

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

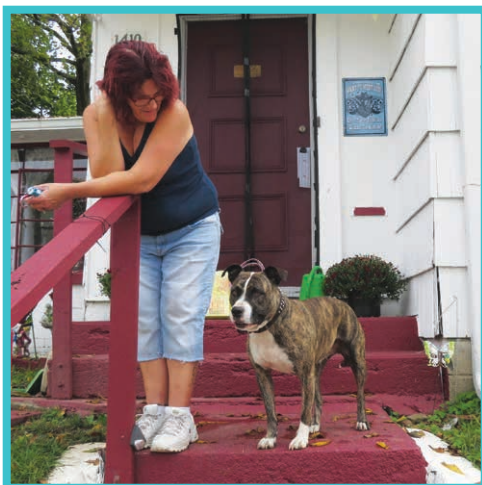
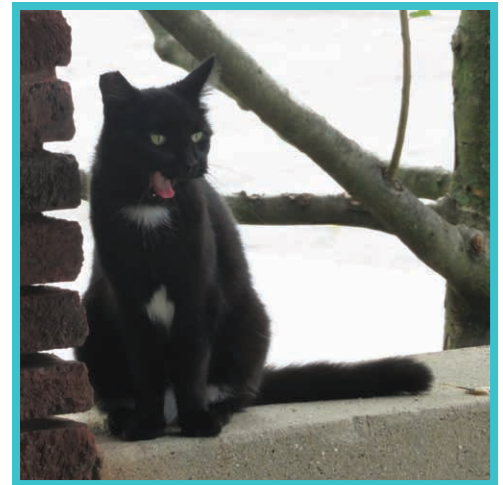
WINTER 2021



SOUTH CENTRAL RESIDENTS AND THEIR PETS

MEET KUNG FU.

This black cat has gone by many names, including Meow Meow, Toothless and Pooh Bear, but Kung Fu's owner Lezlie McCrory said she decided to go with one of the names that reflects the feline's toughness. Kung Fu had roamed the South Central neighborhood for years, living on the streets or taken in, on occasion, by caring neighbors. In 2015, the McCrory's welcomed the cat into their family. These days, Kung Fu is seen lounging on the porch, curled up next to McCrory as she answers emails related to her role as the neighborhood association president.



MEET LADY GAGA.

She's a pit bull who has lived in South Central with her owner, Shellie Williams, for the past four years. The bob-tailed beauty, also known as "Gigi," has been in Williams' care since she was eight weeks old, and, ever since, Williams said she has felt safe in her home. "[Gigi]'s nice, but, if she knows I have a fear, she'll come and stay right in front of me, and it just amazes me because I've never known that dedication and bravery in a dog."

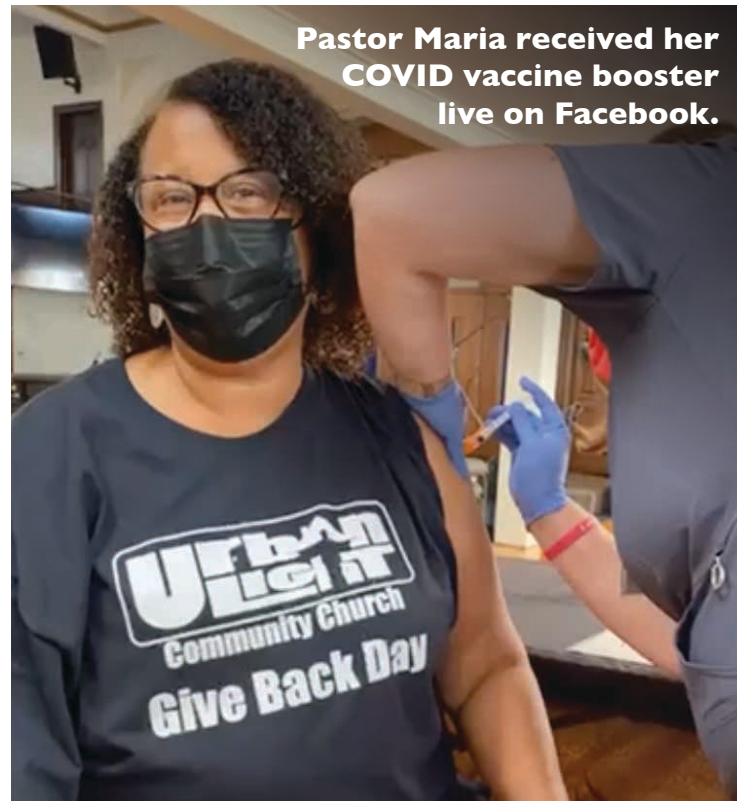
URBAN LIGHT GIVE BACK DAY

Urban Light Community Church exceeded its fundraising goal of \$1,500 during the Give Back Day from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 23.

Members of the community purchased tickets that included a meal and chances to win a range of prizes, including a 60" television.

Community and health organizations lined each room of the church, including the sanctuary, with free health and safety screenings, including blood pressure checks, car seat safety checks, COVID-19 testing, dental and diabetes screenings and flu shots. Visitors were also encouraged to participate in a blood drive and sign up for breast and prostate cancer screenings.

Ball State journalism majors took free family photos, and the following organizations handed out information and swag: Meridian Health Services, IU Health, Open Door Health Services, the Healthy Lifestyle Center, and Ball State University.



Pastor Maria received her COVID vaccine booster live on Facebook.

NEW BOND STARTS MUSIC

Emily's earliest memory is singing with her aunt, and now the 12-year-old is learning the mechanics of music as part of a new program through the Boys & Girls Club of Muncie. The Junior Producers Club, which emerged from a partnership between the club and Ball State University, connects Ball State music majors with Club Kids in grades 6-12. Emily said the program fosters her creativity.

"I like the chance to make my own music," Emily said. "My aunt gave me the courage to be able to sing in front of people, but it wasn't until I started playing the clarinet that I found my voice. It allowed me to express myself without words."

Dominic Bordenero is the teen director at the Boys and Girls Club of Muncie. The program is a reflection, he said, of the club's dedication to serve every child, across the spectrum of interests.



"Creativity is intelligence and having fun," Bordenero said. "Programs like these give kids the opportunity to use their minds in ways that interest them. This program has been successful; kids love it."

IN & OUT CLEANING SERVICES



Josh Arthur, a 20-year South Central resident, began cleaning windows and homes with neighbors in 2002. In & Out Cleaning Services is what it has become today. The business provides residential and commercial cleaning services, including window washing, pressure washing, wax/floor maintenance and gutter cleaning. But it does so with a focus on supporting a healthy, thriving Muncie by offering employment opportunities to people who have been overlooked for employment elsewhere — namely recovering addicts and people with criminal backgrounds.

“Our cleaning excellence, reliability and reputation is number one. Number two is employing people,” said Arthur, who temporarily sold the business to a friend in 2008 but reacquired the business in 2018. “We have to do good business, so that it does make money, but the goal wasn’t to make money. The goal was to get money in people’s homes.”

Employees of In & Out often work an average of 40 hours each week with paid holidays off, Arthur said. He wants to grow employees who can support themselves and their families. But he runs a tight ship. Employees are drug tested and no one is allowed to work if they are using.

“That’s a hard line. We don’t mess around because it’s not the best for them,” Arthur said. “If we continued with their employment, we would be buying into this myth that they created where they can be dependent and functional.”

Erica Tackett was residing at The Lighthouse, an Urban Light Community Development Program, when she heard about In & Out’s embrace of felons and recovering addicts.

“When I first started working, it was just like a community, and I was allowed to be open and honest about who I was,” Tackett said. “I was exhausted all the time, but it was fun. I got to be around people who were like me.”

Tackett said she felt support from her co-workers when her mom died in 2017. Crew members donated their paid time off to her, when she didn’t have any accrued to her at the time.

“That whole time, I got paid and they showed up for the funeral and just did kind things and were there for me during that process,” Tackett said.

Before Tackett graduated from the recovery program at The Lighthouse, she said she mainly worked the night shifts at In & Out Cleaning. After graduation, Tackett was able to get custody of her children and switched to the day shift, where she discovered a natural ability to lead.



“I was put in a bunch of situations where I was the person with seniority, and the person who had been here a little bit longer, and it just naturally came to me to help train and to help motivate and to help lead people on job sites,” Tackett said.

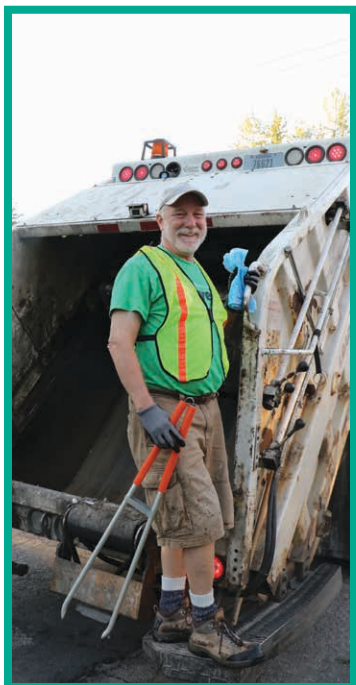
Arthur said the business model works. In & Out Cleaning Services has a great relationship with the judges and correction and parole officers, and they realize that many people given a chance can turn their lives around.

“Sometimes a person from In & Out interacts in a courtroom on behalf of someone on trial to say ‘don’t send them to jail. We need them here, they’re valuable,’” Arthur said. “Some of our employees have stood before court to say: ‘Here’s where I was, and here’s where I am now. I’m asking for that opportunity for this person.’”



SOUTH CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN-UP

On September 27th, neighbors put on their work gloves and high-visibility vests and went to work filling garbage bags and garbage trucks as part of the fall neighborhood clean-up. Thanks to all of you for helping! Look for info next spring for the May 2022 Clean-up!



COMMUNITY GARDEN

The South Central Community garden has been producing for more than 20 years, but it has exploded with produce and promise in the past several years, thanks to Donna Young, South Central resident and community garden coordinator.

The garden, at the corner of Seventh and Jefferson Streets, has gained playground equipment, a chalkboard that lists ripe produce, and rows and rows of everything from raspberries to rhubarb. Young said residents pop in regularly but gather in force during three major events: Planting day, during which they plant the vegetables and fruits for the season; an Easter egg hunt among the tomato plants and leafy squash; and a fall party to celebrate the end of the season. Young said she sees new faces at every event.

“A lot of people are getting to know each other,” said Young, “The garden is a fun place to meet in our area. You’re on a walk, and then next thing you know, you’re socializing and getting to know each other: meeting new faces, meeting new people, and learning things about a garden.”

Although the garden is a productive hot spot, Young has many plans to continue to advance the space. She recently added labels to identify each section of produce, which led more people to use the garden. Still, she wants to add information cards about how to determine ripeness and cooking methods, for instance. Young also wants to gather and share recipes through the garden space.

The existing garden, supported by Urban Light Community Development Corporation, is packed. Young said she hopes to find ways to expand the garden, but until then, she will maximize and celebrate this plot of promise.

“The flavor of this stuff is just so much different than going to the store and buying it,” said Young, who spends about 5-10 hours each week during peak planting and growing seasons. “And it’s been a huge resource during the pandemic. All the fruits and vegetables were cleared out as they came in this summer. I’m glad the garden helps my neighbors make ends meet.”



NEIGHBORHOOD TRUNK OR TREAT

Dozens of neighbors gathered in the Jefferson Street Pocket Park for the South Central Trunk or Treat on Sunday, October 31. Kids of all ages paraded around in their costumes as they gathered handfuls of candy. Lezlie McCrory, neighborhood association president, said the event is a festive way to visit with neighbors and meet new faces.

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, and resident leaders for making this event a huge success.



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