

# Kingdom House The Monarch

Spring 2011

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When parents reach out to Kingdom House to see about enrolling their children in the organization's day care center they begin by meeting Pat Powell, the registrar of the program.

Powell works with Christine Cannon, Associate Executive Director at Kingdom House, and Day Care Director, Karen Blank-Ewell, to head up the organization's effort to provide high-quality care for local children.

The process of enrollment involves several steps, and Powell serves as a guide for parents working to place their children in the program.

"We start with a few things, including a physical, which involves immunization verification, dental records, and so on... once that checklist is complete, then the parent has to undergo an evaluation to determine eligibility," said Powell.

The process can be a little bit daunting for a parent who may already be in a place of difficulty in day-to-day life. Powell attempts to help folks navigate their way to the finish line, which is a place in the organization's different centers.

The infant center, which handles kids beginning at 6 weeks to two years of age, is staffed by approximately four instructors, who float on a schedule based on the needs of the center.

The pre-school program has several different classes, with each having two teachers on hand. Approximately 25 teachers are involved in the program, overall.

Powell brings a cheerful, but down-to-earth demeanor to her role.

"The most rewarding thing for me is seeing a parent get their child enrolled when they feel they have no other option," said Powell.

Meeting the needs of children, particularly when there is nowhere else to turn, is the main focus of the program, and this process starts at Powell's door.

She has seen it all, as a teacher and a registrar, and believes progress should be measured one child at a time, and one step at a time.  
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***Articles in this issue of The Monarch were written by Tom Bedwell***

***Photos submitted by Aida Gabitova***

## *Daycare (continued)*

“When a child moves from our center into kindergarten, or the next step in his or her life, I see the progress, and it feels good to know I’ve been a part of that,” said Powell.

While the day care program serves 94 children consistently, it is forced to turn away some 20-25 kids per year due to a lack of physical capacity, and increasing the ability of Kingdom House to handle more kids is Powell’s hope.

“We don’t want to turn away anyone,” said Powell.



Our Family Center program features a separate day care facility for children from 6 weeks to 10 years of age. While the program can be utilized for extended periods of time, it is considered a short-term, and perhaps emergency, option for stressed, at-risk families seeking childcare. Its primary focus is provision of free, short-term, respite childcare with assessment of needs and referral to resources within and beyond Kingdom House.

Through an ongoing commitment, the Family Center receives a generous amount of funding throughout the year from The Gathering United Methodist Church. Rather than taking away from the church’s internal fundraising, The Gathering’s financial involvement with Kingdom House has actually increased giving to the church. In the future, the Family Center would ideally like to use this funding to increase its hours, potentially to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



The facility is stocked with toys, and the floors have colorful, soft play areas for kids to sit and roll around on. There is a TV for presenting educational programs, and a large cabinet structure provides storage for items used in the facility.

Typically, three caregivers make up the staff on any given day, and up to ten children may be accommodated. Parents needing help are encouraged to call a week or so in advance because availability, usually, is tight.

On a recent visit to the facility, we found three ladies helping out, including Annie Abernathy, Leann Swain, and Marissa Sims. There was plenty to keep everyone busy, but the 3-1 child to caregiver ratio provides for lots of direct attention. Care is provided from 8:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., and the caregivers spend about 30-60 minutes, before and after, to clean up, prepare, and arrange for the next day.

Activities include playtime in the morning, reading and coloring, and trips to the gym to let the kids run around and have fun. Parties and holiday celebrations are held, for instance, during the Christmas season or on Valentine’s Day.

With such a broad range of ages involved in the program, caregivers often become involved in many aspects of the development of participating children, from potty training to help with education.

“Cody (a two year old little boy in the program) is just now learning potty training, and I’ve been helping out, after talking to his mom and making sure we are doing the same things to teach him,” said Sims.

While the program is often a stepping-stone for parents in short-term need, the personal care available is a big relief for families facing challenging circumstances.

**“To me Kingdom House is all about the kids– it is for the kids. It gives them a hope and a future. We encourage a lot of people from the office to go down there and get involved and get to see the kids in a more personal way. And I tell my people if you ever question why we support Kingdom House the way we do, I will take you down and I will show you the kids and if you have a heart you will understand why we support them the way we do.”**

***David LeMoine, Volunteer/Supporter  
(CHAN Healthcare Auditors)***



Kingdom House is the most invested member, at 80%, of the Near Southside Employment Coalition, which offers support to job-seeking clients in the south St. Louis area. Founded in 1983, the NSEC serves nearly 60 clients per month via a team, currently comprised of Ohala Ward, the executive director, and two volunteer assistants.

Job seekers reaching out to the NSEC undergo a three-step process, beginning with a consultation to determine the client's needs and abilities. The initial assessment performed during consultation attempts to connect the client with the proper resource, which may not be employment related.

If it is determined the client's primary need is employment, then the NSEC works to establish a plan for the client involving training and preparation for entering the job market. Training may consist of education, skills development, resume support and practice with interviewing techniques.

Job placement is the final step in the NSEC process, and this is performed via local resources including associations with private companies, and government organizations, as well as online job searches.

Ward says the role of Kingdom House in the NSEC program is critical, not just in terms of funding and operations, but also as an extension of support to clients.

For instance, if a client has a short-term need for food supplies, or clothing for an interview, Kingdom House



can meet these needs via their other service areas. Additionally, if childcare is required during a scheduled interview time, Kingdom House Family Services can provide

day care on short notice.

Ward has been with the NSEC for six years, and says she'd like to offer more services to clients, not just in terms of working with more individuals, but also in providing a higher level of support, such as more substantial computer training.

"Each of us works with about 10-15 people a week, and to increase that capability we need to add more volunteers, but we also need specialized staff who can improve the quality of service, so it's not just the number of people we can see, but the quality of help we provide to each client," said Ward.

***...regardless of age, helping a person on the path to employment often begins with helping lift self esteem.***

***-Ohala Ward***



The NSEC offers support to clients 16 years of age and older. Additionally, the NSEC provides specialized help with summer employment services, some of which are coordinated through Nestle Purina, who covers the salaries of summer internships for kids.

Ward says, regardless of age, helping a person on the path to employment often begins with helping lift self esteem.

"Many times, clients come in with their heads down, and they leave the initial consultation with their heads up, so while they may not have a job yet they feel empowered to enter the job market, which makes a big difference," said Ward.

*In our summer newsletter, we will provide an update on how the year is going for the NSEC, and we will tell some stories of success for coalition clients.*



Kingdom House  
Family Support 

# Food Pantry



Our Family Support Program helps clients via several dedicated service areas, including our food pantry and thrift store. While the thrift store is putting some exciting plans in place for growth, the food pantry has accomplished a significant overhaul of late, both in terms of facilities and inventory.

Andrea Dent manages the food pantry, and has been involved with the service for eight years. After overseeing her family's contribution of food and financial resources, Andrea brought her three boys down to help out several years ago, and her efforts have since spearheaded improvements in the program.



"It started out as an educational tool for my kids... I could bring them down during the summer months, when they were out of school, and they'd get involved and learn about volunteering, but after school resumed the staff would take it back over, and eventually I decided to try and maintain a dedicated role year-round," said Dent. The decision made a big impact on the pantry.

About two years ago Andrea headed up the *green bag* program, which reaches out to local churches, businesses and private groups to create a focus on food collection. The actual *color* of the bag acts as a visual reminder to participating organizations, and has been an important component of the

pantry's successful increase in food inventory on hand.

The pantry runs on donations only. In addition to local church and private support, food is collected regularly from Operation Food Search, the United Way and the Food Bank.



In order to meet current demand, the pantry needs to collect the equivalent of a large U-Haul truck, packed completely full with cans and other non-perishable food items, every two to three months. This translates into a purchase price of approximately \$8,000 per month.

"We put the number at about \$100,000 per year, and this is based on our process of weighing the food as it leaves the pantry, which we then reconcile as an accounting step," said Dent.

The pantry has doubled in size in the past year, after moving to a new space within Kingdom House. Food is organized into categories, and protein items, such as canned meats, consistently move fastest off the shelves.

"Vienna sausages, tuna, and canned chicken are always in high demand," said Dent, "we have to limit some of those items to one can per customer."

While some items are restricted, the rest of the experience has become much like a normal trip to the grocery store for pantry clients. A sign, with the words *Andrea's Market*, hangs outside the entrance to the space, and bright, orange-colored tables are set up for clients to use as they shop. Students from Webster University painted a collage on the walls outside the pantry, and all of these touches serve to warm the space and enrich the experience for clients.

"This is my passion... I love to help people, and when clients come in now they chat and relax, and I am not sure that makes a difference in their whole week, but for a moment, it does," said Dent.



*Our next Family Support article, in the summer newsletter, will profile the thrift store program, which has recently begun recruiting volunteers to step up its effort to improve, and grow, much as the food pantry has done.*

# Kingdom House Senior Companion Program

As the sponsor agency for the Senior Companion program, Kingdom House funds and supports this service, which offers volunteer-based companionship and personal assistance to frail, elderly, and possibly isolated seniors.

Nina Murphy is the program's director, and handles a staff of two, including Program Assistant Hope Sims and Field Coordinator Robin Mitchell.

Senior Companions matches volunteers, who are 55 years of age or older, with clients identified through local agencies, or direct contact from friends, neighbors, and families.



"We've got volunteers who go out and help families that are burned out, or seniors who are isolated, lonely, and needing a regular visit to help with getting out for a walk, or escort to a senior center, or just help opening the mail," said Murphy.

The program serves over 160 clients, currently, and this is accomplished through a network of approximately 45 volunteers. The average number of clients a volunteer will visit in a week is two, but some handle three. The volunteers typically spend about four hours at a time with each client, and they earn a small stipend, as well as training in the latest senior care concepts.

Kingdom House funds the Senior Companion program as part of its commitment to elder services. Additionally, Kingdom House provides administrative support, including accounting and payroll services.

In July 2010, Murphy's team moved from their office at Kingdom House to a new space at St. Vincent De Paul.

"That was significant," said Murphy, "we were kind of on top of each other, and the move gave us room to work on things like volunteer training, without interrupting the work at the Kingdom House office."

Murphy has added 10 volunteers since she joined the organization in late 2008, and she'd like to add 10-15 more over the next couple of years, if possible.

"We are certified to work in outlying counties, but we need to increase funding, and add volunteers to begin providing in-service support in those other areas," said Murphy.



Murphy considers this her second career, and she's accomplished a great deal in her short time with the program. Many years spent running programs with the Missouri Division of Aging have prepared her for the work she's doing now.

"I have a real passion for helping people, specifically with the goal of preventing institutionalization, but also in supporting the volunteers and building our team, it's something I really enjoy," said Murphy.

We look forward to providing more information on the Senior Companion program in future newsletters, including stories on volunteers, and the lives of the clients they touch.

**"Where things really changed for me was when I came to Kingdom House and spent some time volunteering there. When you walk through Kingdom House that's where you really see the impact they make in the community - from their day care center to serving the elderly and spending time with them. They instill values in the children they work with, things like personal responsibility and teaching good, ethical values. As I got more and more involved - the return to me emotionally is why I stay involved because it makes me feel fantastic. It is a pleasure to be involved with Kingdom House."**

*Steve Gross, Volunteer*

# Meet Our New Executive Director

## Scott Walker



After 15 years of service at Kingdom House, Scott Walker has taken over as the executive director for the organization. Walker began with Kingdom House as a member of the team putting together the annual golf tournament, which has become a mainstay of the organization's fund raising efforts.

After six years on the board of directors, Walker stepped off for a year, as per by-law requirements, and then re-joined, eventually taking on the role of board president for the last three years. In replacing former executive director Tom Sanders, Walker is stepping into a role he is familiar with given his experience on the Kingdom House board. He also brings knowledge to the new role based on his time as board president for Clayton Child Centers.

Most of Walker's background is in the corporate world. He spent over 20 years with Edison Brothers, and was director of stores for a couple of divisions. Walker says despite his business experience, his passion is for non-profit work and he hopes to combine the two in his new capacity at Kingdom House. "Really the big difference between the business world and the non-profit world is their funding sources, and the expectation gap between how a business runs and a non-profit runs is getting smaller and smaller all the time," said Walker.

For Walker, this means providing improved clarity to donors in terms of documenting outcomes against proposed initiatives. "Donors coming from the business world are accustomed to measuring results, and I believe my experience in that world will help Kingdom House be more accountable to its funding sources," said Walker.

This is not to say Walker intends to push the non-profit model to become bottom-line focused, but more of a move toward being a healthy organization, and paying attention to the results of efforts made to address specific challenges. "There are two big goals I am focused on this year. First, is improving our case management model, in which we hope to assign 100-150 clients to a social worker, who will help the client set goals and target outcomes in order to break the cycle of poverty, and second, we want to do a high school program in order to prevent kids from getting lost during their high school years due to the need for jobs and income, and to get these kids into college and mentor them through that time so they finish not only high school but also post-high school education," explained Walker.

Mentoring is something Walker intends to focus on by recruiting new volunteers to help kids tackle the tasks involved with taking basic, high-quality steps associated with maintaining an educational path. "This year begins the transformation of Kingdom House, and we are doing a pilot study of the case management program, and an evaluation of the needs, and successful examples of the high-school program, in order to be ready by the end of 2011 to set-up and launch these initiatives," said Walker.

*Stay tuned to this newsletter for notes from Mr. Walker on the progress of the transformation of Kingdom House, as the year proceeds.*



### Come join us for these events and ways to be involved at Kingdom House:

**Summer Camp at KH June 13 – August 5**

**Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, Pi Pizzeria in the CWE May 3 at 5:30 pm**

**Gospel Sing at KH May 20 at 6pm**

**Christmas in July – new gifts needed all month**

**Golf Tournament & Dinner Auction July 11, 2011 at the Country Club of St. Albans**

<http://www.kingdomhouse.org/giving.php>

*Partner with us in furthering the mission of Kingdom House.*