HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS
HEALTHY FAMILIES

Update to the Community
When Nationwide Children’s Hospital announced the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families (HNHF) initiative in September 2008, it was with a vision and commitment to making a significant, positive difference for our neighbors and community in the 43205, 43206 and 43207 zip codes. We know place shapes people’s well-being, and that both social and physical environments influence health and overall wellness. We also know that children’s welfare and family functioning are crucially dependent upon the social support available within local communities. Children’s daily experience of living and learning in the environment around them is a significant factor in their overall well-being.

Modeled after successful revitalization programs across the country, HNHF seeks to remove hurdles to getting health care and other supports to improve the well-being of thousands of families in our neighborhood. We achieve this by using a multifaceted approach, which you’ll read more about in this report. HNHF has demonstrated noteworthy, tangible outcomes in many areas. We’ve partnered with Columbus City Schools to open seven school-based health clinics on Columbus’s South Side. As part of our school-based efforts, we’ve also expanded access to important physical and behavioral health programming. The School-Based Asthma Therapy program, which helps to treat asthma symptoms at school to help keep kids learning in the classroom, and the PAX Good Behavior Game, a prevention initiative that promotes positive social and emotional development in children, are just two programs that have shown great success. We have also engaged 45 Nationwide Children’s employees to mentor Columbus City Schools’ students through our Connecting ME partnership.

A total of 225 affordable housing units have been added or improved since the inception of HNHF, and last year, we hired more than 185 new employees from our HNHF zip codes. This success has been fueled through the collaboration with numerous partners including, most notably, the City of Columbus, The Affordable Housing Trust, Community Development for All People, United Way and The Ohio State University’s Kirwan Institute. These partnerships continue to attract others, highlighted throughout this report, to join the effort.

Everyone involved in HNHF’s progress deserves special recognition for continuing our successful collaboration. Having more partners invested leads to greater potential to make a difference for our community. Without the partners’ vision of creating a strong, vibrant community, this would not be possible.

Steve Allen, MD, Chief Executive Officer, Nationwide Children’s Hospital
Organizations in a community can spur children’s success by helping provide support for health care, safe homes and neighborhoods, quality education and viable job opportunities for them and their parents. Together, with our many partners, we aim to assist in that effort through the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative.

Successful and lasting changes in a community are rooted in trust, the result of having built authentic relationships. We thank the South Side residents who continue to share their insights with us about their vision for a healthier neighborhood. As we continue to nurture these relationships, we come closer to understanding each other’s needs and can better respond to them. Together, we have the power to create a neighborhood that prospers and affords all families the opportunity to thrive.

A ZIP CODE SHOULD NOT DETERMINE A CHILD’S HEALTH.

The City of Columbus is proud to continue to work with Nationwide Children’s Hospital and all the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families (HNHF) community partners in this effective public-private collaboration. The accomplishments found within this report are a representation of the positive transformation possible through the commitment and actions of many partners in the community.

The health and safety of our children and families is the cornerstone of building strong, resilient communities. The programs and results discussed in this report are important steps in our efforts to help neighborhoods thrive, and we commend everyone involved in this initiative and the impressive results achieved.

I would like to recognize, in particular, some of the accomplishments made on housing and safety since the initiation of HNHF eight years ago. More than 225 homes have been improved through a partnership between Nationwide Children’s, Community Development for All People, United Way and the City of Columbus. These improvements were made possible through a financial investment of more than $16 million.

I am pleased to say that the partnership continues to expand. A new public-private partnership is underway with The Residences at Career Gateway. This new venture on Columbus’s South Side will provide both job training and housing for those within the community. This project represents a $12 million investment in the community by the City of Columbus, JPMorgan Chase, Ohio Housing Finance Agency, Nationwide Insurance and Nationwide Children’s Hospital that will fulfill an important need for affordable rental units and a pathway to a career for South Side residents.

In addition to the investments in housing, in 2016, the City of Columbus, Nationwide Children’s, Habitat for Humanity, United Way of Central Ohio and South Side Renaissance formed a partnership to expand Community Crime Patrol in the area around the hospital. The patrol’s job is to build relationships with the community, deter crime and help Columbus police, all in an effort to make our neighborhoods safer.

The achievements of HNHF are encouraging and we’re excited to continue to partner to get results for children and families. Together we are creating healthier communities and healthier citizens.

Mayor Andrew J. Ginther, City of Columbus

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Nationwide Children’s Hospital’s program Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families is focused on the Columbus zip codes of 43205, 43206 and 43207.
“It’s really not my house, it’s Zeza’s house.”
Drive down Carpenter Street and you’ll see row after row of two-story houses, many of them renovated. But one house might stick out to you — a ranch house, beige and trimmed in white.

The house belongs to LaQuita Long, who’s lived there five years now. It’s her first home. She had been looking for a ranch-style house with walkways and room entries wide enough for a wheelchair and an outside ramp suited for a wheelchair ride into the house.

“It’s really not my house, it’s Zeza’s house,” says LaQuita, referring to her oldest daughter.

Home is the one place where LaQuita has long intended that Zeza would be taken care of.

For the first year of Zeza’s life, home was the neonatal intensive care unit. She was born about three months too early. Early on, she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

But that was 10 years ago. LaQuita doesn’t often bring up the harrowing first chapter of her daughter’s life — the frequent 9-1-1 calls, the trips by ambulance, the long days and nights spent at the hospital, the multiple surgeries.

When Zeza was 5, LaQuita moved her and Thaya, her younger sister, into the South Side home custom built with Zeza in mind with assistance from the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families Healthy Homes program. The entryway, hallway, kitchen and restroom are wide enough for Zeza’s wheelchair to make full turns. The light switches were installed lower on the wall so that Zeza could eventually reach them. Utility bills have always been low because the home was designed for energy efficiency; gas heat has never cost LaQuita more than $55 a month.

LaQuita’s monthly mortgage on the home was lower than the rent she was paying, and their apartment was further from Nationwide Children’s than LaQuita had wanted to be. This home is less than a mile from Nationwide Children’s, a 7-minute walk from their front door. And this home is where Zeza has become healthier, less dependent on doctors and more able to communicate her needs.

Though she is thankful for the years of care Zeza has received at Nationwide Children’s, LaQuita is most grateful that she can now take care of her daughter, with the help of nurses, in her home.
Healthy Homes

Healthy Homes, a nonprofit housing program between Community Development for All People and Nationwide Children’s, is spearheading the revitalization of the neighborhood adjacent to Nationwide Children’s and Columbus’ South Side. Homes that are renovated or newly built are equipped with energy efficient components such as recycled carpet, high-efficiency furnaces or air conditioning units and energy-efficient windows.

Research shows that housing and health are inextricably linked. A child living in a safe neighborhood, in a home that is affordable, well insulated and in good repair, stands a higher chance of being physically and emotionally healthy than a child who does not have that opportunity.

Organizations that serve the physical, mental, spiritual and housing needs of Columbus families are working with residents on the South Side to strengthen the neighborhood. Through grants, existing homeowners have replaced windows and roofs, reconstructed porches and landscaped their front yards. Once boarded up houses are being replaced with renovated ones, and new houses now occupy previously neglected vacant lots. More people are becoming homeowners.

“We want to be creating a neighborhood with no blight and we’re trying to make certain that all families thrive,” says the Rev. John Edgar, pastor and executive director of Community Development for All People, the key community partner with Nationwide Children’s in the HNHF Realty Collaborative.

“Building Dreams: South Side’s Transformation Continues

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– Rev. John Edgar, Community Development for All People

Home Repair Program

Property owners on the South Side can receive grants through Healthy Homes to pay for otherwise unaffordable renovation projects. The grants can pay for new roofs and porches, energy-efficient windows and siding, as well as other improvements.

Since 2008, 64 area-homeowners have received home repair grants, representing an investment of over $844,000.

All of this progress has had a ripple effect. Inspired in part by the success of this effort, a new initiative, South Side Renaissance, began in 2012 to renovate a 52-block area further south. Healthy Homes provides in-kind management oversight to the South Side Renaissance. During that year, South Side Renaissance began a Home Repair Program for area residents. Between 2012 and 2014, 75 homeowners were provided grants, in part thanks to funding provided by the City of Columbus. In addition, because of funding from the United Way of Central Ohio and the Central Ohio Community Improvement Corporation, South Side Renaissance has renovated 15 units in Southern Gateway with plans to complete another 15 within the next 12 to 18 months.
Led by the efforts of Community Development for All People, a new housing complex within walking distance of Nationwide Children’s will be a part of the South Side in 2017, filling an important need for affordable rental units while also offering job training and career development opportunities onsite.

In 2015, public and private partners launched a $12 million low-income housing complex, called The Residences at Career Gateway, to be located at Whittier Street and Heyl Avenue. Low-income housing tax credits were awarded in June 2015 for the construction of the 58-unit complex, which will include apartments and townhomes, and will have a valuable amenity: onsite career development workshops.

“This will be high-quality programming aimed at equipping people to attain success on a personal and professional level, in close proximity to where people live,” says David Cofer, managing director of Community Development for All People. “We hope that the barriers to accessing ongoing education will be significantly reduced.”

Most tenants will either be employed or aspiring to work for one of many local employers. Tenants must be earning at or below a certain income level, which would be $42,600 a year for a family of four.

Classes offered onsite will train tenants and other neighborhood residents for specific local job openings, as well as teach skills necessary for success in any position, including handling workplace conflict.

When tenants of the complex and others get hired, job coaching will support them in that position and assist them in advancing through a career pathway — developing their technical and employability skills in a way that supports their advancement to the higher paying jobs they want.
“She really got him to open up. Whatever steps that she taught him, he used them. I was thinking he was just going to be known as a problem child for the rest of his life.”
“Why do I need to go to a counselor?” Michael* asked his mother.

He was 8 at the time and stuck in a cycle of snapping into rages, beating up classmates, getting kicked out of school and returning to do the same, days or weeks later. No, he said about counseling. What does a counselor need to talk to me about?

A little over a month before Michael began kindergarten, he saw his godfather get shot and die. The godfather had been Michael’s primary male role model because Michael’s own father was killed when Anna* was three months pregnant with Michael.

Michael also watched helplessly as his mother was physically assaulted in a domestic violence incident, leaving her with permanent injuries. Anna couldn’t walk for several months. Even now, after multiple surgeries, she limps unless she wears a brace. Michael has never forgotten that assault.

One incident piled on to the next. “He’d get angry,” Anna says of Michael. “You didn’t even know what was wrong.” And Anna knew that in order to restore a sense of hopefulness for Michael, she needed to reach out. And she did.

There was a lot to unravel when Michael began counseling with a therapist at Ohio Avenue Elementary School, which Nationwide Children’s staffs with clinicians to provide behavioral health treatment to students at school. Over two school years, Michael met with the therapist, and in that time, the therapist never treated Michael as if he were just a behavior problem, a troublemaker, Anna says.

“She really got him to open up,” she says. “Whatever steps that she taught him, he used them. I was thinking he was just going to be known as a problem child for the rest of his life.”

Gradually, with the help of his therapist and the fortitude of his mother, Michael is learning how to calm himself instead of resorting to violence. He expresses himself more and is doing better in his classes.

*Names have been changed
Raising children in an under-resourced community presents many stressors: How will I feed my children? Buy them new shoes? How can I meet with the school principal about my son’s behavior or take my son to the doctor when I can’t leave work because my job pays the bills?

The stress a parent may experience affects children as well, both at home and at school. A child could struggle to focus or be frequently primed for a fight if the child is anxious and on-guard because his or her mother, the sole provider of the family, juggles several jobs and stays worried about finances or a family member’s addiction. A child may not get his needed immunizations or miss necessary visits to a doctor.

“Think about how difficult it is to raise a child. And if you’re doing it by yourself, with limited resources, you don’t have the ability to always check in at school. Or, if a teacher is saying there’s a problem, it may not be the highest priority,” says Kamilah Twymon, clinical coordinator of school-based programs and community partnerships at Nationwide Children’s.

Nationwide Children’s has expanded access for children who would not otherwise get care through the mobile care centers, along with school and community-based efforts.

“Think about how difficult it is to raise a child. And if you’re doing it by yourself, with limited resources, you don’t have the ability to always check in at school.”

– Kamilah Twymon, Nationwide Children’s Hospital

Mobile Care Center
The Nationwide Children’s Mobile Care Center and the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile® (in partnership with Ronald McDonald House Charities®) visited various South Side locations including child care centers and churches in 2015. The mobile care centers make it easier for children and families to receive health care by having medical equipment and health providers on board. Three hundred and twenty five children were treated for illness, received immunizations or had their well-child visit.

“Being able to meet the child and the family where they are has been a priority for us,” says Jennifer Voit, director of the Primary Care Network for Nationwide Children’s.

Care Connection
Nationwide Children’s has a longstanding relationship with area schools. The partnership between the hospital and schools in the community recently expanded to provide more comprehensive primary care and behavioral health services in targeted locations.

The 2015-2016 school year was the first in which Nationwide Children’s Care Connection nurse practitioners and mental health professionals were onsite in many South Side schools to provide physical and behavioral health care. Students were seen during school hours and, at some sites, before and after school.

A total of 593 students were seen by Care Connection clinicians for primary care services in the 2015-2016 school year. Students were seen for sports physicals, asthma therapy, and consultations about prevention of drugs, tobacco and alcohol use, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

If a child visits a Care Connection nurse practitioner, a summary of services provided and recommendations for follow up (if needed) are sent home with the child and are sent to the child’s pediatrician or family doctor. If a child does not have a pediatrician or family doctor, they are connected to one.

In addition to needed primary care services, access to behavioral health continues to be a top priority. One in five school-aged children suffer from significant behavioral or mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression.
Inside elementary school classrooms, the PAX Good Behavior Game helps children learn the skills to manage their own emotions and behaviors and focus on learning in a fun and nurturing environment. In 2015, Nationwide Children’s therapists trained 57 teachers in the PAX Good Behavior Game in nine Columbus City Schools within South Side neighborhoods. Overall, classrooms implementing the PAX Good Behavior Game experienced a 63 percent decrease in disruptive behaviors over the course of the school year.

In the community, parents are supported through clinician-led groups that offer strategies to strengthen the bond between parent and child, and create a more nurturing home environment. The Incredible Years (IY) parenting intervention is a national, evidence-based parenting program designed for children aged 3 to 8 years. Seven parent education groups were held in five locations on the South Side in 2015, assisting 52 families.

When young children experience trauma or repeated exposure to stress, a stable and safe school environment is essential in helping children manage their feelings, develop healthy relationships and learn. In the face of that, teachers have the difficult job of trying to create a positive learning environment in which all children can learn. Teachers are supported by having a behavioral health clinician in the classroom to work directly with them on achieving an optimal learning environment and helping students develop those skills.

Last year, 31 teachers and administrative staff received training and consultation in 10 preschools, child care centers and kindergartens on the South Side, which impacted 565 children ages 2-6. The results were clear: student resiliency improved. Overall, 80 percent of the school programs experienced a decrease in disruptive incidents and children leaving the program because of challenging behaviors.

“We’re teaching teachers how to interact differently, to understand the challenges kids bring to the classroom and how they can influence their behavior in the classroom,” says Lisa Golden, clinical lead supervisor of the Early Childhood Mental Health program at Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

“Were teaching teachers how to interact differently, to understand the challenges kids bring to the classroom and how they can influence their behavior in the classroom.”

– Lisa Golden, Nationwide Children’s Hospital
“I don’t know what we would have done without her.”
Riley Sewell clutched her mother’s leg as she hid under the kitchen table. Her pre-K teacher had just arrived at her house.

A week later when Mickie Roberts, “Miss Mickie,” returned, Riley stood by the back door. By the third visit, she sat at the kitchen table. Arms crossed, she didn’t want to pick up the pencil handed to her but Miss Mickie was able to change that. She reached into the black plastic box she had wheeled into the house, a box filled with entertainment to get past tough spots — markers, blocks, puzzles, Elmo. After Miss Mickie handed Riley Play-Doh, Riley dug in.

Over the weeks, Riley, who was 4 at the time, grew to look forward to Miss Mickie’s arrival and to the packets she would leave behind, a plastic bag of fun for the week — letters to trace, a book, directions and materials to make a craft.

Miss Mickie teaches for SPARK, a program that brings pre-K lessons to children on the South Side in the year before they enroll in kindergarten to prepare them for school.

In between Miss Mickie’s visits to the Sewell house, Riley’s mother, Kelli, found it easy to reinforce what she had taught Riley during their one-hour sessions every two to three weeks.

Kelli describes Miss Mickie as a cross between a Mary Poppins and a guardian angel.

“She got her to do things that I couldn’t get her to do,” Kelli says.

A perfectionist, Riley turned away if she didn’t think she could do a task exactly like the example showed. Even so, Miss Mickie could draw Riley out and move Riley beyond her frustrated moments to write a letter or sound out a letter. When Riley seemed spent, Miss Mickie pulled out something from her black, plastic box so the lesson never ended with a withdrawn or infuriated preschooler and a disappointed mom.

By the end of the program, Riley knew the sound of every letter in the alphabet and what letter words started with. She could count to 20 and use scissors. She was ready for kindergarten.

In the fall of 2015, Miss Mickie knocked on the Sewells’ front door again. This time she was arriving to work with Riley’s younger sister, Olivia, then 4. Olivia welcomed Miss Mickie back — even gave her a hug, and she was willing to try any task Miss Mickie brought her.

Among her favorites was a lesson that included a worksheet for the letters M, P and W, a book called “Mouse Paint” and different colored plastic discs that can be layered atop each other to show how colors mix to form different colors.

Miss Mickie had a lot to share with Kelli as well. Kelli and her husband had just moved to the far South Side. She didn’t know many neighbors. She didn’t know the area.

Miss Mickie plugged her in to the library’s story hours. Suggested free classes at the nearby recreation centers. She told Kelli how and when to register Riley for kindergarten.

“I don’t know what we would have done without her,” Kelli says.

And before Kelli met Miss Mickie, Kelli had never heard of SPARK.

Having just moved to the South Side, Kelli scrambled to find a pre-K program for Riley. It was September. Early childhood programs were full and some had waitlists, but those with open spots weren’t affordable. After a period of panic, she resigned to the idea of becoming Riley’s pre-K teacher that year. Then she got a call from Miss Mickie, who had received Kelli’s name from one of the programs with a waitlist.

With all of Miss Mickie’s help, the once-bashful Riley began kindergarten self-assured, as did her younger sister Olivia. One day at kindergarten, Olivia was asked to write a letter, any letter of the alphabet. She wrote all of them, along with her first and last name, which was far more than her classmates. All that she left out was her middle name, Scarlet, because Olivia didn’t feel like writing it, though she knows how — only because, she explained to her mother, it has too many letters.
Preparing Children for School and Beyond

The early years in a child’s life lay the foundation for their future. More and more studies are documenting the significant impact early care and education can have on not only children’s cognitive abilities but also important behavioral traits like motivation and self-esteem. But there are obstacles that can prevent some parents from enrolling their children in preschool. Getting the child to and from school may be a challenge. Paying for the program may be another.

When children enter kindergarten in Columbus, one-third are behind, according to data from Columbus City Schools. Since a solid education lays the foundation for a child’s future, the HNHF initiative supports several programs to improve the chances that students will not only be prepared in kindergarten but also be successful throughout their school years and into their careers.

When children enter kindergarten in Columbus, one-third are behind, according to data from Columbus City Schools.

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SPARK

In 2015, 64 South Side children became kindergarten-ready through SPARK, a free program for residents in South Side neighborhoods, in which a pre-K teacher brings lessons to the families at their home or in a nearby library. Each month, the teacher meets with the child and the parent/guardian one-on-one to teach a lesson. The teacher works with the parent or guardian on tips to reinforce the lesson between visits. In addition, the teacher guides the parent in how to encourage his or her child’s learning and curiosity, providing free books and supplies to supplement each lesson.

“The kids are excited about learning. They’re primed for success.”

– Marcie Rehmar, Nationwide Children’s Hospital

At the end of the program, nearly 90 percent of the children were kindergarten-ready compared to 32 percent before they participated in SPARK.

“The kids are excited about learning,” Rehmar says. “They’re primed for success.”

64 CHILDREN became kindergarten-ready through SPARK in 2015

90% OF CHILDREN WERE KINDERGARTEN-READY after participating in SPARK compared to 32% BEFORE

“That’s why the program has sustainable gains over time because we’re not just teaching the child — we’re teaching the parents,” says Marcie Rehmar, director of community education at Nationwide Children’s.
**Summer Scientist Internship Program**

Since work experience is critical in determining a career direction, competitive summer internships in biomedical research are available through The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s.

Among the high school juniors and seniors hired in 2015, approximately half were from South Side neighborhoods. Interns completed hands-on research projects in gene therapy, immunology, microbial pathogenesis, perinatal research and cardiovascular and pulmonary research. They learned lab techniques and procedures, collected data, attended weekly science lectures and career development seminars and presented research projects at the end of the summer.

**Connecting ME (Mentorship Experiences)**

Like a second home for children and teens, the Boys & Girls Club on Reeb Avenue offers structure. A time for video games, ping pong and pool. A time for snacks and dinner. A time for homework, along with math and grammar flashcard competitions. A time for a group activity, a discussion on handling emotions or one on one time reading to an adult.

Within that daily schedule, volunteer employees from Nationwide Children’s help coach and teach kids, and often get outrun on the basketball court.

In the fall of 2015, 45 Nationwide Children’s employees began mentoring at the Boys & Girls Club in the Reeb Avenue Center.

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**Relationships with caring adults can be critical for young people to have a vision of what’s possible in their lives.**

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**HALF OF HIGH SCHOOL INTERNS**

Hired at The Research Institute from the South Side neighborhoods

**Mentorships**

Relationships with caring adults can be critical for young people to have a vision of what’s possible in their lives. Adults can help show adolescents they have the potential to do well in school, go on to college and find a career that excites them. Mentoring is one way to encourage that. Hospital employees have engaged in mentoring, most recently through Connecting ME.

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**55 BOYS**

Participated in free Saturday classes

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**45 NATIONWIDE CHILDREN’S EMPLOYEES**

Began mentoring students at the Boys & Girls Club in 2015

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**“The number one reason kids come back to the club day after day, month after month, is the relationships they form with adults.”**

– Rebecca Asmo, Boys & Girls Club of Columbus

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**“Having those adult relationships consistently available to them over a long period of time is critical to their success,” says Rebecca Asmo, executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus.**

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**“Can we keep going?”**

The boy asked.

Buoyed by his success, he kept working on the flashcards with Kelleher, even while everyone else was out on the playground.
“I like interacting with everybody.”
‘Go for it’ Attitude Spurred Success for Mother and Son

Wendy Holliman worked for a temporary agency that offered no health insurance. Her son, Dominic, was a part-time salesman, but wanted a job with an organization where he had more opportunity to advance into different positions.

Then, a flier arrived in the mail: Free job assistance workshops for residents on the South Side. Of course we’ll go, Wendy thought at first, then hesitated. Being 50 at the time, she worried she might be considered old, rather than experienced with a solid record as an administrative assistant. Still, she knew she wanted a more secure job and one with health insurance. Dominic, who was 21 at the time, had no hesitation. He was going.

The workshops were funded through the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative to help people living on the South Side find their first jobs or better jobs.

On the day of the first workshop, Wendy and Dominic were a mother and son team, arriving together and sitting toward the front, dressed up, resumes ready. Lina Lee, a human resources recruiter for Nationwide Children’s, happened to sit near them and took an immediate liking to them. They were friendly and seemed serious about wanting better jobs.

Lina recommended ways they could both tweak their resumes. Wendy and Dominic took notes and spoke about what type of job they hoped to land: an administrative position for Wendy, and for Dominic, any position that would get him in the door. He was flexible.

Before leaving that day, the mother and son team had emails, business cards and names to follow up with. The next day, Dominic revised his resume and emailed it to Lina, then he followed up and politely reminded her that he really was interested in a job.

“I emailed her like every other day,” Dominic says. “My mom said ‘Leave her alone.’”

Within a week, he had an interview. A few weeks later, he drove to his new job at Nationwide Children’s working on a behavioral health unit, watching patients at risk of harming themselves. While it may be a stressful job, Dominic has the personality that kept him from ever leaving work and ruminating over what happened on his shift. He loved the job.

After nearly two years in the position, Dominic recently was promoted to a job as a patient access representative in the radiology department, a job he does while finishing a bachelor’s degree in health care management at Franklin University.

Wendy found a job as well, about a month after Dominic’s first position began. She works as an administrative assistant for the cardiology department, a position that requires, among other responsibilities, a calm voice when a harried parent calls. My daughter just fainted in school. Should I be continuing with this medication for my son? Every day is entirely different, filled with various patient needs for reassurance, an appointment, a prescription refill, advice.

“I like interacting with everybody,” Wendy says.

And she likes helping mothers in need, which may be why she eventually wants to start a home for pregnant young women to help guide them before they take on mothering on their own. She could support them, using her own experience overcoming the challenges of being a young, single, pregnant mother, who was able to raise a son and daughter who are well grounded and driven.
Connecting Residents With Employment Resources

A regular salary is critical for stability. Finding work on a regular basis can be a starting point for people improving their lives. Among residents living in the South Side zip codes of 43205, 43206 and 43207, the unemployment rate is 23 percent — about six times the overall rate in Columbus. Many on the South Side have faced barriers — such as the lack of needed education or transportation — to employment and a career.

HNHF programs offer support to help eliminate some of those hurdles to finding employment.

Many on the South Side have faced barriers — such as the lack of needed education or transportation — to employment and a career.

Job Fairs and Workshops

A number of initiatives were created to support residents interested in working at Nationwide Children’s and connecting them to other local employers. To expand employment opportunities for South Side residents, Nationwide Children’s teamed up with other area staffing agencies and employers to hold a job fair. Among the 20 vendors were DSW, Lowe’s, Raising Cane’s and the City of Columbus. Fifteen people were hired from the event.

Nationwide Children’s hosts workshops to help prospective applicants refine their resumes, focus their job search and prepare for an interview. In addition, outreach sessions at local high schools offered job assistance and stirred interest in hospital careers. At Marion-Franklin High School, the hospital’s Human Resources staff held resume writing workshops over a series of weeks. Some young people secured summer paid internships at Nationwide Children’s in a partnership with Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corporation’s (COWIC) summer youth employment program.

Pathways to Employment

In November 2015, Nationwide Children’s partnered with Community Properties of Ohio to hire South Side residents with limited work histories to work in hospital positions while getting on-the-job coaching and feedback. This may lead to full-time positions.

By working and having an on-the-job coach to provide feedback and advice, employees learned skills necessary to secure and maintain a position.

“We can teach you a technical skill,” says Marcey McDonald, director of Employment Services at Nationwide Children’s. “We’re giving participants an opportunity to learn something new.”
“I don’t believe that just because you grow up a certain way, that you have to live the way you grew up.”
As a mother of four, a school bus driver and director of a nonprofit for South Side young people and their families, Renita Adams stays plugged in to the interests and struggles of young people in her neighborhood. She is most drawn to the ones who get in trouble. She’s determined to figure out why. And she works to convince them of the potential for themselves they may not be able to see.

Too often, those youths are dismissed as troublemakers, Renita says. Not likely to ever succeed. Thrown away.

“If you tell me that I’m bad, I’m going to believe that I’m bad and I’m going to continue to do bad. If you’re teaching me, ‘No, you’re not bad. You just made a bad choice. There’s other choices you can make,’ they begin to respect you. They see ‘Maybe she does care.’ If they do wrong, they won’t do wrong in front of you. Then eventually, they might not do wrong.”

Renita wants more for young people on the South Side. More chances at jobs. More opportunities to go to college, even summer camp.

“I don’t believe that just because you grow up a certain way, that you have to live the way you grew up,” Renita says.

Yet she knows how difficult it can be to avoid repeating the decisions made by family members, friends or neighbors, who are in prison, who sell drugs and who profit from swiping metal off houses and selling it.

Renita knows some of these challenges. She grew up in a single parent home with a mother who struggled with alcoholism and drug addiction in a neighborhood where gunshots and police sirens regularly sounded.

Motivated partly by her uncle, a community activist, Renita participated in the South Side Neighborhood Leadership Academy, which encourages new and emerging South Side leaders to bring about the changes they’re most passionate about to their neighborhood. Renita credits the neighborhood leadership academy with infusing her with the know-how to write grants and network with other leaders with similar intentions for South Side youth.

With Renita’s ambition to help young people, comes a realistic attitude as well. She knows what she can’t control. She can advise young people on what to do and what not to do, but what they witness at home may be beyond her ability to undo. She can tell her daughters to always be alert, but she couldn’t have stopped the shooting her two eldest daughters witnessed a few years ago while walking to the school bus stop to meet their younger sister.

Renita may not be able to change those circumstances for her children and the children on the South Side, but she may be able to steer a child to a summer job or summer camp or offer guidance to a frustrated parent. And in so doing, that might eventually lead a child or an adult to make a different choice. Her help might put a young person on a path toward consistently showing up to school, then striving for an A in a class, then an A in most classes, then graduating high school, then applying and getting into college or finding a career.

It might.

And it’s that chance that keeps Renita trying.
Making Neighborhoods Safer and Cleaner

A growing number of residents on the South Side want their slice of Columbus to be as safe as it once was, when few worried about someone breaking into their house or garage. This reclaiming of the South Side is occurring as a community crime patrol begins, and neighbors launch a block watch and some attend a new leadership training that offers the know-how to bring about the lasting change they desire in their neighborhoods.

"Before, people were going in and closing their doors and they wouldn’t come out until they’d leave for work the next day. Now people are introducing themselves."
– Buford English, Sr., South Side Resident

Block Watch

"You can’t just stick your head in the sand and expect change to take place," says Buford English, Sr., a retired Nationwide Children’s security guard, who has lived on the South Side since 1976.

English is a member of the block watch for the Southern Orchards neighborhood immediately south of the hospital. In 2015, the block watch met for its first full year. During quarterly meetings with a Columbus police liaison officer, neighbors talked about crime and discussed prevention strategies for reducing prostitution, drug dealing, burglaries and arson.

The block watch’s successes may not be quantifiable yet, but one success is certain: the group has stirred more conversations and connection among neighbors. And that, in turn, is expected to diminish crime.

"Before, people were going in and closing their doors and they wouldn’t come out until they’d leave for work the next day," English says. "Now people are introducing themselves. A lot of people come to the meetings to say ‘Hey this happened to me,’ so people can keep an eye out."

Beautification: Plant Pride on Parsons Avenue

Some took up a paint brush to glide it over graffiti, while others picked up trash or planted flowers. In hopes that beauty will beget beauty, volunteers from Stowe Mission, Speedway and Nationwide Children’s participated in two cleanups on Parsons Avenue in 2015. Cleaning up the once major commercial corridor in the area and brightening it with seasonal flowers is intended to encourage residents to be conscious about tossing trash and sprucing up their homes, inside and out.

“It can start with one house," says Carla Fountain, Nationwide Children’s senior community relations specialist. "Even if it’s the planting of some flowers and keeping them up or making sure your grass is cut, your paint is not peeling. If one person sees someone else doing it, it becomes a ripple effect."

"If one person sees someone else doing it, it becomes a ripple effect."
– Carla Fountain, Nationwide Children’s Hospital

South Side Neighborhood Leadership Academy

Lasting change to an area does not come easily. Leaders are needed, particularly those who understand how to motivate people and focus more on what the South Side offers than on what it lacks.

A group of 18 individuals, each driven to improve life on the South Side, came together in 2015 for the South Side’s first Neighborhood Leadership Academy. Each participant began with a different ambition for bringing about change, but one success is certain: the group has stirred more conversations and connection among neighbors. And that, in turn, is expected to diminish crime.

"Leaders in the program are people experiencing challenges of their own, but making a commitment to better their neighborhoods. You have people who need food assistance but want to figure out a way to do a food drive for those who are homeless," says Nick Jones, manager of the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative at Nationwide Children’s.

“Leaders in the program are people experiencing challenges of their own, but making a commitment to better their neighborhoods. You have people who need food assistance but want to figure out a way to do a food drive for those who are homeless.”
– Nick Jones, Nationwide Children’s Hospital

18 PEOPLE
joined the first South Side Neighborhood Leadership Academy

After finishing the 10 sessions, leaders completed a community-based team project — either organizing the first annual South Side festival or working on a photography exhibit featuring the photos of children assigned to find beauty, in its various forms, on the South Side.

The leadership academy is a joint effort among Nationwide Children’s, United Way of Central Ohio, the Kirwan Institute and Community Development for All People.
WHAT’S NEXT?
Moving Healthcare Upstream: An initiative to help more children thrive in their first year of life and beyond
Affordable rental housing
Opening of The Residences at Career Gateway

For more information, please visit
NationwideChildrens.org/Healthy-Neighborhoods-Healthy-Families