

HEARD
- on the -
EAST
SIDE

*Stories from Macon's
First Neighborhood*

Vol. 1

A Heartfelt Thank you to the Following:

The incredible neighbors who
entrusted us with their stories,
hopes, dreams, gifts, and time!

MERCER

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CENTENARY
CHURCH

Welcome to the East Side.

Heard on the East Side captures a moment and a movement. This book is the result of the 2015 Roving Listeners' journey. When we went out into the community, we thought, "Wow! There are so many gifted people that live in this amazing, historic area!"

In this neighborhood there are caregivers and cooks, artists and pastors, churches and historic homes, friends and acquaintances. The stories and gifts are just begging to be discovered, shared, and put into action. This book begs the question, what if we scratched just below the surface of what we know about each other to truly unlock the gifts and capacities of a neighborhood?

So are you a resident? Read on and get to know your neighbors. Are you looking to move to this neighborhood? This book should seal the deal. Are you from around the corner? Check out what's going on as we explore what was "Heard on the East Side" in the summer of 2015.

Map of

FORT HAWKINS

Neighborhood

19

Church Street

6

Coliseum Drive

Clinton



to I75 North



Dorothy Allen

Plumtree Street

"It wasn't always like this," recalls Dorothy Allen when referring to all the blight in the neighborhood. She has been in Macon for about 16 years. She loves the quietness but what used to be decent housing now is just an empty shell.

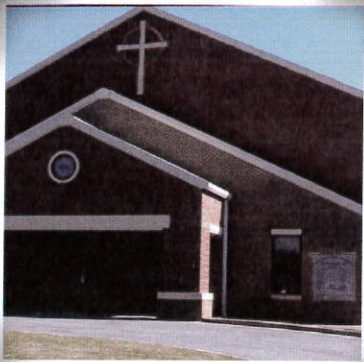
"I would tear down the old ones and build new ones" says Dorothy when asked about what to do with the abandoned houses. "Put the right folks in it, not people who will tear it back up."

According to her, what is missing is a state of trust between the neighbors.

"Have the neighbors get to know each other" says Dorothy. "You can't get too close to everybody but try to know our neighbors and we can work together." One of the groups she feels like she could have the most impact with in her neighborhood is young people. She would "sit them down and let them know that I care and that somebody loves them. They think the whole world is against them, but it's not." That is not the only thing Dorothy could help with. "I'll teach them how to cook" she says. "I did 16 years of volunteering in nutrition in high schools."

**"...try to know
our neighbors
and we can work
together."**





Church Street

New Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church

On September 15, 1978, at the home of Grover and Marva Amos, a group of Christian believers gathered. In this meeting opinions were heard regarding feelings of those present about their continued membership at the New Pleasant Grove Baptist Church on Maynard Street.

Upon learning that the pastor of New Pleasant Grove, Rev. Ronald E. Terry, Sr., had decided to resign his pastorate, the group knowing of his integrity, scholarship, eloquence, Christian tenets and his dedicated and productive leadership, asked him to remain in Macon and serve as their leader. He accepted the challenge. And so a new church was born of faith and on a philosophy that says a church should be geared toward a program for all members, not for a small segment of the congregation. Another of its founding principles was simply that

worshippers should be able to serve God in peace and harmony. In October of 1978, the infant New Fellowship Baptist Church held its first worship service in the auditorium of Sunset Nursery Kindergarten, in East Macon. The church was officially chartered The New Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, Incorporated, a corporation of the State of Georgia, on May 9, 1979. In late October, 1979, New Fellowship purchased the formerly known Eastside Baptist Church, 475 Church Street, and moved in by November.

The legacy of service continues today as the New Fellowship Baptist Church takes part in the revitalization of its neighborhood through the Mill Hill process. "This church's primary mission is to share the good news of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and provide a Christian atmosphere through fellowship, friendship and service to our fellow man in this community," said Rev. Ronald Terry.

Maxine Glover



Passions in life are sometimes hard to find, but for Maxine Glover, hers is simple to identify: children.

"I love working with the children," Glover said. "That's why I stayed in the community so long: because of the children. I want to make a difference and help others."

Maxine moved to the Fort Hill area 18 years ago. She was originally from the "south side" of Macon. She has since put a lot of time into the lives of the children in the Fort Hill area. "I work with the school system, I work with the kids, I mentor the kids, I tutor the kids," Maxine said. She employs an open door policy for the kids in the neighborhood. "The kids are still a priority to me. They can knock

on the door anytime and I'm available," she said.

Maxine is a former assistant teacher at Heard Elementary who has now changed careers to become an advocate. She is also involved with the Boys and Girls club. She would one day like to run one of her own, or anything that could help the kids. "I would love to have my own Boys and Girls Club, my own group home, my own anything with the children. My own school! My own dancing class. My own everything when it comes to the children."

If money wasn't an object, Maxine would "adopt all the children" and provide for them, calling that her "dream".

**"[The kids] can
knock on the door
anytime..."**



"I've had some difficult days; you'd be surprised. But I just keep going."

Bobby Lee Dawson Sr. is a Macon local, born and raised not far from where he lives now. But he spent much of his adulthood moving around and has lived in many different places. From a young age, Mr. Dawson recognized something special about Macon. "There's just something about Macon a lot of people don't realize... when people come here, they stay here a while," he asserts. "And I been watching that ever since I was old enough to watch anything... you see there's something about this city." When asked about his many travels, Mr. Dawson said, "I done been all around, but when I got back here, it felt like home," and this love for Macon is

evident in his involvement and encouragement for the community.

Mr. Dawson is passionate about both his church and his music and has seen these two intersect many times in his life. However, he has also seen his fair share of adversity. He began his work young and many discouraged him. "I've had some difficult days; you'd be surprised, but I just keep going," he remarks. "Anybody that come in this world and live and die and don't have any [difficult days], there's something wrong." But despite his trials he consistently encourages his son and affirms the importance of hard work and dedication.

Bobby Lee Dawson,
Applewood Street **Sr.**



Fort Hill Street

Leola Rhoden

Leola Rhoden loves to upholster furniture and sew clothing when she can. "I refinish and strip wood furniture," she said. "I used to sew a lot, but I discovered that I can't sew as well. My hands will hurt."

Leola believes that her purpose in life is to encourage those around her. "I know my purpose," she said. "My purpose in life is in the highways and the byways... people that I meet- I am to tell them what I know, what my experiences are and what I did. Somebody's got to go out there and reach those people. So that's what I do."

Currently, Leola has neuropathy but does not

allow it to greatly affect her. "I'm not a quitter. I'm a fighter," she said. She identifies one of her primary gifts as biblical knowledge, having studied scriptures for over 40 years.

"I want to see people who want something out of life - want a beautiful neighborhood, want an education and to see Macon make it possible for them to have it," Leola shared.

Leola also focuses on encouraging people around her and helping them find what they are most passionate about in life. "Whatever your environment or your surroundings, you should want it to be beautiful," she said. "Get up and do something. You can do something." This is her purpose to help others find their purpose.

**"I'm not a quitter.
I'm a fighter."**

Linda King



Linda King, a Maconite since her birth in 1958, is one of the many happy residents on Applewood Street. A loving and caring member of the community, Linda is a bright light that showcases the warm hearts that inhabit her neighborhood.

These traits and more come from the influence of her grandmother. "My grandmother was a wise person in her age," she said. "She always taught me to give people a chance don't just judge them because of what they look like or the lifestyle they have because you know we are all not perfect"

Linda is passionate about "children, their safety and the well-being of the elderly and mostly children and how they are cared for." Linda has always cared for those around her, having worked

for years as a Certified Nursing Assistant. That care extends to her elderly neighbors, saying that if there was anything that needed to be done in the neighborhood, it was to check in on the elderly in the hottest months and make sure they were ok.

When asked what she would like to teach to more residents in her community, she responded by saying she would like to teach someone to, "mostly love and care for one another. This is the biggest problem we have in this world, especially in the young children- there is not enough love being taught you know it's always self and not the other man."

Amantha Jackson

Main Street

Amantha Jackson has only lived in Macon for nine years, but her six children and fourteen grandchildren all reside here. Amantha loves kids and wants to see more opportunities presented to them. She believes the construction of a park, swimming pool, and basketball court would greatly improve the lives of the children in the neighborhood.

Amantha knows the addition of these facilities would eliminate violence and promote peace amongst the children. Aside from her love for kids, she also has a caring heart. Amidst her own trials, Amantha helped a

homeless man get on his feet by feeding him and washing his clothes. Her children call her blessed and praise her for her gift of hospitality and love, but she calls her children her greatest gifts.

She has fallen in love with her neighbors. She says they helped her and her family when they needed it most. According to Amantha, she would not be here if it was not for the help of Rev. Finney and her church family at St. Peter Missionary Baptist Church. It is the community surrounding her that inspires her to develop friendships every day.

She has fallen in love with her neighbors.





Maynard Street

Virginia Jordan

Virginia Jordan, a resident of Maynard Street, has lived through experiences that have given her wisdom many need to hear.

"When you start losing your siblings, your mother and father all gone...it does something to you," said Virginia. These harsh experiences allowed her to know more about life and its short length.

As a result, she wants to talk to younger people in her community and "tell them what I've been through, tell them what I know," Virginia explains. "I feel like I can communicate with anybody."

The loss of a loved one can be difficult for many, however, she

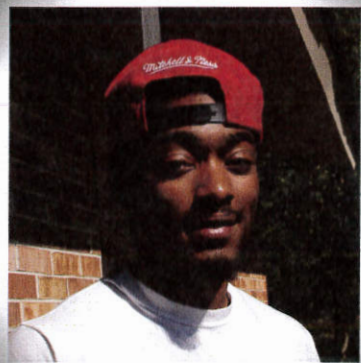
said, "I learned that I wasn't afraid as much as I thought." One of her favorite ways to pass the time, singing, helps with the tough times.

This wisdom that she has about the process of grieving could help people deal with a situation like this. She used this wisdom to help other grieving families by washing dishes, washing clothes or anything else that needed to be done while families were dealing with the loss of a loved one. "I enjoyed doing it," she shared.

Virginia has hope that her community will improve and believes that "this community, and any community, can be anything it wants to be," she said.

Leaf Street

Warren Williams



Warren Williams, a young man originally from New Jersey, has lived on Leaf Street for the past three years. He's a very active member of the community, involved with Jehovah's Witness, kickboxing, music, and drawing.

Warren is a talented guitarist and pianist, and writes some of his own music. He lists his absolute passion as music, specifically making beats. On top of his musical gifts, he is also a very keen artist. He would like to be able to share his talent with the community, both by teaching others how to draw and by tattooing others, so that they may carry his artwork with them wherever they go.

He went through a difficult time when his son died. From that time

in his life, he learned that he is not in control of everything - that we can't fix all of the world's problems.

But still, when asked what he would change about the community, Warren said that he would like to see everyone in the community come together and talk to one another more.

He hates bullying, especially when someone messes with someone who can't defend themselves. He wants to see everyone not take love for granted.



"Just learn from your life experiences."

Kids. When you ask Joyce Sackor what she is most passionate about, that's what she will tell you. Whenever the Roving Listeners passed by her house, there would always be several kids outside, playing and practicing dance routines with Joyce nearby having fun alongside them.

Joyce, who was originally born in Fort Valley has been living in Macon for 10 years now. She said she likes Macon, "I like the neighborhood...I like the kids."

She gets the chance to work with kids in the Motivating

Youth Foundation, showing unswerving dedication to her neighborhood and larger community.

If she could do something to change the community, it would be to get more help for the parents. "Some don't have the money for certain things and the kids want to do certain things." Her wise advice to those younger than her is to "keep eyes on your kids. Don't be afraid to be honest with them."

As a mother herself, Joyce says to other parents, "Just learn from your life experiences and be better than your parents were."

Joyce Sackor
Main Street

Main Street

John Darby



“Be happy with what you have. Do the best with what you got.” These are words of wisdom from East Macon resident, John Darby.

A Michigan native, John shared that though he has not been in the area long, he enjoys living there because of the peace and quiet. He also enjoys fishing.

When asked what project he would bring to Macon, he answered a recreation center for the kids in the area. John enjoys mentoring

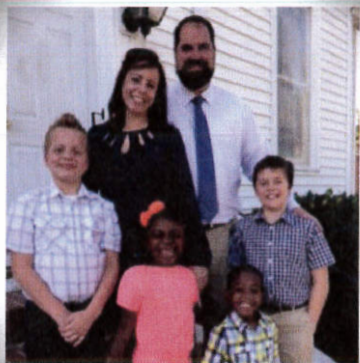
the kids in the neighborhood. He says he tries to keep the peace in the neighborhood and a recreation center would keep the kids off the streets and out of trouble.

When asked what he would like to teach others to do, he said “Just get along with everybody. Can’t everybody get along? Treat a man like you wanted to be treated there would seem to be no problem. That’s what I’d go for anymore. You can’t read that negative stuff. If you are talking negative, get away from me, I don’t want to hear from you. Be positive about everything and it’d be a better world.”

“Be positive about everything and it’d be a better world.”

Church Street

Jill Thomley



Jill Thomley, originally from Indiana, has lived with her husband, Jason, on Church Street for about two years. She enjoys living on Church Street because of the sense of community she feels and she believes that all the children who play outside brighten the neighborhood.

Jill's passions are "The Lord and family, and helping people feel connected to family." She is very involved with Awakening Fires and The Redeeming Hope Center, where she counsels church members and brings them closer to each other and to God. The Hope Center is next door to her property and was

confounded by her husband. Jill has a lot to offer her community, as she is a social worker and "can help figure out how to connect [people] to resources" within the community.

She also helps with summer camps, makes treats, and does arts and crafts with the children around her neighborhood.

She shared with us that "we are working on the fruits of the spirit as a family to learn love and compassion."

"...all the children who play outside brighten the neighborhood."

Meet the 2015 Macon Rowing Listeners



Beverly Banks



Deonna Belcher



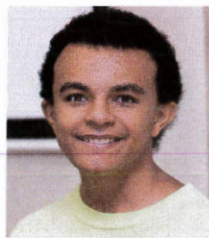
Pamela Braxton



Xavier Carswell



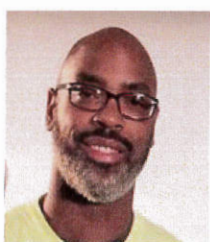
Sam Claussen



Nick Crawford



Leah Davis



Anthony Guy



Nakia Guy



Stacey Harwell-Dye



Zikeal Howard



Diana Mullen



Peggy Mullen



Davida Poole



Jimmie Reeze



Renoalda Scott



Shelva Snell



Laura Sugg



Cory Williams

Who are the Macon Roving Listeners?

The Macon Roving Listeners started in 2012 as a way of tapping into the vast resources of our community's residents. In fall of 2011, a group from Centenary United Methodist Church traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana to meet with De'Amon Harges and Mike Mather of Broadway United Methodist Church on a learning journey sponsored by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD).

"When we got there, it was like seeing a vision of the future and

having x-ray vision all at the same time," Rev. Stacey Harwell-Dye remembers. "This church felt like it was 20 years ahead of us in its revitalization time line and De'Amon's relationship with the community around the church is like where we wanted to be. He knew things about neighbors nobody would have known by just looking because he stopped to ask questions."

Fast-forward to the summer of 2012 and, inspired by De'Amon and his original Roving Listeners, Centenary sought out partnerships to build the first version of Macon Roving Listening. We started in Beall's Hill and worked our way north.

In 2015, because of the initiation of the Mill Hill Arts Village, the listeners were given a grant by the Knight Fund, a component fund at the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, and



GCDD to work on a community asset map of the neighbors that live in the surrounding area. What you hold in your hand is one way that community asset map has taken shape.



At our heart, we believe that every person has a gift and that the best communities are ones where everyone can share their gifts. This includes persons that have developmental disabilities, like half of our workers and volunteers. In fact, part of our core commitment through our Real Communities work at GCDD is that we have persons with developmental disabilities involved at every level of decision making. We feel strongly that knowing and integrating ALL persons into the revitalization of a community is of critical importance.

So how does this happen? We start by reaching out and forming partnerships in the area. In 2015 we were proud to partner with New Fellowship Baptist Church, Phillips

Performing Arts Center, Macon Arts Alliance, and Regency Hospital. Once we form these partnerships, we work to find folks to hire. The teams we send out to listen are made of two adults and two youth. After we do some training, the teams start to interview residents. We go door to door asking folks if we can spend some time learning about their gifts. We want to know what folks are good at and the dreams they have for their communities.

Our goal is to be the catalyst for community change. That community change comes when people in the neighborhood come together around areas of common interest, realizing that all people have a gift. The best communities are ones where those gifts are shared.

Mill Hill: East Macon Arts Village

Mill Hill: East Macon Arts Village is an asset-based, creative placemaking initiative led by neighborhood residents, Macon Arts Alliance (MAA), Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority (UDA), and many community stakeholders and partners. The Mill Hill initiative is a key component of the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority's Urban Core Master Plan (called the Macon Action Plan, or MAP).

There are four major aspects to the development of Mill Hill: East Macon Arts Village:

1. The former Bibb Mill Auditorium, constructed in 1920, is being restored to become the Mill Hill Community Arts Center. The center will be a place for artists, residents, and visitors to build and strengthen community.
2. Vacant mill houses on the two streets immediately behind the Arts Center are being renovated to become artist live/work housing. This investment will reduce blight and create a hub for creative activity in Mill Hill.
3. Clinton Street Gateway Park is a new, neighborhood park that is currently being developed by the UDA and partners. This new amenity will be a shared space for residents, artists and visitors that strategically connects the arts village and neighborhood to adjacent tourism assets the Macon Convention Center and the Ocmulgee National Monument.
4. A neighborhood and cultural district planning process to engage residents and artists as collaborators in creating a shared vision for the future. Creating a plan together ensures that all voices are recognized and included in the decision-making process.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING is a recognized economic and community development strategy where partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. It builds on distinctive local character and story. It is a long-term, partnership-based strategy that results from a commitment to social equity and a meaningful life for residents as well as an interesting experience for visitors and a stronger economic base for the area.

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT builds a community from the "inside out." It is a strategy that considers local assets as the primary building block of equitable and sustainable community development. Building on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions, asset-based community development draws upon existing community assets to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.



