More Black Women and their Infants are Surviving Childbirth

Written By Miesha Winton Heard and fund By the Solutions Journalism Network.

There is a need to hear the voices of Black women who have suffered the loss of a child or a mother during childbirth. We heard and recorded the stories of nine Black women from Cleveland. What we need is a call to action. We will analyze how the Greater Cleveland community has responded to this call.

Whether it is underlying medical conditions or healthcare disparities caused by the racial gap, the women’s stories provided invaluable insight. Since 2010, Ohio has ranked in the lowest fifth percentile of 50 states along with Mississippi since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began posting data based upon race in maternal death and infant mortality. Though separated 800 miles, Ohio stands nearly shoulder to shoulder with Mississippi in its care of pregnant black women.

There are wide disparities between black babies and white babies when it comes to birth outcomes in Cleveland, according to the Center for Community Solutions. In 2017, black infants were 13 times more likely to die from low birth weight and

DONING SCHOOL AT HOME: A PARENT’S SURVIVAL GUIDE

By Meryl Johnson

Children are the priority. Change is the reality. Collaboration is the strategy.

Judith Billings,
Washington State Superintendent

Keeping up with a child’s education during this pandemic crisis is an unnerving prospect that can exacerbate the challenges families are already facing. So, what can parents/caregivers do to alleviate some of the stress of learning from home? How can doing school at home be made more effective and more tolerable for students, regardless of the resources families can access?

For the first three points, I went directly to Cleveland teachers:

1) Teachers become frantic when they can’t locate their students.
   They need your current phone numbers and emails. If your contacts information, change, please notify the secretary at your children’s school as soon as possible. Secretaries will be available in all CMSD school buildings every day from 8 am to 12 pm and from 1 pm to 4 pm.

2) Please make sure your children are completing their assignments, and doing them with as much quality as possible.
   Teachers are asking that you monitor regularly to make sure a serious effort is being made on all assignments.

3) Ask for help. Be honest and open with your children’s teachers. Share your needs.

(Continued on page 3)

The Cleveland Foundation Comes to Ward 7

By Mansfield Frazier

A bit over 20 years ago, my then new wife, Brenda, was walking towards her office in the Department of Children and Family Services building one Monday morning, there were two women at the water cooler chatting. She overheard one say to the other, “Did you see that some damn fools are building a house on the corner of 66th and Hough?” She kept right on walking and didn’t inform the woman that she, along with me, her husband, were the fools in question.

Fast-forward to today... considering recent developments, it appears as if my wife and I were prescience two decades ago. As I am sometimes wanting to inform people, we didn’t simply throw a dart at a map of Hough when we were deciding where to build our home. Instead, knowing history as I do, there was no question in my mind that residing in proximity to, and on the same street as the historic League Park (the oldest original baseball park still standing in the United States) would be a smart bet. It was eventually renovated into a first-class facility 10 years ago to fulfill now-deceased Councilwoman Fannie Lewis’ signature dream.

Now our little corner of the world—as well as the entire Eastside of Cleveland—is set to get another major boost.

Last year the Cleveland Foundation proposed to build their new headquarters on land that runs along 66th Street between Euclid and Chester Avenue, which will put our home (and the vineyards and winery we manage, Château Hough) equal distance between their building and the ballpark.

Talk about feeling like being in the catbird’s seat!

However, as with anything that is ultimately going to be of consequence, challenges to the Foundation’s plans soon developed... something I personally believe should occur whenever a progressive idea is initially rolled out. Facing obstacles and overcoming them clarifies purpose and time vision while strengthening resolve, plus making the victory, when it comes, all the sweeter. Allow me to elucidate.

The land which the Foundation purchased was a vacant lot that was once owned by the Dunham Tavern Museum. Although a majority of the museum’s board voted for the sake of the land, they did not have the financial wherewithal to develop, a dissenting group of board members (plus a few non-board members of questionable intent) mounted a campaign to void the deal. But the only issue naysayers could raise is that the land, which has sat as an open field on the top of contaminated fuel storage tanks for years, is really a green space, a lovely park that serves nearby neighborhoods.

At the time I questioned in print that if the space was indeed intended for community use why then wasn’t I, who lives a short block away, not aware of it, and further, why was it entirely surrounded by a sturdy fence? Additionally, it was not until the Dunham board brought a wonderfully talented woman, Lauren Hansgen, as executive director there had been little, if any, interaction between the institution and the surrounding community. In other words, their arguments were pure, unadulterated, hogwash, and, lacking any other plausible explanation. I was forced to come to the conclusion the dissenters’ actions were designed—at least in part—simply to impede the progress of the communities.

(Continued on page 3)

The Cleveland Observer
SERVING COMMUNITIES:
ASIA TOWN, CENTRAL, DOWNTOWN, FAIRFAX, GLENVILLE, HOUGH, MIDTOWN CLEVELAND, ST. CLAIR-SUPERIOR, AND UNIVERSITY CIRCLE

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Elder Justice Center is a Safe Space for Elderly Victims of Crime, Abuse, Violence, or Trauma!

Lisa Rose-Rodriguez, MPH Epidemiologist

The irony, of course, being that most of the time the victims and victimizers are from the same community. Community is originally a word in Latin, communities, which can be translated as public spirit. (en.wikipedia.org).

The public spirit connects us as human beings across race, gender, culture and language. The bullets that rip through one black teenager’s lung, pierce the soul of his mother. The bullet that tears through the hand of a young girl who aspired to write a best-selling novel, smashes her family’s aspirations. Cleveland, Ohio is a city that has been under the siege of COVID-19 and Gun violence since the Spring.

This article addresses the connection between the COVID-19 pandemic and increases in firearm assault in the city of Cleveland. “What is known is that the corona virus resulted in record unemployment, dire projections for evictions and brought many of the underlying systemic socio-economic problems into sharp focus.”


In large urban areas where people of color are marginalized, gun violence has increased. Chicago and Philadelphia are also undergoing this phenomenon. Here, it is the area of Saint Clair and Superior; the neighborhood and adjacent neighborhoods of Cleveland are connected to the national trend. How can this be addressed? Sometimes dialog is the jumping off point.

NORA has been given an opportunity through a Common Ground discussion on Zoom, Sunday, September 20, 2020. Starting at 11:30 AM the public is invited to join in the discussion. The technology will allow stakeholders, grassroots organizers and advocates the opportunity to interact with Commander Dorothy Todd of the 3rd District. She will be available to answer questions about the community along with her officers’ patrol. Communities have spirit and this will be addressed by Karis Tzeng of Asia Town. She works hard to promote the culture of Asians who live in urban Cleveland.

The Ward 7 Observer has an email signature that reads: “Rebuilding our community together. One family at a time.” The Northern Ohio Recovery Association uses a similar motto: Building Communities of Recovery and Resilience.

Both speak to the well-being of the community. As a trained Epidemiologist we look for the illnesses in a community and how to solve those illnesses collectively. Interpersonal violence in general and gun violence in particular destroy individuals, place families in perpetual grief and fracture the communities that the victims are from. The irony, of course, being that most of the time the victims

The relationship between Urban Blight and Gun Violence

90th St, off Chester Ave. Soon to be demolished and developed into three builds with approximately 120 units per building. No Land Trust Agreement, or governmental organization.

In need of a temporary safe space and agrees to be placed in a temporary safe space

The Eliza Bryant Village Elder Justice Center

Elder abuse has been on the rise during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Eliza Bryant Village Elder Justice Center is open, accepting guests, and we are here to help you and your clients. Take a virtual tour of our Elder Justice Center!

Elder abuse is a severe and growing problem. COVID-19 brings us all daily challenges, and changes to our daily lives are not helping older adults experiencing abuse, violence, trauma, or criminal victimization. Elder abuse may be increasing because of:

- Social isolation – Seniors are isolated from systems that can protect them.
- Work from home – Seniors may have more difficulty finding time apart from their abuser with new “work-life” balance changes as more of us are working from home.
- The National Council on Aging reports that in almost 60% of elder abuse and neglect incidents, the perpetrator is a family member. Two-thirds of the perpetrators are adult children or spouses.
- 62 years of age or older.
- Experienced one or more of the following types of abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, financial) or is at risk for experiencing such abuse.
- Referred to the Elder Justice Center by a community or governmental organization.

In need of a temporary safe space and agrees to be placed in a temporary safe space

The Northern Ohio Recovery Association (NORA) Drug Addiction Treatment Center in Cleveland, Ohio 1400 E 55th St. Cleveland, OH 44103

September 2020

www.theclevelandobserver.com 2
The Foundation serves... particularly those of color.

Nonetheless, the dissenting group went to court to block the sale. The case was summarily tossed out of Common Pleas Court on its ear, but they persisted and filed an appeal. On Wednesday, August 12 the Court of Appeals, in a three-zip vote, ruled in favor of the Cleveland Foundation. The organization can now move forward with a groundbreaking in the late fall.

The dissents can, of course, take their very weak case to the Ohio Supreme Court. In such case, I'm relatively confident the Justices would find that the move by the Cleveland Foundation to decamp from their ivory tower existence and place their operations logistically, programmatically, and philosophically closer to the communities they seek to serve, inclusive mindset.

This move will certainly help to energize nascent Eastside revitalization efforts and coupled with the equally nascent “woke” movement (whereby the majority white community nationwide is, at least for the nonce, expressing a desire to right past wrongs and address past grievances), now is the time for us local residents to make efforts to fulfill our dreams of turning our neighborhoods into stable, vibrant, and safe communities of choice.

I can sense that the door of opportunity is beginning to crack open and it’s incumbent upon us—no matter how suspicious one is due to past failed efforts and unfulfilled empty promises made to the black community— to step up and avail ourselves any and all offerings of assistance to better our condition that might come our way... or those we can create for ourselves via dent of entrepreneurial spirit and the hard work that accompanies it.

Also, it’s incumbent upon us to make sure our buckets don’t have any holes in them. We can’t move forward with sloppily prepared business plans or ill-thought-out strategies. We have to go to the table completely prepared. In more simple terms, we need to step up to the plate and take a swing at a better life... just take a swing at it.

The Cleveland Foundation Comes to Ward 7

The New Captains of your Health Care Team

At Dedicated Senior Medical Center, our Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) are the captains of your healthcare team. They will see you once a month and oversee all aspects of your healthcare needs, whether you are sick or well. Your PCP will monitor your health and medications, order your on-site tests and screenings, and coordinate your care with all your specialists. They will keep all your doctors informed and on the same page, so you do not have to.

By coordinating all aspects of your healthcare, they can keep you in the best possible health. Some of the on-site services they offer are:

- Primary Care Providers
- Onsite Diagnostic Testing
- Medications Provided on-site
- Labs & Testing on-site
- X-Rays
- Door-to-Doctor Transportation Available
- LifeCard
- Cardiology
- Acupuncture
- Social Workers
- Exercise, Educational and Social Events

They are located at the old Rite-Aid Building: 15105 St Clair Ave., Cleveland, OH 44110, (216) 800-8020
The Witness Project: Black and Blue  Imani Capri

Black lives matter. That is fact, not opinion.

Even in the midst of the deadly COVID19 pandemic, courageous, brave souls are willing to risk their lives, in protest, in order to help save more Black lives. They have gathered, for months, and continue gathering, as a human-mosaic of millions of diverse, masked faces, to send an earthshaking message that loss of Black lives at the hands of the police is not to be normalized. *Black Lives Matter* is the amplified, global declaration, cry, mantra and call-to-action for justice, radical compassion, and the swift dismantling of systemic racism in all of its manifestations, especially and most urgently, regarding police reform in the United States.

In the wake of the recent murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, Desmond Franklin, and too many others killed by police, than when he defended and advocated on behalf of the officers who murdered Tamir Rice to be rehired.

Although Follmer was cordial in conversation, was he possibly somewhat shielded emotionally, behind his badge and loyalty to the “Brotherhood” or “Blue Wall of Silence?” Follmer’s comments like, “...That was tragic. But I have no way of knowing or being in an officer’s head at any given situation and they want to go home too.” An additional issue that stood out during our interview was the fact that there is currently nothing in place that requires police officers to receive, mandatory, regular emotional and mental health checkups to determine how they may be managing the stress of the job.

Employee assistance services are available, according to Follmer for police officers who voluntarily seek help.

The divide between black and blue lives remains wide all across the country and Cleveland is not exempt. However, protest, pushing for justice, radical compassion, and continued engagement to engage the police in dialogue with the communities in which they work is vital to dismantling all of the dogma that prevents officers like Follmer from ‘only seeing the color blue when it comes to policing.’

Without dialogue, humans are fated to walk in the darkness of their own dogmatic self-righteousness. Dialogue is the lamp by which we dispel that darkness, light and making visible for each other our steps and the path ahead.” - Daisaku Ikeda

The Cleveland Observer

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DOING SCHOOL AT HOME: (From front page)

Communicate everything, no matter how small it may seem. From a teacher: “We can help so much better if we know what’s going on.” Also, you can dial 211 at any time, 24/7, for assistance.

Here are some additional suggestions:

4) Help your child establish and stick to a daily routine. Treat school days like regular school. Have them get up at the same time every day, put on clothes, and eat breakfast.

5) Encourage physical activity and exercise. Whether it’s using breaks to walk the dog, to stretch, or to do jumping jacks—any movement helps. And, it also boosts the brain’s ability to function.

6) Take care of yourself. To have the energy and patience needed to take care of your children, do your best to take care of your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs. Even 10 to 15 minutes of “not now” time during the day can be helpful.

It’s been said that success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out. We will all come out stronger from this experience, as we learn to adapt to a challenge that is being faced all over the world.
preterm birth than their white counterparts. Black women were two and a half times more likely to die of a pregnancy-related death than white women.

This disparity remains when controlling for income and education. A college-educated Black woman of moderate to high income has a higher likelihood of experiencing infant loss than a white woman with less than a high school education.

The collaboration includes organizations throughout the region: American Association of Clergy and Employers, Cleveland Clergy Coalition, Literary Cleveland, FreshWater Cleveland, First Year, The Cleveland Observer and funded by Solutions Journalism Network.

Solutions Journalism Network’s missions is to spread the practice of solutions journalism: rigorous reporting on responses to social problems. We seek to rebalance the news, so that every day people are exposed to stories that help them understand problems and challenges, and stories that show potential ways to respond.

Over the next three months, we will analyze whether the progress can continue considering the following:

• The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on pregnant Black mothers;
• The history and relationships between Black women and their obstetricians and gynecologists, including how these interactions affect current statistics about prenatal deaths, infant mortality, and maternal mortality.
• The toxic effect of institutional racism on Black women’s wombs called “weathering.”

Weathering triggers extreme premature and late term fetal deaths, yet community champions work to deliver healthy Black babies and support their mothers.

The Beauty for Ashes Project is a hyper-local exploration of pregnancy outcomes and emerging solutions of Black women before and during the COVID-19 crisis. This project was made possible with funding support from the Cleveland Foundation and Solutions Journalism’s newly formed Northeast Ohio Journalism Collaborative. A combination of Local / Hyper Media platforms here in North East Ohio.

The Beauty for Ashes Project is personal to me as well. Viola Penno, my grandmother, bled to death in 1951 shortly after giving birth to my Uncle Isaiah in the colored wing of Mississippi’s Tupelo Community Hospital which boasted its own sink and toilet. Her death was quick. Her aunt Viney left her side to get coffee in the segregated cafeteria, but minutes later found her dead. Dr. P.K. Thomas, Jr. was Tupelo Community Hospital’s only gynecologist-obstetrician for more than 15 years. Whether he attended to my grandmother as she hemorrhaged to death was lost to history.

Viola Penno’s story was lost, but Beauty for Ashes has memorialized the stories of similarly situated Black women.

The pain, experience, and hope for Black women in their maternal health is exemplified by the work and personal experiences of project participant Dr. Susan Stephens, a Black Orthopedic Surgeon at University Hospitals. She spoke about the necessity for the medical community to hear Black women’s experiences with the healthcare system: “Half the time, they don’t even see you. Let’s be honest, right? You don’t even really exist half the time. The system’s stronger than any one individual.”

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MidTown Cleveland, Inc. is beginning a visioning and planning process for the MidTown neighborhood of Cleveland. Bounded by I-90 to the West, Cedar Avenue to the South, 55th and 79th Streets to the West, and Payne and Chester Avenues to the North, the MidTown neighborhood is a commercial corridor that is home to its own residents and local businesses. Development activity has increased dramatically since the opening of the Regional Transit Authority’s bus rapid transit “HealthLine” in 2008, which has led to $350 million of real estate investment in the MidTown neighborhood.

Further, the corridor is the center of gravity for a growing Innovation District in Cleveland’s health-tech and high-tech business sector anchored by the new Cleveland Foundation Headquarters, coming to MidTown in 2022. The MidTown neighborhood is now at a critical junction with several catalytic development projects that will spur the acceleration of real estate development and economic opportunity in the neighborhood. What happens to MidTown over the next decade will directly impact the tens of thousands of residents in neighborhoods north, south, east and west of MidTown.

This effort aims to develop a cohesive vision for the identity of MidTown, by creating a place-based and holistic neighborhood plan. The Neighborhood Vision Plan will include strategies that grow MidTown as a neighborhood, reinforce Midtown as a great place to work, visit and live. It will also create accessible job opportunities, and expand MidTown as a destination for entertainment and services that better support the surrounding communities. It is a priority to align this new plan with existing development and planning efforts into a cohesive whole that reflects MidTown Inc.’s core commitment, which is equitable and inclusive growth. The creation of this plan will bring together the desires of a diverse range of stakeholders and provide a roadmap toward achieving the collective vision through actionable steps for the next 5 years.

“We are interested in building a future that includes the diverse voices in our community, from businesses in the commercial corridors to residents in Midtown and adjacent neighborhoods”, said MidTown Cleveland, Inc’s Executive Director Jeff Epstein. MidTown selected Interface Studio, a planning firm from Philadelphia, through a competitive selection process. Partners in this effort include ThirdSpace Action Lab, LAND studio and a 20+ person Steering Committee of civic, residents, and business leaders from MidTown and adjacent neighborhoods.

To engage the community safely during COVID-19, MidTown Cleveland, Inc. is adapting the public input process to primarily online tools and virtual meetings. A project phone line is available to make the process accessible to individuals without digital access. Beginning Friday, August 28th, the MidTown Vision team will host virtual focus groups. Residents of MidTown or the bordering neighborhoods will each receive a $10 gift card for their participation in the focus groups. Please RSVP for one of these meetings at the following link: https://bit.ly/MidTownRSVP.

A digital collaborative map collecting stories and ideas about the neighborhood, a community survey for residents, workers, and visitors to MidTown will also be released publicly this month. More information about the project, updates, and ways to get involved are posted on the project website: https://midtowncleveland.org/our-vision2025/.
Erie Chinese Journal Distributes Newspapers by Mail Thanks to a Facebook Journalism Project Grant

Annie Ying Pu, publisher of the Erie Chinese Journal, Photo courtesy of Erie Chinese Journal

Annie Ying Pu direct-mailed copies of the Erie Chinese Journal Saturday as part of a Facebook Journalism Project grant to ensure local Chinese American readers can safely access the Mandarin/English print paper during the COVID-19 pandemic. Back in May, The Erie Chinese Journal was one of just 144 local U.S. News organizations—one of only four in all of Ohio—to be a recipient of a Facebook Journalism Project COVID-19 Local News Relief Grant. The Facebook Journalism Project grant helped save the 18-year-old paper from impending pandemic disaster, and right on-schedule—Annie Ying Pu, Publisher of the Chinese community newspaper (headquartered in Cleveland), was able to resume and increase direct-mail home delivery copies of The Erie Chinese print edition through the U.S. Post Office this Saturday. By having the paper mailed directly to readership mailboxes, these readers now receive information by and for their own community Chinese readership.

Ying Pu was experiencing challenges reaching her loyal, local readership with her print paper during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the resulting lack of distribution locations and loss of advertising revenue. That’s where Neighborhood Media Foundation, a local media supported nonprofit organization, submitted The Erie Chinese Journal for the Facebook Journalism Project grant.

"We are very proud of Annie and the value Facebook places on her labor since 2002 developing her grassroots Chinese-language newspaper." Executive Director Rich Weiss said, "We are very proud of Annie and the value Facebook places on her labor since 2002 developing her grassroots Chinese-language newspaper." Weiss submitted grant proposals for all 14 grassroots Cleveland papers of Neighborhood & Community Media Association of Greater Cleveland (NCMA-CLE), an association of Cleveland-area support organizations. Facebook did not make the decision to award a grant to The Erie Chinese Journal alone—the $64,998 grant was made possible by a collaboration of media support organizations. The grant selection process was led by Local Media Association and The Lenfest Institute for Journalism, and included input from the Institute for Corporate Responsibility News, Local Independent Online News Publishers, the Local Media Consortium, and the National Association of Broadcasters. Ying Pu said that in addition to Cleveland, her Chinese culture newspaper enjoys readership in Pittsburgh, Columbus, Cincinnati, and other Asian communities throughout Ohio and Pennsylvania, as well as those in New York, Kentucky, and Washington.
Neighbor Up: Good News Cleveland Project

Good News Cleveland is a people-powered web show and podcast made by the people, for the people with stories that you create. Tell us your story of building people power in these challenging times. It’s easy—all you need is an idea and a phone. Check out our special podcast series with Never, Ever Give Up - CLE. Neighbor Up members and other community members read Stories of Struggle and Letters of Hope, bringing them to life in a whole new way. Our goal is to create space for people to bear witness to the experiences of others, in the hopes of building a more connected and tangible community.

Episodes:

NEVER EVER GIVE UP CLE – THE PODCAST

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Listed below are other potential funding sources for grassroots groups:

- **The Foundation Center**: A library of resources to help you find funders, and free training classes on fundraising, proposal writing, and nonprofit management.

- **The Ohio Arts Council**: A state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically. They offer a host of community programs that offer training and funds for small and emerging arts organizations. The programs include Art Access, Arts Innovation, Capacity Building, and the Building Cultural Diversity Initiative.

The Cleveland Colectivo welcomes individuals, new businesses, and community projects to participate. Grant amounts range from $500 and $5,000, based on the number of projects selected.

The Organizers and Allies Mini Grant program was created to be Rolling and Responsive in order to assist with quick financial needs. Mini grants are awarded to any group who has partnered with a fiscal agent. The mini grants must be used for projects that benefit the community—they cannot be used for personal gain.

The Self-Development of People Fund (SDOP) of the Presbyterian Development of People (Presbytec) is a community fund that awards grants to support community projects that benefit the community. Mini grants are awarded to residents living in and community groups serving residents in the Greater Cleveland area. An important part of the philosophy is to insure that non-profit charitable organizations serving the poor, Black, and other minorities receive an equitable share of the charitable dollars. United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland funds over 80 non-profit agencies annually.

The Friends of Slavic Village Mini Grant Program Mini Grants are awarded to residents living in and community groups serving residents in the Slavic Village. The mini grants must be used for projects that benefit the community—they cannot be used for personal gain.

Virtual Community of Practice

Join this learning exchange about community network building & the Neighbor Up Network now online and by phone.

GET INVOLVED

The Cleveland Observer has supported over 200 resident leaders as they plan, crowdfunding, and build positive change in neighborhoods across the city. With a median donation of $35, these leaders have raised over $422,000 in small donations to make ioby Cleveland neighborhoods greener, safer, more livable, and more full of opportunity for all residents.

Ohio Humanities, an independent non-profit organization funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and private contributions, serves as a public advocate for humanities in Ohio. The organization promotes the humanities through public programs, grants and community projects.

The United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland has financially assisted many non-profit organizations in the Greater Cleveland area. An important part of the philosophy is to ensure that non-profit charitable organizations serving the poor, Black, and other minorities receive an equitable share of the charitable dollars. United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland funds over 80 non-profit agencies annually.

The Friends of Slavic Village Mini Grant Program Mini Grants are awarded to residents living in and community groups serving residents in the Slavic Village. The mini grants must be used for projects that benefit the community—they cannot be used for personal gain.

Virtual Marketplace

Join It’s mutual support for and by neighbors like the Marketplace we all know and love from Neighbor Up Nights except now online and by phone. Text MP to 474747 to put your request, offer or declaration into the Virtual Marketplace.