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THE COMMUNITY POST

Connecting Adair Park, Mechanicsville, Peoplestown, Pittsburgh, & Summerhill



The coronavirus pandemic has contributed to the growing number of people in America facing hunger daily. Researchers project that more than 50 million people in the U.S. – including a potential 17 million children – may experience daily hunger in 2021. People of all ages face food insecurity, but households with children are more likely to be food-insecure. (feedingamerica.org).



HUNGER IN GEORGIA

Chronic hunger is a harsh reality for communities across the country, and food insecurity affects millions of people regardless of age. According to feedingamerica.org, “in Georgia, 1,318,500 people are struggling with hunger – and of them, 405,308 are children.” Put another way, in the Peach State, one in eight adults struggles with hunger, as does one in six children.

Issues surrounding chronic hunger and food insecurity are complicated and varied. Structural and systemic inequities disproportionately affect marginalized populations, and areas known as food deserts limit access to fresh, healthful, and affordable food.

Medical crises and job loss also contribute to the problem. The coronavirus pandemic has created an unprecedented spike in the number of people needing help, and food pantries are having difficulty keeping up with the growing demand. Lack of consistent nutrition causes significant long-term physical and mental health issues in children as well as adults.

Hunger in AMERICA

The United States is the richest country in the world, yet millions face hunger every day. The Feeding America network comprises the largest domestic hunger-relief organization in America and reports that “rural communities make up 63% of counties in the United States and 87% of counties with the highest rates of overall food insecurity.” In many areas of the country, particularly southern states, African Americans face unemployment and poverty at rates significantly higher than other populations and are also at greater risk of food insecurity.

A Message from the Editors

Welcome to readers of this first issue of The Community Post!

This first issue of *The Community Post* for the neighborhoods of **Adair Park, Mechanicsville, Peoplestown, Pittsburgh, and Summerhill** is, hopefully,



DR. ARLA G. BERNSTEIN

just the beginning of a community forum for and by its residents. It is, by all accounts, an experiment to find out if this publication will provide a communication network for topics and issues of interest to the community's residents. It can certainly not be "all things" to all resident needs and interests, but *The Post* can provide a channel for some stories that need to get out.

To be honest, the staff of this community newspaper are not professional journalists; we are faculty and students of Mercer University who have made a commitment to our mission for this newspaper project – we want to produce a free online newspaper that residents will feel good about reading as a source of pride in their community. In fact, we are interested in providing hope during difficult times through portraying positive community attributes as well as shared community interests.



DR. STEVE N. HAMILTON

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Lasting Effects of Hunger

An estimated 50 million people are likely to face daily hunger and chronic malnourishment in 2021, and the lack of quality nutrition can have devastating effects on a person's physical and mental health. Living with hunger is very stressful, and a parent's inability to provide food for his or her family can be traumatic and cause serious harm to one's mental health.

Feeding America reports that constantly worrying about where one's next meal will come from is likely to cause various mental health problems including anxiety, depression, and even posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "The American Academy of Pediatrics revealed that mothers with school-aged children who face severe hunger are 56.2% more likely to have PTSD and 53.1% more likely to have severe depression."

Hunger is often painful and may cause children to be cranky, hyperactive, and aggressive, and learning disabilities can intensify such behavior. Approximately 50% of children facing daily hunger will need to repeat a grade.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) notes "...a strong connection between hunger and chronic diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes" (feedingamerica.org). The more meals missed, the greater the toll on one's mental and physical health.



In America, one in seven children experiences chronic hunger, and signs of hunger can be difficult to recognize, particularly if the child feels ashamed and hides his or her pain. Children as well as adults may suffer from depression and low self-esteem due to hunger caused by food insecurity.

Food Desert Means Challenges for Residents

The term "food desert" refers to a region or area with limited access to nutritional food at reasonable prices. Food deserts are more common than some may realize and exist mainly in urban areas and most often affect neighborhoods with lower incomes. Residents of NPU-V are very familiar with food deserts because they live in one.

Instead of large grocery stores and farmers' markets, the sources for food in these areas are often gas station and convenience stores, which generally carry few options for nutritional foods, offering instead pre-packaged items that are high in carbohydrates and loaded with sodium.

For many residents of NPU-V, grocery stores and markets are simply too far away. For example, the grocery store closest to Peoplestown is a Kroger on Moreland Avenue, almost three miles away. The nearest Wal-Mart is almost four miles away.

Lack of transportation presents another barrier to accessing nutritious food at reasonable prices for residents. Even if a resident reaches a large grocery store via public transportation, he or she is limited by the amount of items and bags that can be managed on the trip home. Often, the challenges are too much, making a healthy diet impossible.

Compromises and Coping

When it comes to money, a significant number of residents in Atlanta's NPU-V neighborhoods know about making tough choices. When a household has limited funds, decisions have to be made based on priorities or whatever is most urgent at the moment. Rent or mortgage payments are important, and so are utilities. Nutritious food is certainly a critical need, and transportation to and from work must be a priority in order to earn more money. What happens if a person has only enough money to address one of those priorities?

MAYBE THIS IS WHY KIDS ARE OBESE



Learn more about our project @ eatlocalgrown.com

Many families can only afford the cheapest food available, which is usually processed, fried, and loaded with sugar, fat and sodium. Consuming unhealthy food puts children at significant risk for long term adverse effects on physical and mental health.

Systemic oppression blocks millions of people from pursuing “the American Dream” by preventing access to medical care, educational opportunities, and quality food supplies. Feeding America reports “many people facing hunger are forced to make tough choices between buying food and medical bills, food and rent and/or food and transportation. This struggle goes beyond harming an individual family’s future, it can harm us all” (feedingamerica.org).

In 2014, Feeding America sponsored the “Hunger in America” study, and participants were asked to share the choices they made due to limited resources: “69% had to choose between food and utilities, 67% had to choose between food and transportation, 66% had to choose between food and medical care, 57% had to choose between food and housing, and 31% had to choose between food and education.

Ways people stretched their food budgets included buying cheap, unhealthy food; receiving help from others; watering down food or drinks to make them stretch further; selling or pawning personal property; and growing food in a garden. Keep reading to learn how the last option mentioned (gardening) is making a positive difference in many Atlanta communities and beyond.



PHOTO: THE URBAN GARDEN INITIATIVE.ORG

Community Success

A variety of influences – political, social, financial, and others – have created a culture of systemic oppression that negatively affects many populations, communities, and neighborhoods across the United States, particularly in urban areas. Of all the harmful effects this reality forces on millions of Americans, a lack of access to suitable nutrition at reasonable prices may be the worst. The lack of healthful, consistent nutrition causes adverse physical and mental health outcomes for people of all ages.

Every day, those living in food deserts – which are found most often in low income areas – experience the incredible toll such injustices take on body, mind, and spirit. The struggle is real, and obstacles to a better life can seem insurmountable; however, neighbors everywhere are coming together, establishing trust, nurturing relationships, brainstorming possibilities, and creating communities that take action to transform food deserts into flourishing oases with plenty of nutritious food for everyone.



Meals and Groceries to Go

A number of organizations offer nutritious support to individuals and families living in the five neighborhoods covered by *The Community Post*. The Atlanta Community Food Bank is a member of “Feeding America, the nation’s leading domestic hunger relief charity made up of over 200 food banks” (acfb.org). Working with more than 700 nonprofit partners, ACFB distributes millions of meals across metro Atlanta and north Georgia. A wide variety of compassionate partners donate almost nine million pounds of food and grocery products (more than 20% is fresh produce), and hundreds of partners distribute the goods

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Legacy Ladies are Sources of Knowledge and Inspiration

Miss Annette describes the Pittsburgh of her childhood as a magical place where everyone looked out for each other, no one felt a need to lock their doors, and people could walk anywhere without fear. “It was like the sun was shining all the time,” she said. Annette Samuels was born and raised in Pittsburgh, and she still loves calling the special community home.

Miss Annette recognizes that the lenses with which she viewed the world as a youth were greatly influenced by her parents who created an environment where anything seemed possible. She admits that probably life was not quite as rosy as it seemed to be when she was younger, but she insists there existed what she describes as “Pittsburgh Magic” that made her community a special place to live.

Around the same time, many of the local businesses began to relocate or just close down. Miss Annette misses the days when Pittsburgh had a booming business district. There was a medical doctor, a dentist, drug store, hair-salon, and several restaurants - all Black-owned. She pointed out that because of segregation, Black people were not allowed in stores and restaurants that served only white people. In those always sunny days years ago, Miss Annette says Pittsburgh had four grocery stores, owned and operated by Jewish families, who worked with residents when times were hard, offering store credit and finding ways to work out the bill when necessary.

“We have no grocery store [now, in Pittsburgh],” Miss

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Everybody knows Miss Ethel. In Peoplestown — where she has lived since she was seven years old — Miss Ethel is a busy lady. On most days, she can be found out and about the neighborhood, going to various meetings and gatherings, checking in with folks who hang out around town, speaking with politicians and other leaders, and dropping in to see what’s new at the few shops and stores that remain open for business. This friendly neighbor has always cared about her community, and now that she has retired, Miss Ethel is more involved than ever.

Miss Ethel was a young woman in the mid-1970s when, as she puts it, “my husband jumped ship.” Suddenly single and without a source of income, this mother with three small children (two daughters and a son, aged five and younger) determined that her best course of action was to move in with her mother.

Even though she qualified for financial support, Miss Ethel decided against welfare and went out to find a job. She started as a team member at Church’s Chicken, but before long, she was promoted to crew chief, and soon became an assistant manager. The work was steady, the money was good, and she had no plans to leave until late one night when a robber put a gun to her head and threatened to kill her unless she opened the safe and handed him all the money inside. The manager, who was also being held, nodded his consent, and a frightened Miss Ethel did as she was told. When the robber had what he came for, he locked both employees in the freezer and left. Miss Ethel and the manager might have frozen to death

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NPU-V Community Resource Guide



ALUMA FARM is owned and operated by farmers Andy and Andrea in Southwest Atlanta, along the Atlanta BeltLine Westside trail. We work to nourish and strengthen our local community by providing fresh, organically grown fruits and vegetables for our neighbors. Find our farmstand every Thursday from 4-8 pm (April through November) at 1150 Allene Ave. SW, Atlanta, GA 30310. Email alumafarm@gmail.com to learn about our CSA program, volunteering opportunities, and upcoming events!



EMMAUS HOUSE seeks transformation in the lives of individuals, within communities, and in the systems that shape our lives. To achieve this change, we believe that as an organization we must focus on both relationship and results. We have three strategic priorities that inform our work: Economic Success, Academic Achievement and Youth Development, and Grassroots Leadership and Social Justice.

Emmaus House services include benefits assistance, SSDI assistance referrals, GA ID vouchers, medical crisis assistance, rent/utility assistance, and food pantry. Help Hotline - (404) 523-2856

Lokey Help Center - 27 Haygood Ave SW, Atlanta, GA 30315

Hours - M 9:30am-3pm, Tu 9am-3pm, W 9am-3pm, Th 9am-3pm, F 9am-2pm
For more information: www.emmaushouse.org



HABESHA, INC. is a Pan-African organization that cultivates leadership in youth and families through practical experiences in cultural education, **sustainable agriculture**, entrepreneurship, holistic health, and technology. Volunteers are the lifeblood of HABESHA! If you are interested in volunteering, please click the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LVS99JJ> For more information, contact: Charles Greenlea, Program Director, at (678) 431-1949.

The **MECHANICSVILLE CIVIC ASSOCIATION** meets the first Monday of each month. If that Monday falls on a federal holiday, then the meeting is moved to the first Wednesday. Meetings are typically held downstairs at the Mechanicsville Branch of the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, located at 400 Formwalt Street SW, Atlanta, GA 30312. For more information, visit www.mechanicvilleatl.org



ORGANIZED NEIGHBORS OF SUMMERHILL (ONS) "The function and purpose of ONS is to unite the people of the Summerhill neighborhood into an organization concerned with the common issues of the area, to provide a means for discussions and solutions of such issues and to maintain and enhance the quality of life of our community." Meetings are held at 7 pm on the first Monday of every month at the Georgia-Hill Center, which is located at 250 Georgia Ave. SE, Atlanta, GA 30312. For more information, visit www.onsummerhill.org

The **PEOPLESTOWN REVITALIZATION CORPORATION** mission is to improve the quality of life for residents of our community.

Our Corporation: Since 1989, the Peoplestown Revitalization Corporation (PRC) has sponsored holistic, sustainable economic development programs to maintain a prosperous, forward-thinking community. Today the PRC is a prototype for maintaining historically black, urban neighborhoods from population displacement. PRC employs private sector practices to maximize return on funds invested through verifiable social impact. For more information, and to get involved, visit www.peopletown.com.



PITTSBURGH NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION Get active! Be involved in your neighborhood! PNA: Pittsburgh Neighborhood Association meets monthly at Pittman Park on the first Saturday each month at 10 am. For more information, please send an email to pnaorg022@gmail.com.



Above Left: Miss Annette shows the Certificate of Appreciation given in recognition of her service related to marketing and communication for the nearly-completed Pittsburgh Yard Complex. Above Right: Morehouse School of Medicine presented an Award of Appreciation to Pittsburgh Legacy Resident Annette Samuels for serving on a task force created to help victims of violence.

(Annette Samuel's story, continued from page 5)

"We have no grocery store [now, in Pittsburgh]," Miss Annette laments. "The closest ones to me are 20 or 30 minutes away."

Throughout the years, Miss Annette has witnessed the highs and lows, the triumphs and disappointments, of the community she loves and all those friends and neighbors who call Atlanta's Pittsburgh home. On a well-located corner lot on Ira Street, Miss Annette has a good view from the porch of the house that has been her home since childhood. She lives there happily with her professional jazz musician husband (they have been married thirty-two years), enjoying retirement after working at Sears more than three decades; however, Miss Annette does not sit at home watching the world change around her. Instead, she takes action and helps affect positive change in her community and beyond.

Miss Annette serves as Chaplain for the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Association. Her duties include opening and in the community and offering a caring ear to anyone who needs or wants to talk are among the gifts she shares with those around her, and she welcomes all those who care to reach out.

"We have no grocery store."

**"Neighborhood is about location.
Community is about involvement."**

— Annette Samuels, Pittsburgh —

To new residents as well as those who have been around for years, Miss Annette points out, "neighborhood is about location. Community is about involvement." She encourages people of all ages to invest time, energy, talent, and other resources to make the world a better place for everyone. That Pittsburgh magic is all around. Just ask Miss Annette. She can show you where to find it (anet48@aol.com).

communitypost2020@gmail.com

(Ethel Floyd's story, continued from page 5)

had they not managed to escape through the chicken shoot, a small tunnel used to deliver poultry to the kitchen.

One robbery at gunpoint was enough. Miss Ethel reasoned that there was little use to spend her time making money to support her children if she was killed murdered at work. She said goodbye to Church's and joined the production line making Arrow shirts for men, and she kept that job until retirement. Miss Ethel was in charge of the collar, and one day she was told the company CEO wanted to see her in the Executive Office.

Nervous, she rode the elevator to the top floor and took a seat, waiting for her name to be called. Miss Ethel could not imagine what she had done wrong. She was a hard worker, and she took her job seriously. "I walked in there like I was going to the gallows," she said. Miss Ethel was almost in tears when the CEO spoke. "You out to be proud of yourself, young lady," the big boss said, and he explained that she had made top production over 250 women for two weeks.

Miss Ethel was relieved to hear she was not in trouble, and when the CEO handed her a one thousand dollar bonus check, she nearly fainted. "Oh, child, they almost had to carry me out of there." The extra money made it possible for Miss Ethel and her children to move into an apartment of their own, and they loved the new space.



**"Get somewhere,
and be somebody."**

— Ethel Floyd, Peoplestown —

In 1988, the family of four moved into a two-story home built by Habitat for Humanity where Miss Ethel still resides. She is understandably proud that the mortgage was paid off three years ago.

Her family motto has always been, "Get somewhere, and be somebody," and Miss Ethel takes those words to heart. Practicing what she preaches, Miss Ethel recently earned h

er GED after retiring from the shirt company. She quit school in the eleventh grade and when asked why she waited so long to complete the GED, she explains, "I never had no time to do it. I was too busy working and raising kids." She says she also did it to show her grandchildren she could go to school and succeed just like they do.

Her children are just as committed to the family motto. One daughter is a successful software engineer, her other daughter (who died of cancer late last year) was a physical therapist at Emory, and her son is a police officer for the City of Atlanta.

Miss Ethel has lived in Peoplestown for sixty years and welcomes newcomers to the area. Eager to share her knowledge of and pride in the community, she says to new residents, "If you meet us halfway, we can help each other," and that is what community is all about.

(Community Success, continued from page 3)

through support centers, food pantries, and mobile markets across 29 counties in North Georgia.

In the Pittsburgh area, the Beloved Community Church of Atlanta, Inc. (located at 1113 Ira Street) serves meals from 12:00-2:00 pm and 3:30-5:00 pm every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On McDaniel Street, a food bank is open once each month, and area residents are notified by phone regarding dates and times.

An exciting development to spur economic growth, encourage entrepreneurship for “Adair Park, Capitol Gateway, Mechanicsville, Peoplestown, Pittsburgh and Summerhill – often referred to as Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V) – and other southwest Atlanta neighborhoods” is the almost completed Pittsburgh Yards (<https://www.pittsburghyards.com>). The 31-acre site has already started transforming the area and will soon offer area residents a variety of “foodpreneur” opportunities among others. For more information, visit the website – [pittsburghyards.com](https://www.pittsburghyards.com) – or call the “info line” at 478-888-YARD (9273).

The Coronavirus pandemic has affected cities, towns, and rural areas in every State, but people of color and lower-income communities have been disproportionately impacted by the virus. This American tragedy has also taken a toll on area food banks and other nutritional support organizations. Aluma Farm, Emmaus House, and Habisha, Inc., are just a few of the area resources available to residents of NPU-V. See the Community Resource Guide on page 5 for more information.



Above: The Beloved Community Church of Atlanta, Inc., serves meals on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 12-2 and 3:30-5 p.m.

(A Message from the Editors, continued from page 2)

The *Community Post*'s Editor was first introduced to your community by the staff of the Partnership for Southern Equity in 2018. During the past two years, she has talked with many of its residents and has come to appreciate the community's challenges, as well as the community's pride in its historic importance. The staff are interested in finding stories to enhance community networking and cohesion—we are not interested in taking political stances. In preparing for this first issue of *The Community Post*, 12 community residents were interviewed to identify their topics of interest, and we thank them for their participation in this project. This issue focuses on the topic of food justice, especially food deserts, as seen as relevant by residents of this community.

With hope for your community's wellbeing,

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MERCER
UNIVERSITY

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“We have food deserts in our cities.
We know that the distance you live
from a supplier of fresh produce
is one of the best predictors of your health.

And in the inner city,
people don't have grocery stores.

They have to get on a bus
and take a long ride
to get to a source of fresh produce.”

MICHAEL POLLAN, American Author and Journalist
Knight Professor of Science and Environmental Journalism
University of California Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism

Community Gardens Grow More Than Food

According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC), “efforts are underway to change Metro Atlanta’s food landscape and reverse the rate of diet-related illnesses plaguing poor and rural communities,” and gardens are a part of those efforts. The Atlanta Regional Commission reports more than 300 community gardens are maintained across the metro area. Some programs offer only space for gardening, while others provide education for successful gardening as well as recipes and instruction on preparing fresh fruits and vegetables (<https://investigations.ajc.com/fooddeserts/>).

The most obvious and important reason for gardening is to provide fresh fruits and vegetables for a healthy diet, but there are other benefits to shared gardening as well. In addition to meeting dietary needs, community gardens can have positive effects socially, psychologically, physically, and some say, spiritually.

NPU-V residents know that the challenges of living in a food desert can feel overwhelming and impossible to change, which leads to depression and feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. Growing our own food helps us regain some power and control over our health while helping the greater community.

Atlanta horticulturalist and landscape designer Matt Blodgett maintains that gardening helps us reconnect with the earth and nature’s positive energy. Working together encourages new relationships and a sense of shared accomplishment. Many scientists agree gardening makes us feel better because of a “friendly bacteria” found in soil. Numerous studies have indicated the microorganism known as *mycobacterium vaccae*



Top left: **Community Movement Builders (CMB)** wants “...to establish a permanent, multi-vendor farmer’s market that will serve poor and working-class Black communities.”

Top right: **Community gardens provide quality time activities for families.** Above: **Teen members of CMB are committed to cultivating and sharing locally grown foods.** Left: **Community gardens bring people together working toward the common good.**

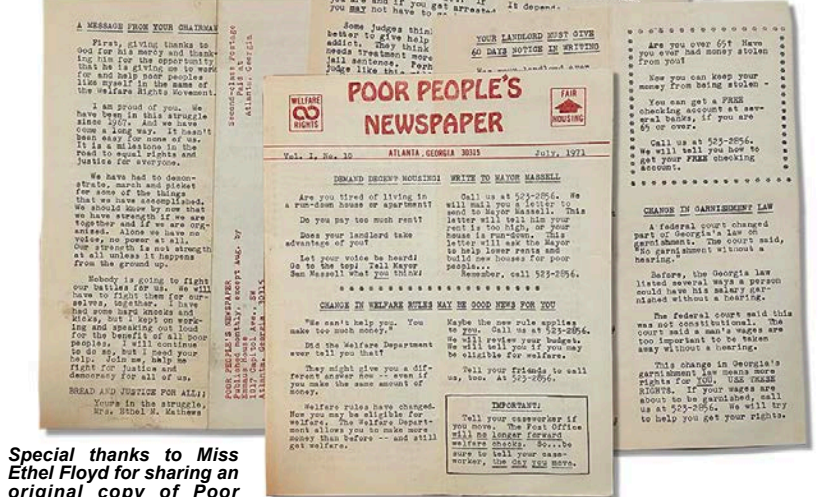
has been found to mirror the effects of some antidepressants by stimulating the production of serotonin – the chemical produced in the brain that makes us feel happy and relaxed.

Gardening is an activity enjoyed by people of all ages. A gardening project brings families, neighbors, and individuals together. Relationships form and strengthen as people work together for the common good. Community garden startup costs are A Maine-based nonprofit called SeedMoney provides grants and training for public food garden projects. The website has a colorful blog where partners can post updates about their work. For more information and to apply for funds, visit seedmoney.org.

In Atlanta’s Pittsburgh neighborhood, an organization called Community Movement Builders (CMB) “...is the care-taker of the Welch street community garden and a private garden on Windsor street.” Both projects are part of CMB’s Food Justice Programs. For additional information about this member-based collective, which has a mission “...rooted in Black love and equity,” visit the website: communitymovementbuilders.org.

Other noteworthy garden projects are being tended by individuals, groups, and organizations. Neighborhood Associations may provide more information (see the NPU-V Resource Guide on page 5).

When residents invest in a community garden and tend it with care, the project grows not only fruits and vegetables but friendships, hope, and pride in the community, turning a food desert into an oasis in the city.



Special thanks to Miss Ethel Floyd for sharing an original copy of **Poor People's Newspaper** from July 1971. Much has changed in the 50 years that followed the publication, but the need to stay connected and informed is just as important in 2021. We hope this inaugural issue of **The Community Post** provides informative, interesting, and useful information about NPU-V.