

“We look out for each other. It’s like an extended family.”

Tangela Perry, a CPGR employee, currently lives in a house that is part of The Community Place’s Housing Opportunities for Sustainability and Transition (HOST) Program. She talks about her path to home ownership and her active role in improving her community.

Tell us about yourself and what you do here at The Community Place.

My name is Tangela Perry. I’m 40 years old. I’m a single mom. I started with Eastside Community Center [a former settlement house now part of The Community Place] as a volunteer and now I’ve been an employee here for 14 years. My title is Operations Specialist. I work mostly in the HOST Program with maintenance issues of our tenants.

Tell us a little about your children.

I have a boy and a girl. My daughter started here [in CPGR youth programs] when she was 10 or 11. She was active

in all the programs. Both my kids were. She went to Genesee Community College, and she works for the Red Cross as a phlebotomist. My son is now a manager at Popeye’s. He is what I want to call the “basketball star” at The Community Place.

How did your move into a HOST house come about?

The knowledge I got about the house came through my job. It was convenient for me because I worked in the neighborhood and I was commuting from across town. So when a house in this neighborhood that I was familiar with became

Harnessing the Collective Power of People

As a settlement house, one of our main roles is to connect people with resources, tools, and ideas that will help them use their power to build a better life for them, their family, and their community. Settlement houses have long operated under the belief that people do not need to be given power; rather, many marginalized and underrepresented people just need some form of support to fully realize that power. We provide this support in a number of ways to people from all walks of life throughout the Rochester area.

Many of our most recent initiatives have centered on helping our community harness the collective power of its members to revitalize neighborhoods socially and economically. Our Housing Opportunities for Sustainability and Transition (HOST) Program sets forth a two-pronged approach to community building. First, the HOST program works to purchase and renovate dilapidated houses and apartment buildings in the Parsells Avenue area. After the buildings are renovated they are rented to responsible individuals and families at below-average rates. By pairing low-cost housing with financial management trainings and seminars, we work with tenants toward the ultimate goal of home ownership. Home ownership will lead to increased community engagement, decreased transience, and a strengthening of the fabric of communities. In our interview (at left), we spoke with Tangela Perry, a CPGR employee, who is currently navigating the path to home ownership. Her success story shows the

“Extended family” (cont. from page 1)

available I took advantage of it. I've lived in the house now for about three years, and I'm actively going through the process of purchasing the house. I'm going through some credit counseling at this time, with the help of The Community Place, in order to purchase the house from them.

What do you like about the house?

What's great about this house is it's mine. It's convenient, it's in the neighborhood. I know everyone, my family is here. I've seen the changes in the neighborhood so I feel safe. I just feel secure there.

What is special about this neighborhood?

I think there are a lot of things going on in this neighborhood, not all good, but I think the majority of these people are honest, trustworthy, and they want to build strong communities and have a solid foundation. There's always going to be a few bad apples, but that doesn't make a community. What makes a community is the whole.

I think the difference for me is I know the people in my area. They know me. They feel comfortable with me, I feel comfortable with them. We look out for each other. It's like an extended family. If I'm not home, and someone knocks on my door, the person next door tells me, “you had company.” They look out for each other, and that's a big thing for me.

Can you talk about the safety of the neighborhood now versus before the HOST program started?

When I first started coming around my son was playing basketball here. I didn't feel comfortable because of all the things that were going on. There were shootings. A lot of gangs, a lot of people hanging out. So I would walk him over and hang around to make sure he was safe.

From there the biggest change I see now is I don't see anyone hanging on the street corners. The area is clean. It's quiet in the evening. The neighbors, once I got to know them, were all really friendly. There's not a lot of bickering, and the neighborhood is great. The people are just like an extended family.

As a future homeowner, and as a CPGR employee who works in the HOST program, how would you suggest other people like you get on this path to home ownership?

I think the biggest part is to just to ask the question. Come into the agency, see what they have to offer. Tell them what you need. Anything that you ask one of the employees for, if they don't have the information they find out or they send you other places. They have workshops in the Family Services department about credit counseling, home ownership, first-time home buyers, things like that. I think the biggest thing is to come into the agency and ask.

Then find out what your status is, what your credit score is, and are you able to buy a home. The next thing is to work toward that, if you need credit counseling, if you need to consolidate your finances. Work toward your goal. Then go out and find out what homes are available, what they cost, and what you need to work for so you can get a goal and work directly for it.

How do you see your neighborhood progressing in a positive way? What do you think about this neighborhood in five or ten years?

In five or ten years I will see more first-time buyers see their dreams. My thought is that if you own your little piece of the world, you invest in your community, you invest in your world. I think it will encour-

age people to get involved in the community. That way, if you see a bad element come into your little piece of the world, you're going to make sure that your area is the best it can be. I think that as people begin to own their own property they'll invest more in their community.

Where are you in the process to home ownership right now?

Right now I'm going through some credit counseling. I've got to consolidate a lot of the debt I made as a young person. I have to pay a lot of people off. The next couple of years, one or two years, are going to be really rough for me. I have to really be on a budget and make sure I make these payments. It's going to be hard. But at the end of the road, I'm going to be a homeowner. And I can't wait.



Tangela Perry

president's

CORNER



"We have found that when opportunity and necessary skills are added to the human will to achieve, success is almost always right around the corner."

Rod Jones

Helping Out Is Everyone's Job

It is a challenge for our community, like many other communities in upstate New York, to maintain a stable quality of life in the face of growing deficits at the state, county, and city levels. As corporations downsize or relocate out of our area, the tax-paying population decreases, and the cost of living for the average family continues to rise as a result of the increased cost of insurance, groceries, utilities, and gas.

For more than a century, The Community Place and its former agencies have been helping families participate in the pursuit of The American Dream. Settlement houses have a longstanding success record of helping families progress, and in partnership with a variety of stakeholders we are continuing this mission of strengthening our community and the families who live here. We have found that when opportunity and necessary skills are added to the human will to achieve, success is almost always right around the corner.

It is important that every member of the Rochester community understand that we are not able to hold the line for the community unless we all pitch in. In an increasingly global community and economy, Rochester is but a drop in the pond. To attract and maintain employers we must have a large, skilled, and educated

workforce, neighborhoods that are safe, and a competitive economic climate. It is not the burden of government alone to supply these things; it will take all of us working together to achieve success.

The nature of poverty and inequality is that one poor population is replaced by another. As an example, I recently met a very successful gentleman who lives in Rochester, and he shared how he grew up in our service area nearly 50 years ago. He told me his family was only able to eat meat with their meals once a week or less. It is possible that your parents or grandparents went through the same struggles as this man, and if they grew up in Rochester in the past century it is very likely that they were helped by settlement houses. We ask that you help us give these same opportunities and resources to the many children and families still living in extreme poverty in Rochester. If there is one thing that our country's current economic climate should teach us, it is that any one of us could find ourselves in need of help one day because crisis is indiscriminant.

If our community is going to change it will take contributions of time, talent, or treasure from all of us. I hope you will be a part of it. Thank you, and I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Pulse*.

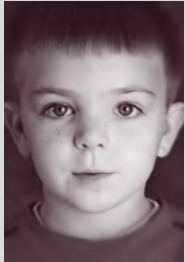
A Special Thanks to Our Holiday Angels

The Community Place received tremendous support from a number of individuals and companies during the holiday season. On behalf of the consumers, staff, and board members of The Community Place, thank you:

- Bank of America
- Boy Scouts Troop #55
- Church of the Transfiguration
- Covenant United Methodist
- Grace Church
- Harter, Secret, & Emery LLP
- Sylvia Hasman
- Pastor Hedges and Laurelton United Presbyterian Church
- Linda Hicks
- Dana Hollis
- Holy Cross Church
- Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn
- Our Mother of Sorrows Church
- Peace of Christ Parish
- St. Mary's Church (Canandaigua)
- St. Pius X Church
- Salvatore's Pizzeria
- Richard and Leslie Shroyer
- Rochester Press Radio Club
- Sonia Szabo and Uda Karfiol
- Trooper Toys For Tots

COMMUNITY *Place* NEWS

Early Childhood



The Community Place's **Universal Pre-Kindergarten** program, which is in its fourth year of operation, consistently has full enrollment and a very high rate of daily attendance due in part

to the fact that it is one of the few UPK programs that provides transportation.

This year the challenge of securing funding to continue to provide transportation was bolstered by strong community support and advocacy. The hard work of a number of community advocates who understood the importance of transportation for children with working parents resulted in funding for a pilot program that will allow our UPK program to stay viable. The pilot program is modeled after our structure to reach more families with preschool-age children that likely would not enroll their children in Universal Pre-Kindergarten because of the barriers that having to transport their child to and from the program present.

Family Services

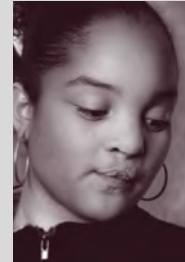


We are proud to announce the second entrepreneur to receive support from the economic development branch of our **HOST Program**. Benjamin's Barber Shop and its

owner, Robert Benjamin, opened for business at 441 Parsells Avenue. In addition to providing haircuts, Benjamin says the business will do its part to be a responsible community asset, encourage nonviolence and positive youth development, and help build the economic stability of the neighborhood.

Our Family Services department had another busy holiday season. There was record attendance at our Thanksgiving Dinner for consumers, staff, and board members. Holiday assistance was also provided to approximately 200 families through our annual food and gift basket campaign. This year we received tremendous support from a local donor, Sylvia Hasman, who donated and wrapped more than 200 gifts for our Breakfast with Santa event.

Developmental Disabilities



Our **Parent Training** program provides resources and trainings to parents of children with developmental disabilities. Staff work with parents to identify topics of need and interest,

enhance self-advocacy, and engage community resources. Recreational and respite opportunities are available, and transportation is often provided to and from sessions.

Our **Autism Services** program identifies resources for families with members on the autism spectrum. An on-site resource room is available for parents to retrieve information. A small training group meets monthly to provide ongoing support and training to families, and an individualized behavioral modification session for youth centered on positive reinforcement meets weekly. Home visits are also conducted to enhance relationship-building between staff members and families.

For more information of these programs and our other services for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families please call **585-336-4697**.

Youth Development



The Beacon Centers of Excellence are well into their second year of preparing youth ages five to 21 for college, work, and life. Already this year the Beacon Centers have provided trainings and workshops related to leadership, character development, job readiness, and life skills.

Last year's youth-led Dime for a Crime anti-violence campaign was a huge success, and youth from the Beacon Centers continued their work again this year by sponsoring the Victim Assistance Christmas Project. The project is designed to assist selected families with children under 18 who were victimized by violence. Last year several thousand dollars were raised for the project, which the youth plan, implement, and lead.

Other upcoming Youth Development events include the Sankofa Youth Conference, a host of college tours, and Lunch with the Easter Bunny.

Aging Services



Our **Aging Services** department has a number of new partnerships and collaborations aimed at enhancing services for seniors and the community. Our **Senior Center** is collaborating with a group of high school students with developmental disabilities from Greece. The students and their teachers come to the center every Wednesday and do volunteer activities with and for our seniors.

The department partnered with parishioners from St. Pius X, Holy Cross, and St. Mary's (Canandaigua) Churches again this year to provide a gift to each of the elders in Aging Services programs. The partnership with all three churches has been going strong for more than 10 years.

A collaboration with Rural Opportunities has given elders in our Senior Center an opportunity to talk about issues and concerns in their neighborhoods. They will also create books about growing up in their neighborhoods, and an art show to display them is planned.

Harnessing the Collective Power of People (cont. from page 1)

importance of this initiative and the impact it can have on a community.

The second main goal of the HOST program is to improve the economic viability of our community. The second entrepreneur in our business incubation program, Robert Benjamin, recently opened Benjamin's Barber Shop at 441 Parsells Avenue. By helping businesses grow in our community we can keep dollars circulating here longer, thereby improving the overall economic health of the community. With the help of community members, planning for future efforts for further strengthening the economic assets and decision-making power of the community is underway.

The work of HOST has already led to new partnerships and support. The REALTORS Charitable Foundation and the Independent Insurance Agents of Monroe County have both provided tremendous support for the HOST Program. Earlier in 2007 the HOST Program was also awarded a national United Neighborhood Centers of America/Annie E. Casey Foundation Family Strengthening Award,

which is given to just three nonprofits nationwide with innovative, effective programs that strengthen communities and the families and children who live in them.

New partnerships and collaborations are especially important as support from traditional sources remains flat or decreases. Current uncertainty in the health of the economy hurts corporate and individual donations to nonprofits, and shifts in government spending has hurt many organizations that provide social services. These cuts emphasize the importance of community-led initiatives that rely on the strength and resources of community members themselves.

Settlement houses have always understood the importance of community support and buy-in. Since their inception, settlement houses in Rochester have worked with, instead of for, community members to improve lives and neighborhoods. Programs and services were not provided without sufficient buy-in from the community, and only services that confronted relevant issues and problems, the ones that community members

deemed most important, were provided.

When has the community reached its pinnacle? We believe it is when the community as a whole reaches a level where it has decision-making power. Not only will community members be advisors and activists working to solve the community's problems, but they will band together to make decisions that are best for the community and then take ownership of the solutions to those problems. We will continue to do our part to increase citizen engagement, provide tools and resources to increase community ownership and assets, and support grassroots social and economic development efforts, but it will take the collective action of the entire community to get there.

Make a Difference...

There are many ways to use your power for good:

- Visit www.communityplace.org or call **585-327-7200** for information on our HOST Program and other programs that help harness the collective power of people.
- Contact Patricia Taylor at **585-327-7200** for information about volunteer opportunities, donations of goods and/or services, or other ways you can get involved.
- Become an advocate for the causes that you most believe in—attend meetings, rallies, or fundraisers and make your voice heard.



Rod Jones (back row, center) accepts the United Neighborhood Centers of America/Annie E. Casey Foundation Family Strengthening Award in Anaheim, California.



Our Rochester Settlement House Conference, held at Nazareth College in September, explained the history of settlement houses, why they are still successful today, and on what issues they need to focus to be successful in the future.



Upcoming Events at The Community Place

Date	Event
April 5	"Pasta Bowl" Event for Lewis Street Center Alumni
Late May (date TBD)	Genesee Settlement House Alumni Breakfast
June 14	Rochester Step-Off, Blue Cross Arena
June 19	Annual Meeting and Reverse Raffle Dinner, The Lodge at Woodcliff
August 18	CPGR Golf Tournament, The Country Club of Mendon

A number of other events are also planned for alumni (former attendees, employees, and board members) of Lewis Street Center, Genesee Settlement House, Eastside Community Center, and The Community Place throughout 2008.

Please check www.communityplace.org or call **585-327-7200** for updates.



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