

BELOVED COMMUNITY AND HOPE

The people who walk on the sidewalks outside the fence surrounding our retirement community do not look like most of us who live inside. We live in a neighborhood of immigrants, mostly Latino with many undocumented and poor.

Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of Beloved Community, several of us set out to learn about the surrounding community. We wanted to do the right thing, to listen, to care, to share, to learn, and to build relationships. Intergenerational programs emerged one after another.

Our amazing discovery: hope happens . . .

- when we support a neighborhood organization asking a landlord to get rid of rats and provide lighting in dark places.
- when a mentor listens as a child who keeps dozing tells about having to sleep in the same bed with her older sister and the older sister's baby who cried all night.
- when young students on a field trip to the botanical garden experience the excitement of a scavenger hunt in the greenhouses filled with exotic plants.

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- when a fifth grader discovers his love for bird-watching at the wildlife preserve.
- when Latina moms bond together as they practice speaking English with seniors.
- when seventy- and eighty-year-olds stand up for funding after-school programs in poor neighborhoods at county council hearings.
- when young students try their hand at a new skill, using digital photography to capture the wonders of nature, and then see their best photos displayed on a wall at school.
- when high school students and eighty-year-olds engage in conversation on topics of interest week after week.
- when students are able to talk about bullying and hateful comments they experience.
- when we find new levels of meaning as we step out of our comfort zones.

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