



THE COMMUNITY VOICE

Vol. 10, No. 1, Fall 2013

www.GreenDoors.org

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS: TREATY OAKS

Over the last year, Treaty Oaks has seen some wonderful growth as a community. On a warm Thursday evening in April, about thirty neighbors gathered in the courtyard of the Treaty Oaks apartment complex in South Austin. There were burgers and hot dogs on the grill, coolers stocked full of ice cold drinks, and smiles and handshakes all around. Families, artists, veterans, and students mingled together, introducing themselves to folks they didn't know and greeting the ones they did warmly. It was Treaty Oaks' Meet Your Neighbors party.

"I'm just so excited that everyone is here," said the Green Doors Community Manager, laughing as Gabriel, Treaty Oak's resident first grader, ran by her with his cousin to help unload some more bags of ice.

There were burgers and hot dogs on the grill, coolers stocked full of ice cold drinks, and smiles and handshakes all around.

For over a year now, we have been managing what is more or less a construction site. Green Doors has fully remodeled Treaty Oaks to better meet residents' needs, even filling in the pool to make room for a community garden. Now, every apartment is full, providing affordable, safe, quality housing to folks who need it.

Similar to other Green Doors' developments, Treaty Oaks offers affordable housing to working poor individuals and families, in addition to permanent supportive housing for veterans who have experienced chronic



homelessness. But, because of its central location in an affluent neighborhood close to downtown Austin, Treaty Oaks differs from other Green Doors projects, like Pecan Springs Commons.

"Pecan Springs Commons was a neighborhood revitalization project," explains Frank Fernandez, Green Doors' executive director. "In that instance, Green Doors went in to a place that desperately needed quality, safe and affordable housing, with an emphasis on "quality" and "safe." With Treaty Oaks,

Green Doors has come into an area of Austin that needs the same kind of housing. Only this time, the emphasis is on "affordable."

At the heart of Green Doors mission is connecting our residents to the opportunities they need to succeed – including access to trainings, health services, transportation, and education. The central location of Treaty Oaks offers proximity to opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach: the popular South Lamar business corridor is only a quarter of a mile away; three major grocery stores less than a mile from the site; four public libraries within two miles; and a major hospital (St. David's Hospital) less than a mile away.

Now that construction is complete, Treaty Oaks residents are truly forming a community. Whether it's helping their neighbors move in, bringing sandwiches to the volunteers building furniture for newcomers, or just grabbing coffee together,

residents have gotten to know and care about one another. They are neighbors now, a group of folks who share a sense of belonging.

We are very happy that Treaty Oaks is well located at the intersection of Opportunity and Community – a place where good things happen. ■

Visit GreenDoors.org to find out how you can invest your time or financial resources in Green Doors' mission, or look inside to find out more!

RESIDENT SUCCESS STORY

LOST & FOUND SCOTT CLAPPER

Scott Clapper knows a thing or two about hard work.

A resident of Green Doors for nearly four years, Scott worked for more than 30 years in factories. He made shoes, garments, computer components, you name it. As he put it, he punched a clock. But he was never late and he never complained. When one of his factory jobs was cut, he moved from place to place and held various jobs, from property manager to auto body repair worker. He even ran a marina.

But he also knows a thing or two about bad luck.

A few years ago, he started to lose weight and got worried. And after a long series of tests and back and forth trips to different VA hospitals, he learned he had a liver disease that would leave him unable to work.

"I never made a lot of money. Usually minimum wage. But I always worked," he said. "I worked my whole life, and then it was all gone. I went from one side of the coin to the other, and I never saw it coming."

He lived with relatives and friends for a while, but soon ended up homeless with few medical options and no idea where he'd end up. Fortunately, he ended up in Texas.

A spot opened up at Temple's VA center, and Scott borrowed \$200 from a relative to get there — where he got treatment and lived for 3 years before coming to Green Doors.

And it was something that started in Temple that has transformed Scott and brought new value to his life.



"I got involved in arts and crafts therapy. It was a small way to give back and be productive, but I found that I really had an eye for making things. And people really liked what I did. It was one of the first times I did something unique."

Most of Scott's art is found objects — glass, bottle caps, rocks. They fill his apartment at Green Doors, and every piece has a story. He says "I just see ordinary things differently than most people. I want to make them beautiful. Valuable."

And for the first time in a long time, that's how his art made him feel with his own family. A few months ago, Green Doors featured Scott and his art on our blog. It was a simple story, but it helped his children...and now grandchildren...see him in a very different way.

"My family sees that I'm back on my feet. They see I'm working at something. They are proud of me, which is new for me to experience," he said. "My daughter printed out copies and handed it out to people. A cool story about her dad."

GREEN DOORS' 2013 FUNDING PARTNERS

Texas Veterans Commission

Department of Veterans
Affairs

Travis County

City of Austin

Texas Department of Housing
and Community Affairs

Housing and Urban
Development

Meadows Foundation

Silverton Foundation

Religious Coalition to Assist
the Homeless

Texas Affordable Housing
Corporation

Coleman Fung Foundation

Alamo Drafthouse

Capital One

Bank of America

Lola Wright Foundation

Home Depot Foundation

Hammill Foundation

Anderson Charitable
Foundation

Capital Metro

Dell, Inc

Luckens Co

Austin Ventures

Whole Foods

Urban Mattress

Boy Scout Troop #149

Juice Homes

Frost Bank

IN MEMORY

Jim Dallas

JR Flournoy

Richard Hayes

Johnny Burleson

Joseph Hall

George Hughes

Annie Armstrong

Robert Stevenson

*Honoring our
residents who
have passed*

KEEP IN TOUCH

Green Doors is excited to announce our transition to an e-newsletter!

Please sign up to receive updates, reports and stories about Green Doors and those we serve. We are starting a new phase of communicating that is more cost-effective and better for the environment, so you are holding the last hard copy newsletter we'll be sending out.

**Be sure to sign up online to
keep in touch!**

<http://greendoors.org/newsletter>



RESIDENT SUCCESS STORY

MOVING FORWARD: LEWIS STENNIS

It was 2009, a normal day in Saadr City: the sun blazed in the sky as an armored fighting vehicle filled with American infantrymen barreled down the road on route patrol. Suddenly, there was an explosion – a car bomb detonated, shaking the vehicle so much that soldiers held within it were knocked unconscious. “All I remember is this flash of bright light and then everything went black,” recalls Green Doors resident, Lewis Stennis. “Two days later, I woke up in Germany.”

Today, the 25-year-old is still feeling the effects of that car bomb. The impact of the explosion left him with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He doesn’t sleep much anymore, and when he does, it’s almost never at night – he just catches naps whenever

“All I remember is this flash of bright light and then everything went black.”

he can. “What I’m really struggling with now is keeping weight on,” he says as he sips a smoothie and picks at a taco. “I just have no desire to eat anymore.” Already a slight guy, he weighed 190 when he was deployed. Three years later, he weighed a little more than 130.

Lewis signed up for the army on what some might



call a whim. “One morning, I just woke up and realized that the military was what I wanted to do with my life,” he says. “A lot of people thought I was crazy.” Born and raised in New Orleans to a robotics engineer father and schoolteacher mother, Lewis had always been a good student. His high grade point average and natural athleticism won him a baseball scholarship to LSU, which he turned down to enlist. “My mom wasn’t too happy about it either,” he adds, smiling. At 17, he headed to Ft. Benning, Georgia for basic training before being stationed at Ft. Hood here in Texas. From there he went to Iraq, where he found a brotherhood like no other he had ever known. “In the military, there is a camaraderie

that the civilian world doesn’t have,” he says. “In the military, your brothers have your back. But in the civilian world, it can feel like there’s no one looking out for you. It’s like you’re alone.”

That’s just how Lewis felt when he returned to Texas from Iraq: alone. Without a safety net, he found his way to the Veteran’s Administration to file the necessary paperwork to claim his benefits. But it took a month or so to get his medical records from Germany. And, for that month, Lewis found himself homeless.

“I lived on the streets,” he said. “I never called my parents or anyone in my family for help. I was embarrassed, and I just felt like I wasn’t in the place I wanted to be. I needed to do this on my own.” His case manager at the VA told him about Green Doors’ Veteran’s Re-Entry Program, which houses veterans in a scattered sit model of shared single family homes. Soon enough, Lewis had a bed to sleep in, a door to lock, and a plan to get to where he wants to be.

In February 2012, Lewis moved into his own place at Treaty Oaks, and went on to enroll in the computer science program at Colorado Technical University, with a concentration on software engineering. He finally called his mom to let her know that he was back in the States, and that he was out of the military and safe. And, though he hasn’t seen them in six years, Lewis talks to both of his parents regularly and tries to catch up with his eight siblings as much as he can. These days, Lewis lives in San Marcos, where he has been accepted to Texas State University, and continues his studies in software engineering. “I learned a lot from being in the infantry, but there’s one thing that I carry with me every day,” he says. “And that is: no matter what challenges you face, you’ve got to just keep moving forward.” ■

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

A BIG THANK YOU TO UT'S AIR FORCE ROTC!

Because Treaty Oaks and Glen Oaks Corner welcome many folks who have been chronically homeless prior to getting keys to their home, they often arrive at their lease signing with nothing besides what they can fit into a suitcase. Thanks to grants from the Texas Foundation Fund and the Texas Veterans Commission, Green Doors has been able to provide full household set-ups to our residents who need them – from the big items like beds and couches to the small stuff like towels, dishes, and pots and pans. “Opening a door to a fully furnished apartment really makes a house feel like a home,” says Program Specialist, Cynthia Muñoz, who organizes the purchase and installation of all household set-ups.

Throughout the fall semester, the UT Air Force ROTC visited Treaty Oaks and Glen Oaks Corner to help Cynthia prepare three units for new residents. “We like to have everything perfect for the day a new resident moves in: beds made, towels hung neatly on the towel racks, dishes put away in the cupboards, the whole nine yards.”



We are so thankful to the members of our community who offer their time and service to help Green Doors turn houses into homes! If you are interested in volunteering at Green Doors, please call or email Cynthia at 469-9130 or cmunoz@greendoors.org. Also, you can join Green Doors Volunteer Corps on Facebook to stay up-to-date on volunteer opportunities.

OUR WISH LIST

Green Doors accepts both financial and product contributions that directly benefit our residents. If you wish to contribute items listed below, please contact us for delivery arrangements.

Our Food Pantry and Clothes Closet are always in need of:

- Condiments (ketchup, mustard, grape jelly, etc.)
- Oil (olive or vegetable)
- Cleaning supplies
- Men's Clothing
- Kid's Clothing
- Underwear and socks
- Shoes (both men's and women's)
- School Supplies
- Laundry detergent
- Flour, sugar, coffee

Our Houses are always in need of:

- USB sticks
- Books
- Movies on DVD
- Games (e.g. chess board)

To make a donation for Green Doors programs, contact Jennifer Kolb at (512) 469-9130 or jkolb@greendoors.org.

Financial donations can be made via our website at www.greendoors.org
Or mailed to: PO Box 685065, Austin, TX 78768

TREATY OAKS WISHLIST

If you'd like to contribute to the community that is growing at Treaty Oaks, here is a list of specific things we need.

- Books (especially ones on gardening and cooking)
- DVDs for our Lending Library
- Coffee beans for the weekly Coffee Hour
- Gardening Tools for the community garden
- Composting container

If you have any questions regarding the donation process, please contact Jennifer Kolb at 512-469-9130 or

jkolb@greendoors.org

BOARD MEMBERS

Lee Chapman (President) Kenneth Carnes (Member)

Karry Keas (Vice President) Aamir Paul (Member)

Kamran Shah (Secretary/Treasurer)



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