



Churches Improving Communities 2015 Annual Report

ImprovingNJ.org

ChurchesImprovingCommunities@gmail.com

Note from the President

What a year for the churches in Classis New Brunswick! There are so many expressions of God's love busting forth from our congregations, and so many lives that have been touched as our churches serve our sisters and brothers in our communities and the world.

This year has also been a big year for your non-profit organization. First of all, you may have noticed that we changed our business name to **Churches Improving Communities** or "CIC" for short. We are still registered as "Classis New Brunswick Community Development Corporation" for tax and business purposes, however the Board of Trustees felt that the new name really gets to the heart of what we do and who we support – the churches of this Classis that are doing God's work in the world!

We are also thrilled that we have a new Executive Director, Carrie Dirks Amodeo, who brings strong grant writing and program development skills to assist our churches. Please contact Carrie if you would like to discuss how CIC can help your church and community!

Our Communications Committee is in the process of retooling the CIC website under a new domain, ImprovingNJ.org. The new and improved site will provide detailed information about projects that are under the CIC's umbrella, and will also provide opportunities for churches within Classis New Brunswick to connect and share ideas. Churches Improving Communities also has a new Facebook presence (search for Churches Improving Communities). "Like" us to stay updated on CIC news and events!

This year, CIC's Congregational Engagement committee has been regularly reaching out to Classis congregations. The committee's monthly phone meeting has been a wonderful opportunity for churches to share ideas and discuss where there are unmet needs in our communities. Please contact Carrie if you are interested in participating in one of these monthly calls.

We hope that you enjoy reading this Annual Report. In it, you will find information on programs that are currently under the CIC umbrella. Each of the programs became a reality because a church congregation asked a question, dreamed a dream, and planted and cultivated an idea like a tiny seed that grew into a tree. Perhaps the report will give your church an idea that we may help you plant and cultivate!

It is always a blessing to work with, and to walk with, the Classis New Brunswick churches as they help bring God's Kingdom to our communities. Please contact us if you would like to discuss how we can walk with your church!

In Peace,



Brian P. Szura

First Classis-Wide Mission Trip a Success!

With encouragement from Pastor Jeff Knol of Colts Neck Reformed Church, CIC held the first of what promises to be many Classis-Wide Mission Trips this August. The purpose of these trips is to be God's hands for communities in need through the combined effort of the RCA churches of Classis New Brunswick.

In August, a group of 23 people from Spotswood Reformed Church, the Reformed Church of Metuchen, and the Reformed Church of Highland Park joined together to travel to North Carolina to repair homes damaged by a tornado that hit the eastern part of the state in April of 2014. The trip was led by CIC Board Member Anthony DiGrigoli, CALTR Project Coordinator Harry Pangemanan, and Daniel Woo, a student minister from Princeton Theological Seminary.

For the work projects, the group was split into two. A group of eight installed under-pinnings (skirts) onto double wide trailers for home owners Tim, his wife, and son David. That group was led by Daniel and the onsite contractor John, who provided training and direction. The group was impressed with Judie from Spotswood RC and her level of energy and persistence!

A larger group of fifteen, led by Harry, Anthony, and onsite manager Cliff, worked to repair a home that was lifted off its foundation - with homeowner Cathy inside - ten feet and moved to the side five feet during the tornado. Cathy came to the worksite every day to help carefully demolish her old house, and the group was able to learn about her, and her five horses! As debris was taken down from the structure it was then moved to piles and either taken away to a dump site or stacked up to be used to construct a new barn. The group also dug a trench and helped install a new water line to Cathy's new home. On their final day everyone took pictures, hugged, prayed and cried. Cathy said the group was the hardest working bunch yet!

But it wasn't all work! Besides socializing and dining at local favorites, the group had the chance to swim in a creek and enjoy an evening campfire with roasted s'mores. An important component of the trip was daily devotions, with time for singing, praying, sharing and reflection. It was noted that the youth in the group particularly demonstrated an enduring love of God. On Sunday the group worshiped at The First United Methodist Church of Washington, NC.

At a worksite and at worship in North Carolina, August 2015.





Churches Accomplishing Long-Term Recovery (CALTR)

CALTR rehabilitates homes along the New Jersey shore that were devastated by Hurricane Sandy in Monmouth, Middlesex and Ocean Counties, utilizing donated supplies and group volunteers from around the country, as well as local unemployed volunteers who improve their job prospects and earning potential.

2015 Accomplishments - CALTR

After a phenomenal summer working at the shore, CALTR surpassed its 2015 goal of rehabilitating 40 hurricane-damaged homes, utilizing grant funding and other sources:

- 271 week-long volunteers in 18 groups from across the U.S. and Canada
- 37 local unemployed volunteers mentored in job skills
- 9,366 total volunteer hours
- \$136,626 in savings by homeowners on labor and materials for home repair

2015 Program Highlights - CALTR

CALTR hosted its first annual Interfaith Day of Service on MLK day in January. Seventeen participants from the Turkish Cultural Center, Colts Neck Reformed Church, and the Reformed Church of Highland Park spent the day working together and getting to know one another.

CALTR has also collaborated with several organizations, both faith-based and non-faith based, including:

- Team Rubicon, a veteran's organization that specialized in disaster response
- St. Bernard Project, which grew out of Hurricane Katrina and continues to serve in areas hardest hit by natural disasters, including Monmouth & Ocean counties
- A Future with Hope (United Methodist Church) and Brethren Disaster Ministries

In April, RCHP hosted a week-long work group of staff members from several RCA offices, including Grand Rapids. This gave RCA staff a truly personal view of the Sandy work they have so generously supported from the very beginning with both funding and volunteer groups. In August, CALTR hosted a volunteer appreciation dinner for those who have participated in recovery efforts, including rebuilding and hospitality volunteers. In September, CALTR welcomed Rutgers University School of Social Work intern, Paola Stevens, who will be attending long-term recovery meetings as well as handling case management for shore homeowners.

CALTR now has a Facebook page that provides updates on our work and events – follow us!

Looking Ahead - CALTR

It has been three years since Sandy’s landfall, and while county long-term recovery organizations are closing due to lack of funding, CALTR maintains a presence at the shore. However, CALTR must think of new and creative ways to continue repairing homes in 2016 and beyond. We are currently exploring a partnership with the Reformed Church of Highland Park - Affordable Housing Corporation to rehabilitate homes in shore communities that would provide low-income rental units for individuals and families.

CALTR work groups at the NJ shore, summer 2015.





NeighborCorps Re-Entry Services

NeighborCorps Re-Entry Services provides free, supportive services that help individuals to transition from Middlesex County Jail back into society and avoid recidivism. NeighborCorps works with Participants and their network of supportive family members and friends, as well as with teams of trained volunteer Navigators that help Participants navigate the various pillars of successful re-entry into society: finding gainful employment and housing, pursuing personal development including counseling or drug/alcohol treatment, and regaining the trust of others through communication and accountability. 2015 is NeighborCorps first full program year.

2015 Program Accomplishments - NeighborCorps

Participants - NeighborCorps currently has nine Participants, six who have already been released and three who are still incarcerated. Among the six who have been released, a few have returned home just within the last month. The remaining three participants who have yet to be released are being visited weekly by Navigators. To date NeighborCorps has provided services to 20 Participants, with two program graduates! NeighborCorps had an average of seven Participants at a time in 2015. Our goal is to increase to a total of fifteen Participants by early 2016.

Navigators - Currently NeighborCorps has 18 volunteer Navigators, including seven students from the Rutgers University Mountainview Program, a program that assists NJ-STEP students with obtaining a four-year degree after their release, and three from Princeton University's research and advocacy student group, Students for Prison Education and Reform (SPEAR). Our goal is to add 18 additional Navigators in the next several months to meet participant demand. If you would like more information please contact neighborcorps@gmail.com or 732-675-1452.

Prior to joining a team, Navigators receive training that outlines the purpose of their role and equips them to support Participants. NC has started recording training sessions so they can be posted on our new website.

Staff - This fall NeighborCorps welcomed Justina Otero as the new Program Director. Justina brings experience and passion for re-entry work. Gale Muhammad has also joined us as Program Support Specialist through the end of 2015 to help increase our support for the Participants' families. Additionally, we are blessed with four social work interns from Rutgers University who assist with many aspects of the program.

Current Efforts - NeighborCorps

Outreach - In order to recruit volunteer Navigators, we are focusing outreach efforts on canvassing in local communities, outreach letters to churches with a follow-up presentation, and talking with student organizations, advisors and professors.

Community Connection - The Reformed Church of Highland Park has myriad services, programs, volunteer opportunities, and resources that are available for our Participants. The Navigators are being encouraged to discuss and provide these options for the Participants to connect them to an additional support system and to reinforce their relationship with NeighborCorps. We are also planning events and activities for the Participants to connect with each other in a fun, stress-relieving environment, such as a potluck dinner.

Web Presence - NeighborCorps has developed a Facebook page to further connect with the community and expand its reach. Please “like” us for program updates and news from the re-entry world! We are also building a website as a resource for Participants, Navigators, and those interested in getting involved in this issue. Visit us soon at NeighborCorpsReEntry.org!

Funding - The bulk of current NC funding is from a renewable Middlesex County Freeholder grant. To supplement this grant, NeighborCorps has implemented a series of fundraising events. In October, NeighborCorps held a Benefit Concert in Highland Park with live music by steering committee member Amos Caley and Friends, which raised over \$1,000! Additionally, Middlebush Reformed Church generously donated more than \$600 from the proceeds of their flea market to the NeighborCorps program.

Finally, we are currently running an online Indiegogo fundraising campaign with a goal of raising \$3,500 by mid-December. Please donate today and forward the link to friends and contacts:

<http://igg.me/at/NeighborCorps/x>.

Finances - Programs

Churches Improving Communities operates as the non-profit umbrella organization for NeighborCorps Re-Entry Services and Churches Accomplishing Long-Term Recovery. CIC resources such as bookkeeping, grant writing, administrative oversight and others are shared among the programs, and with churches who seek assistance with their own community projects. Similarly, certain CIC expenses are also shared such as insurance costs and a portion of the CIC Executive Director salary.

Programmatic budgets reside under CIC but are managed separately by the program steering committees who conduct their own fundraising and are responsible for programmatic expenses. Because of the volunteer focus of both programs, each is able to leverage a tremendous amount of value from its modest budget.

2015 CALTR BUDGET

EXPENSES:

Salary	\$39,000
Materials, Supplies & Transportation	\$94,072
Volunteer Hospitality	\$4,000
Administrative Overhead	\$7,490

TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$144,562
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INCOME:

Foundation grants	\$107,000
Church & Individual Donations	\$14,000
Volunteer Group Donations	\$22,500

TOTAL INCOME:	\$143,500
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*NOTE: The value of CALTR's volunteer labor in 2015 is approximately \$244,000.

2015 NEIGHBORCORPS BUDGET

EXPENSES:

Salary	\$35,000
Printing, Transportation	\$825
Administrative Overhead	\$666

TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$36,491
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INCOME:

County Grant	\$30,935
Fundraising	\$9,000
Rollover from 2014	\$3,100

TOTAL INCOME:	\$43,035*
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*NOTE: Because of funding constraints, NeighborCorps did not contribute fully to CIC overhead expenses in 2015, but will do so in 2016. In addition, NC must run a surplus to cover the first two quarters of the year when county funds have been assigned but not disbursed. Additionally, NC will have leveraged approximately \$20,000 worth of in-kind volunteer labor in 2015.

Finances - CIC

Churches Improving Communities' lean annual budget provides programmatic and administrative support that helps programs successfully obtain and administer grants, conduct communications and fundraising efforts, grow their support base, and employ program personnel – resources that are also available to churches who want to begin or expand community service projects.

This model of resource pooling is a strategic and effective way to invest in communities, ensuring that overhead expenses for programs remain extremely low. The CIC budget reflects this investment.

CHURCHES IMPROVING COMMUNITIES BUDGET		
	2015	2016
INCOME:		
Individual Donations	\$4,060	\$10,000
Congregation Donations	\$4,218	\$7,000
Amazon Smile Foundation	\$23	\$100
Operating Contribution from Programs	\$5,536	\$10,500
Insurance Contribution from Programs	\$695	\$1,000
TOTAL INCOME:	\$14,532	\$28,600
EXPENSES:		
Membership Fees	\$119	\$125
Postage	\$40	\$42
Marketing	\$59	\$500
Data Protect/PYRL Subscription	\$736	\$773
Bank Fees	\$28	\$29
PayPal Fees	\$47	\$49
Insurance	\$1,947	\$2,044
Training	\$119	\$125
Registration Fees	\$33	\$35
Payroll -Wages	\$14,351	\$20,000
Payroll (FICA & Medicare)	\$1,098	\$1,500
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$18,577	\$25,222
DIFFERENCE:	(\$4,045)	\$3,378

Please Help Support Our Work

It is the Churches Improving Communities mission to assist churches in Classis New Brunswick develop and expand justice and mercy service projects in their communities. We do this by pooling skills and expertise to leverage funding, volunteers and community support. To this end, we are committed to using our resources wisely and effectively, and CIC accomplishes much with very lean operational practices and programmatic budgets. Churches Improving Communities is funded solely through foundation grants, and individual, church and corporate donations. We count on you to help us positively impact the lives of people in need. Please donate today to help us continue this important work in 2016.

Classis New Brunswick Community Development Corporation *doing business as Churches Improving Communities* is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Your contribution is tax deductible.

Donations by Check:

Please make checks payable to **Classis New Brunswick CDC** and mail to CIC's bookkeeper at Second Reformed Church:

Classis New Brunswick CDC
100 College Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Donations by Credit Card:

Donations can also be made via credit card or PayPal on our website, <https://ImprovingNJ.org>.

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