

Ice rink transforms Crompton Park to Winter Wonderland

By Hannah Kurman
Crompton Park, nestled in the Green Island neighborhood, has been filled with activity this winter. On November 21st, the Rink Raisers—consisting of Carpenter’s Union 107, community volunteers, and neighborhood residents—built an ice rink on the park’s tennis court to create an outdoors community center for the winter season.



chase equipment to maintain the ice, such as a manually-operated ice rink surfer, aka “Zamboni.” Pernet has given away donated, gently-used ice skates to children and adults who wish to use the rink. Hockey sticks are also available.

The Rink Raisers using the brand new “Zamboni” to maintain the ice. Photo by Paulette Lacoste.

The ice rink “involves the neighborhood in creating a public, outdoor community space” that residents can call their own and take pride in, according to Pernet’s Family and Community Development Director, Paulette Lacoste. The benefit to the community is two-fold: residents participate in the process of creating the rink and enjoy the fruit of their labor.

The Canal District Alliance donated money to pur-

sponsored by Pernet, with major support from Carpenters Local 107, Canal District Alliance, Rotary International, Friends of Mike Germain, Wings Over Worcester, Nice Rink, Fairview Farm and Worcester Fire Department.

To get involved or for more information call Pernet at (508)77-1228.

Pernet: We’re (still) all about babies

By Marcy Boucher, 2008 Summer Intern from UMass Medical School, currently a third year medical student

On a Tuesday morning with the temperature already over 75 degrees, Paula Welch RN walks to her minivan to start her daily home visits, “I hope you don’t mind the AC blasting” she says with a smile. Paula is Pernet’s maternal-child nurse. It’s her job to visit about 25 families, on a weekly basis, to see how mom and new baby are getting along. Paula tries to cool herself in her car as she is about to meet mothers and babies in scorching apartments that often lack even a single fan. The mother at her first home visit is trying to find relief from the unbearable heat by opening windows and placing cool cloths on her baby’s head. Despite the miserable temperature, Paula is greeted with a smile and instant conversation.



Paula Welch with twin boys, Ezequiel and Niomar, and the mother, Crystal.. Photo: Paulette Lacoste.

Pernet’s maternal-child program is a breath of fresh air to families, in a healthcare system that seems to be largely run by insurance companies, consisting of overburdened physicians, and lacking adequate patient resources. Home visits seem to be a thing of the past but not at Pernet, where they make up 100% of the maternal-child visits. There is no better way for

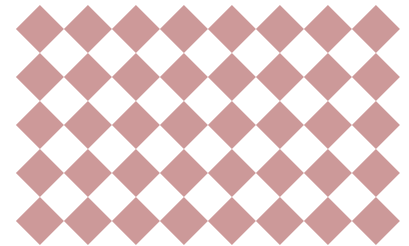
Despite economic downturn, Holiday Program exceeds expectations

The Holiday Program, which includes Thanksgiving and Christmas, is an annual tradition at Pernet. Preparations for the holiday season began in October with the help of both volunteers and staff.

The program is for the clients of Pernet, allowing workers to form relationships with the families they serve.

Lisa Taylor, a Clark student and Commonwealth Corps member, was the Holiday Program intern.

John McCabe, a long-time friend of Pernet and the President of the Board of Directors, started out as a volunteer for the holiday program before becoming an important component of the program—it’s organizer.



Holiday Program by the numbers:

Thanksgiving

- 61 churches. Businesses, schools and individuals...
- donated 14,566 pounds of food...
- including 170 turkeys...
- to over 300 families

Christmas

- 68 churches and individuals...
- donated over 1,300 gifts...
- given to 335 families

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All about babies, continued

an organization to understand the big picture of a family's situation then when families welcome Pernet's staff into their home. Paula visits mothers



that are expecting a baby, or have recently delivered. She answers questions, checks the health of the baby, and makes referrals when necessary.

The program is preventative medicine at its best.

Paula says that a big part of her role is simply "telling (the mothers) that they are doing a good job." Referrals come from Saint Vincent Hospital,

UMass Memorial, and other surrounding health clinics and private doctor's offices. Women are usually referred because someone recognizes that they have some social or mental health issues. Many of the women that Paula sees are young, first time mothers that can use extra guidance. Bringing home a child for the first time can be a stressful situation without social supports. Paula says, "Families have a tendency to come undone" without support. In a city that has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the state, the maternal-child program is well needed throughout Worcester.

The initial visit consists of obtaining background information about the mother and child, taking their "vitals" and weighing the baby. Thereafter, Paula tries to meet with the family on a weekly basis for the first two months of the baby's life.

During this time she monitors weight gain to make sure baby is thriving, takes the baby's

vitals and head measurements, and has well-teaching visits with the mom.

"People want to know how to do the basics. I get questions about sponge baths and feeding as well as if something is serious enough to call a doctor."

Home visits seem to be a thing of the past but not at Pernet, where they make up 100% of the maternal-child visits.

Families trust the maternal-child program. The program offers health-care in the comfort of one's own home to mothers and children who may not otherwise receive it postpartum.

The word seems to be spreading through the community about the maternal-child program. Paula just received a new client who was told about the program by her friend who used it and thought it was really great. The feeling seems to be mutual. Paula says "You really get attached to these families."

Green Island Gardens beautifies neighborhood

By Emily Barnett and Hannah Kurman



Christian Ramos, Orianna Smith and Isaac Herrera of the summer youth employment. Photo by Emily Barnett.

herbs across the street from Pernet is not enough for the beautifiers of the neighborhood to be content with. The Green Island Garden is hoping to expand the garden into other areas of the community and to increase the amount of landscaping in the neighborhood. One proposal is to create a butterfly garden in the triangle at Brosnihan Square, which would include specific plants and flowers that attract different types of butterflies.

2009 was an excellent year for the Green Island Garden. However, 2010 will be even better.

A narrow plot of vegetables and

The Green Island Garden, organized by youth organizer Emily Barnett, is a program to provide youth in the Green Island/Canal District neighborhood a summer job while promoting local gardening in the community.

The mission of the Green Island Garden is to beautify the retail district and residential area, allowing neighborhood businesses and residents to take pride in their community by engaging the community in gardening.

What is grown in the garden is distributed through Pernet's food pantry.



Leadership Training Academy creates neighborhood leaders

By Hannah Kurman

Many neighborhood centers hold leadership trainings. What makes Pernet's foray into leadership training different is an experiment with collaboration. The most recent leadership training academy, held in the fall of 2009, was a collaboration between Pernet, South Worcester Neighborhood Improvement Corporation, and Oak Hill CDC. Fourteen participants from the three neighborhoods learned about grassroots community organizing skills, pledging to take long-term action to improve and revitalize their neighborhood.

One way of measuring the success of the trainings is by "listening to the participants and watching what

happens after," such as on-going actions and involvement in the community, according to Sister Connie Charette, a Senior Aide for Pernet's Family and Community Development



Members of Green Island Residents and Friends: Rick Powers, Sister Connie Charette, intern Hannah Fine, Hannah Kurman, Kathy Watters, and Kristin Herrington gathered at the Hotel Vernon for a meeting.

program, who was involved in planning both the spring and fall trainings. "Success is a person growing in confidence... developing and taking action," such as when participants

spoke at the Community Development Block Grant meeting and attended the Mayor of Worcester's inauguration.

"The Academy prepared me to be a leader in my community by showing and telling me more characteristics of being a leader in our community,

also by giving me more ideas on how to take action and talk to people not only in our neighborhood, but people in the government that can help us make a change in our neighborhood," wrote Paola Solano, a teenager in the Green Island community, in an evaluation of the most recent training.

Participants from the Green Island neighborhood decided to form the Green Island Residents and Friends, inspired by what they learned at the training and devoted to taking action to revitalize the neighborhood.

"Success is a person growing in confidence... developing and taking action."

Pernet Community Computer Lab up and running

In an increasingly technological world, computers have become an integral part of the American way of life. Computers are a necessary tool for school and many jobs.

Six computers are now available for public use at the Pernet Community Computer Lab, located on the first floor of the Early Intervention building, 243 Millbury St. Each computer

runs Windows XP, has Microsoft Office, several computer games, Internet access, and is networked to a printer.

One asset of the computer lab is a program called "Professor Teaches," which shows step-by-step instructions on how to use a computer and Microsoft Office.

The revived computer lab was organized by Samantha Blank, a 2009 sum-

mer intern, and upgraded. IT volunteer Matthew Caranci upgraded and maintained the lab.

The computer lab hours are in the afternoon, Monday through Friday from 1 until 5 pm, with a Spanish speaking computer tutor on Tuesdays from 5 until 7pm.

To volunteer or access the computer lab, call Pernet at (508) 755-1228.



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Supported by the United Way of Central Massachusetts, Partners in Charity, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Children and Families, AmeriCorps, Commonwealth Corps, and Senior Service America Corps.

Volunteers are the life-blood of Pernet



Volunteers provide much-needed support to the services and operations at Pernet, including:

- helping out at the food pantry
- being a computer lab monitor
- working with neighborhood youth in the homework club and the after school program
- Green Island Gardens
- child care for parenting groups
- office and administrative support
- Internships
- Senior Aides, AmeriCorps and Commonwealth Corps

Interested in volunteering?
Contact Keefe Laporte at
(508) 755-1228