keary would like to see the visits increase in frequency. This program really allows kid to help kids, because

although we may have had different situations, we are all children that deserve the right to learn.

East End Neighborhood House is truly a place that changes lives for the managers, teachers, volunteers, and the children. East End has identified issues within the community and addressed them in every area of life. By offering a safe place to learn and grow as a person, kids who are potentially at risk are helped. By partnering with different schools, East End has expanded even further and the volunteers at Hathaway Brown are forever grateful for the life lessons the children have taught them. Vanessa Smith admires East End by saying, “it is such a positive program within the community that gives structural encouragement and helps kids learn about character” she continues with how her character was shaped by the program, “East End reminds me to be to be thankful, but more importantly enjoy life”.<sup>33</sup> By understanding East End’s past you can see the importance East End has today in the community. Tatiana Wells even expresses the interest East End has in becoming a school. She would like to no longer see kids come into East End who are at academic emergency. The kids who have been a part of East End since they were babies are doing well academically and Tatiana Wells would like to see all kids have the potential to do well. Of course this is an ambitious plan considering sponsors and finances, but ambition is what keeps East End changing lives. By deciphering through the past and present clouds of success that East End has had, you can see and appreciate the clarity of the brightness of their future. As stated on their home page, “East End makes a difference at the center of the circle of life”.<sup>34</sup>

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- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Clark, Joseph. Personal interview. 22 Feb. 2013.
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## **Interviews**

Tatiana Wells  
Child Care Director

Joseph Clark  
Teacher at the 21<sup>st</sup> century Youth and Family Program

Rachael Persky  
Hathaway Brown student volunteer at the Child Care section

Vanessa Smith  
Hathaway Brown student volunteer with the Peer Education Program

Denise Keary  
Founder of the Peer Education Program

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