

February 27, 2007

Volume 1, Issue 1



# EastEnd Neighbors

Promoting Communication And Collaboration

## *Welcome To The Neighborhood*

By *Andrea Kay Smith*

Many circumstances came together beginning in 1997 to create EastEnd Neighbors (EEN). From the beginning, it has been an unstructured group of devoted citizens who care about our part of Atlanta, and have been willing to actively participate. When I moved here, Rev. Houston Wheeler with FCS Urban Ministries had already canvassed the East Lake Gardens (ELG) residents located behind the BP Gas Station on 2nd Ave. & Glenwood Ave., so it was easy for LeRoy Barber and myself to form a Neighborhood Watch with the help of Sheila O' Rear/South Precinct.

Simultaneously Bishop Speakman/Bethel Baptist met with developer Jack Morse who was building East Lake Commons (ELC) on Dancing Fox Rd. off 2nd Ave. At that time Jacquie Scott was our Commissioner, so we enlisted her support in getting changes made, like sidewalks on 2nd Ave. all the way to Flat Shoals Rd. which opened more doors of meeting new people like Noel Khahil who built Columbia Villages on 2nd Ave.

As ELC grew, more people became involved in ELG neighborhood outreach activities, offering Street Fairs, Ice Cream Socials, Christmas for the Kids, Litter Pick-up, National Night Out, Earth Day celebrations, Children's Summer Camp and more. Gaia

## *Business News*

By *Kalin Thomas*

East End Neighbors (EEN) have been on pins and needles wondering what's going to happen with the land that the Goodwill and Bag Factory buildings still stand on. Well, the good news is that nothing has been decided or set in stone yet. That's the word from Ms. Kathleen Brownlee of the Cousins Family (CF) Foundation and Mr. Rick Bent, a development consultant who's working with the CF Foundation and the East Lake Foundation. Both attended the February 13 EEN "Development & Built Environment" committee meeting.

Ms. Brownlee also stated that the CF Foundation really welcomes our input as to what we'd like to see with the new development. She disclosed that within the next three or four months they'll tear down the Goodwill and Bag Factory buildings – mostly for safety reasons. But nothing will be built in their place until they settle on what to do with the land – and the entire process from planning to

**NEXT EEN MEETING: TUESDAY FEB 27 @ 7pm**  
Mt. Welcome Baptist, 581 Parker Ave. With Dekalb Police Major Gassner, Goodwill & Bag Factory Reports, State Rep. Stacey Adams & Task Groups.

Garden at ELC with Farmer Ryan Cohen offered another valuable outreach. One day Farmer Ryan had excess produce which he gave to me to give away, so I walked to Bethel Baptist to share the vegetables, meeting Bishop Speakman for the first time. After talking, we set up a community meeting with the help of Bert Skellie, Tovah Melaver, David Kirshbaum, Kathy Burke, Michael Clanton, Fred Frances, Toure' Muhammad (who came up with EEN name), Imam Plemon El-Amin, Yusuf Muwwakkil, Eva Davis, Jane Wellborn, LeRoy Barber, John Whitaker, East Lake Community Foundation, and so many more people, all committed to helping.

Eventually ELC invited the neighbors to an Open House on March 4, 2001 to formalize EEN, when John Whitaker (Delphine) offered the Mt. Welcome Community Room for our regular quarterly meetings. We have continued to grow and network ever since then. For an expanded version of this, see: [www.EastLakeGardens.com](http://www.EastLakeGardens.com).

*Andrea Kay Smith has been a resident of East Lake Gardens since 1996.*

building will take a few years. What they do know is that they'd like to do a "mixed use" complex with both retail and residential space. The units would be "mixed income" housing for sale, NOT for rent. And the retail will NOT be "big box" stores like Target and Home Depot.

EEN members offered suggestions on what the new development should include, like: pedestrian friendly paths and crosswalks, green space to save some of the old trees, and a park or courtyard for neighbors to gather. Ms. Brownlee and Mr. Bent said they would like to keep our committee informed by attending monthly or bi-monthly meetings. Co-chairs Velma Speakman and John Wuichet will be the liaisons for setting up our meetings with the CF Foundation.

*Kalin Thomas has been a resident of Terry Mill resident since 2004.*

## Teen Talk

By Dana Hagwood



*"Be the change you wish to see"*

Gandhi

Hello my fellow youth. I have a question "Why do we think we are better than each other?" You know, with our Air Force 1's, Jordan's, and Timberland's! Oh, and we dare not forget our Roca Wear, Baby Phat, Apple Bottoms, South Pole and so on.

Why don't we try and help each other instead? You know like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I think he'd roll over in his grave if he saw the world today. Black on black violence and

so on. He worked so hard to get us where we are now. But we steadily skip school, do drugs, fight each other, and put each other down. Maybe we can decide to stop and think and make the world a better place, by giving charity and showing more love.

*Dana Hagwood is 13 years old. She is in the 7th grade at Drew Charter School and has been a resident of the Villages of East Lake since 2005.*

## Reflections

By Leila Moore

In 1971, The East Lake Meadows (ELM) Community was built and completed. There were families coming together from different areas of Atlanta with excitement and anticipation of meeting their new neighbors, making new friends, and working together to create a child-oriented family community. Unfortunately there were some who lived on the Second Ave. part of ELM who chose to do their criminal acts. These areas became known as "Pork Chop Hill", and "Little Vietnam." The crime was not in the entire complex but actually from a few who lived in it. I, myself and others who lived in ELM had no idea what was going on, only what we heard.

In 1991, ELM decided to change the direction of the community, and began making plans to make a difference. Our ELM Association went to Hosea Williams, Mayor Maynard Jackson, Gov. Roy Barnes, and then to former Pres. Jimmy Carter to receive a grant to redevelop the 175 acres. In

1996 the name was changed to Villages of East Lake (VEL) with demolition beginning in 1997.

In 2007, VEL has become an experiment in mixed income housing which has brought diverse people together. Crime is still a major factor, so we try to work with a security force and Neighborhood Watch. Even with the YMCA, Drew Charter, First Tee @ Charlie Yates Golf, Sheltering Arms Early Learning Ctr., and Mercy Housing, we have youth and young adults with no place to go. I am hoping the plans for an onsite supervised, recreational Center will occur soon because when I raised my five sons here, it was a safe, wholesome place to live and play.

*Leila Moore has been a resident of Villages of East Lake since 1971.*

## Neighbor Spotlight

By Andrea Kay Smith



*Velma and Bishop Speakman*

Bishop Speakman and his wife Velma are pillars in our community as spiritual leaders of Bethel Baptist Church on 2nd Ave. They've been in Atlanta, on Delphine Dr., since 1969 when they relocated from New Jersey to open a small mission for the homeless in Summerhill in 1971.

Through divine intervention they were able to buy the property for their church in 1980, eventually dedicating the building in 1982. Over the years, they've been blessed to purchase an adjoining building where Bill's Cafe, an Upholstery Shop, a Barber Shop and a Tax Preparer reside. Bethel offers a food & clothing pantry with meals on Wednesday at noon for the homeless.

Interestingly the Speakman's four children were baptized by Pastor Charles Grant with Mt. Welcome Baptist Church. Having just retired as Pres. & CEO of Wonderland Academy Velma will have more time for their six grandchildren as well as participating in EEN.

We spotlight the Speakmans for their continued ministerial service of love and compassion.



## *Crime Prevention—Safety Report*

*By Andrea Kay Smith and Luane Slaughter*

As EEN residents dialogued at our last meeting about the specifics of the continued crime and drug activity in our various neighborhoods, I realized it's time to do something about it and stop complaining. That means, each one of us who is dissatisfied must take one small action to begin a tumbleweed effect of change for the whole area. If there is one place in your neighborhood that you know is harboring criminals or dealing drugs or you see truant kids, or litter or junk cars, or boarded-up houses, or slum landlords in Section 8 houses, remember we're working together to improve our part of Atlanta.

Through dedicated effort in East Lake Gardens, we learned that it takes cooperation and commitment. Ten years ago, we started with a monthly litter pick-up which has sent a non-verbal message to criminals that "WE CARE." ELG is consistent in doing this one action which creates unity and recognition. "Yes", we have a Neighborhood Watch. "Yes", we know the police force and have worked with South Precinct to help put pressure on the drug houses on Swazey Dr. "Yes" we know our County & State officials. "Yes" we've asked for support from businesses, churches and the East Lake Community Foundation.

It comes down to reaching out and making a decision about what one action you can take today, however small. Check out the "EEN Community Calendar". Use the resources we supplied. Call Code Enforcement. Call 911. Find out who owns the bad house on your street through the web link I gave you in the "Calendar". Create a letter-writing campaign to the owner, voicing your concerns, sending a copy to a lawyer and Commissioner Larry Johnson. Get involved with David Patton and Al Lewis on EEN Neighborhood Watch/Crime Task Force. East Lake residents have formed a private security patrol to begin April 1st with unmarked cars and off duty police officers.

Break out of any fear or apathy or negativity which is holding you back and join us in making a change. Then tell us about your success, so we can share it to inspire others. Let's repeat what's working. Remember, it takes a village. Do it for our youth and our senior citizens!!

*"If life hands you a lemon, don't complain, but instead make lemonade to sell to those who are thirsty from complaining." Wally Amos of "Famous Amos Cookies"*

### **EEN Serves These Neighborhoods:**

Columbia Village, Delphine/Barberrie, East Lake Commons, East Lake Gardens, East Lake Terrace, Garden Valley, Olmsted, Terry Mill & Villages of East Lake."

### **Join A Task Group!**

On January 23 a group of regular attendees of East End Neighbors quarterly meetings got together to discuss getting more organized. As a result of that meeting, several neighbors have agreed to help connect neighbors who want to work together on issues or projects. Please contact one of the neighbors listed below if you would like to be part of a task group. The names of the groups and what they do are still being worked out – feel free to join in!

**Beautification & Code Enforcement:** Diane Fowler 404-377-7374

**Community Center for Villages of East Lake:** Leila Moore 404-377-8738

**Development & The Built Environment:** Velma Speakman 404-371-1567, John Wuichet 404-786-2445

**Education and Youth:** Pat Green 404-377-4080

**Hazard Plan:** Andrea Kay Smith 404-377-8004

**Homeless Empowerment:** Rose Satchell 678-698-1304

**Neighborhood Watch/Crime:** David Patton 404-377-1095, Al Lewis 678-591-0010

**Newsletter & Web Site:** Andrea Kay Smith 404-377-8004, John Wuichet 404-786-2445, Grace Wynter

**Pedestrian & Traffic Safety:** Joanna Pritchard 404-371-8966

**Social Justice & Diversity (includes Gentrification):** Bert Skellie 404-378-5883

**Welcoming New Neighbors:** Velma Speakman 404-371-1567

***EEN Community calendar is available with important neighborhood phone numbers and contacts.***

## Crime Prevention ~ Getting the Answers

The Online Judicial System of DeKalb County can be a very helpful tool for getting the information you need. At this site you can enter a person's name and see all the current and past court actions to which he or she was a party in DeKalb. ELG has a neighborhood criminal who has several cases against him. We found all the necessary information about his crimes at this website: [www.ojs.dekalbga.org/servlet/page?\\_pageid=60&\\_dad=portal30&\\_schema=PORTAL30](http://www.ojs.dekalbga.org/servlet/page?_pageid=60&_dad=portal30&_schema=PORTAL30).

This is for County-level cases in DeKalb only.

Another useful site, maintained by the Georgia Department of Corrections, allows you to search by name for all inmates of Georgia prisons, past and present.

The website is: [www.dcor.state.ga.us/GDC/OffenderQuery/jsp/OffQryForm.jsp](http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/GDC/OffenderQuery/jsp/OffQryForm.jsp)

The DeKalb Tax Commissioner has a site where you can search by property address to see the name and contact info of the current owner, the current tax appraisal value, the dates of recent sales and sale prices, homestead exemption status, and whether owners are behind on their taxes. Check it out for yourself at: <https://dklbweb.dekalbga.org/taxcommissioner/search.asp>.

*John Wuichet has been a resident of East Lake Commons since 2002.*

### Calendar Highlights

- ⇒ Next EEN Meeting—May 22nd, 2007, 7:00pm Mt. Welcome Baptist Church, 581 Parker Ave Rear Building
- ⇒ April 22 Sunday 10am-10pm - 10th Annual Earth Day Celebration @ Peace Center 516 Summit Dr. with gardening, art & recycling projects plus music and food. Andrea #404-377-8004
- ⇒ April 24— 7:15am - 8:00am Road Rally at Line St. and Glenwood Ave/Rd (East of Candler Rd) [www.WalkGlenwood.org](http://www.WalkGlenwood.org)
- ⇒ East Lake 2nd Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Satur. April 7th in East Lake Park on Memorial Drive from 11:30 AM -1:30 PM. Bring your own easter basket or make one in the park! For more details email Dawn Stephen at [dawnwright665@lycos.com](mailto:dawnwright665@lycos.com).

## Black History Essay Contest

*The Villages of East Lake Present...*

### Black History Expressions—Essay, Art & Poetry Contest

Our children today are under so much pressure from peers, drugs, music, language and other influences from the outside world. Parents, these children really need our support! Let's all get together and counteract the ever changing and deteriorating influences they must encounter in the world.

We all know that writing and the arts are therapeutic, so, please allow your child to participate in this contest.

Qualifying age ranges are from 6 years –25 years, with separate contests for each age range. For more information, please call The Villages of East Lake Resident Services at 404.679.5370.

*"Let peace roll down like waters, and justice like an ever-flowing stream."  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

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