

EWG

EAST WINTER GARDEN
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

April 30, 2014
NEWSLETTER

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For questions, upcoming dates, or to begin receiving participant list updates contact Megan England at mengland@st.lukes.org.

Website

Visit the [Community Transformation webpage](#) to see video presentations, read about our transformation metrics, and to find ways to get involved.

Letter from Lynette



We are excited to share this first quarterly East Winter Garden Mission E-News with you. In this issue, you will get an update on what has been happening in our East Winter Garden Community Initiative over the last several months and how you can get involved and support this amazing endeavor.

After ten months (June 2012 to March 2013) of prayer, research, community listening events, surveys, and interviews with residents and elected officials, it was determined and then

approved at the April 2013 St. Luke's Church Council meeting that East Winter Garden was a good fit for our community transformation initiative. It met the criteria of having residents and organizations in East Winter Garden welcome our partnership. In our congregational survey our members also committed to serve all ages in this area during the day, on weeknights and on weekends.

Starting in the early summer and through the rest of 2013, our focus in East Winter Garden was to build relationships and to discover what and who was already working in the area. We focused on discovery, preparation, training, and presence. It was clear that East Winter Garden is full of assets and you will read about some of those assets in this issue. Now our goal is to have a St. Luke's presence in the neighborhood on a consistent basis so that trust and understanding can grow.

[Click to read the full article.](#)

The Circles Campaign

Our First Year

This has been an exciting year as we have developed the Circles Campaign with St. Luke's as the Lead Organization in Orange County. This time last year Mariam Mengistie, Director of Orlando Missions, Beth Witten, Co-Leader of Circles Guiding Coalition, and I were just returning from the Circles Hands-On Training, looking forward to



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I am relatively new to the St. Luke's family and I am so excited to be a part of this community. I began my involvement with St. Luke's during the summer of 2012 as an intern. After finishing up a Master of Social Work degree at Florida State University, I am excited about putting into real-life practice what I have learned in social welfare and social policy.

[Click to read more about Adam's experiences!](#)



building Circles in Orange County from the ground up. Since then, we've had quite the journey! In case you don't know, The Circles Campaign is a research-based model that partners lower-income families (Circle Leaders) with two to three upper or middle income families (Circle Allies) who agree to become friends and to work toward transformation together.



[Click to read the full article](#)

The next Circles information meeting is Thursday, May 8 from 6:30p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in Building B Room 201. Anyone interested in being involved in any capacity is welcome to attend.

Connecting in East Winter Garden

Maxey Elementary Carnival and Teach-In

Maxey Elementary School is a relatively small school with only 17 classrooms that serves many of the families with elementary school aged children in East Winter Garden. Seven St. Lukers have begun volunteering at the School. In addition to our daily presence, St. Luke's has been invited to participate in two school events, a carnival and the county-wide Teach-in, in which a number of professionals were given the opportunity to talk to a classroom of students about their profession giving children a glimpse of what career options exist. The Carnival was organized by the staff of Maxey Elementary who invited St. Luke's to set up a few fun stations. The School of the Arts brought a spin art machine that was a big hit with the students. Overall, the Carnival was a clear sign that St. Luke's is gaining trust and forming relationships all over East Winter Garden.

A Very Maxey Christmas

Christmas was a spectacular success in East Winter Garden! Since June of 2013, the St. Luke's mission team along with a few well-trained volunteers has been assisting with a meal service and an after school tutoring program, both of which are housed in the Maxey Community Center. Through the relationships built from this commitment to service, St. Luke's was invited to help plan A Very Maxey Christmas. This event turned out to be a great demonstration of what we have been learning from all of our trainings! Families from both communities, St. Luke's and Winter Garden, sat down to share dinner together.

"My favorite moment in general was seeing the members of both communities sitting with each other at the tables and interacting with one another. Whether it was the kids playing together or the adults engaged in conversation or Janice holding a baby so that the mother could go through the food line or cleaning up together, it was heartwarming to experience."

Pam Hultberg, Director, St. Luke's School of the Arts

Love Week and Friday Fun Night



As part of our effort to come alongside and support existing organizations in East Winter Garden, a team of trained volunteers was able to take part in *Love Week* at Zander's Park over the summer. For this week of kid-friendly fun, St. Luke's was invited to collaborate with several churches and organizations who have been working together for a couple of years to serve children in East Winter Garden. Some of those churches are: Finding the Lost Sheep (located in East Winter Garden) and NEXT Church, Westpointe, and The Crossings. Activities included arts and crafts, field day games, praise and worship, and dinner sponsored by a different church each night. Our very own Change the World mission campers and their families cooked and then served one of the weeknight meals. Rain or shine *Love Week* turned out to be an enjoyable experience for all involved. In order to keep this experience going all year long, Westpointe and Finding the Lost Sheep also provide *Friday Fun Night*, held one Friday a month at Zander's Park in East Winter Garden. At these events children get to create a craft that relates with a specific bible lesson. St. Luke's East Winter Garden team has helped by providing the arts and crafts projects and playing with the children. Megan England says it best,

"Events like Love Week and Friday Fun Night truly show just how close the community of East Winter Garden is. It is a great blessing to be a part of such an awesome experience!"

East Winter Garden Church Visits

For the past few months, a small group of trained St. Lukers have joined in worship, one Sunday a month, with local East Winter Garden Churches. We have identified more than 15 churches within the boundaries of East Winter Garden and have managed to visit 3 of these churches. Our goal is to participate in at least one worship service in East Winter Garden every month. We have already learned so much! Ray and Betty Wilson, St Luke's members, describe their experience,

"At St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, we were privileged to hear a newly ordained minister, who grew up in that church, deliver her first sermon and it was wonderful. Our own Antony Larry was asked to sing on the spur of the moment and his "How Great Thou Art", sung without accompaniment in the middle isle of the sanctuary was the most beautiful we have ever heard. At Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, we were joined by one of their members who helped us build Habitat homes in the area. He—Larry—is a special needs adult who shows up at our sites and helps do anything he's asked to do. He has lots and lots of relatives in this church to whom he introduced us and pointed others out. The service was 2 1/2 hours long!"

The community out in Winter Garden is so interconnected, and through our church visits we are meeting more and more people

from the neighborhood.

Community Garden



It seems like there is so much talk about going green lately. Well, there is no better way to go green than to truly get back to our roots by planting seeds, growing produce, weeding garden beds, and digging up sweet potatoes. These are just a few of the everyday tasks at the Winter Garden Community Garden. The Garden was born in 2009 from an effort to revitalize an underutilized piece of land and is now home to 110 garden plots. The City of Winter Garden and community sponsors provided the land, as well as the irrigation lines, compost and waste collection. The community garden provides a place for people to learn about gardening, share vegetables that are organic and affordable, build cross-cultural friendships, and establish a stronger sense of community.



Alongside St. Luke's member Becky Garner who also serves as the Master Gardener, our team has helped plant beans, mustard greens, onions and even more delicious produce in the charity plots out in the garden. Much of the food that is grown in these charity plots will be donated to local food distribution programs. We look forward to working hand in hand with the Community Garden Board and the garden members to help them realize their dreams for the Community Garden; perhaps, together we will be able to supply affordable and healthy food to our neighbors in East Winter Garden in the near future since fresh produce is not readily accessible.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration



Every year Winter Garden celebrates Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day with a parade that marches through the heart of East Winter Garden. This January we had about fifteen St. Lukers who participated in the march and celebration. St. Luke's also hosted a "Dreams" booth at the MLK Day celebration. Event guests were invited to draw, write, or otherwise express their dreams for their neighborhood. The result was two 4x8 boards packed with pictures, words, paragraphs and scribbles expressing dreams for the community. In addition to this dreams project, the celebration had us dancing in the street, playing in the bounce house, getting our faces painted and connecting with countless families in East Winter Garden. Events like these help us to build stronger ties in East Winter Garden, support the local community leaders, and promote the Circles Campaign.

