

# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

WINTER 2023



## NEIGHBORHOOD GAINS \$65,000 INVESTMENT



The Thomas Park/Avondale Neighborhood Association requested nearly \$65,000 of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to support the neighborhood.

TPA Neighborhood Association President James Heimlich said highlights from the plan include a shed of yard tools that neighbors can check out, food supplies to distribute around the neighborhood, micro-grants to pay neighbors for work, funds for neighborhood gatherings, and grants for beautification efforts and exterior home improvements.

The TPA association meets at 6 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the Ross Community Center, 1110 W. 10th St.

## SPREADING LOVE, ONE BRUSH STROKE AT A TIME

Muncie has become a canvas for striking, stylistic murals on building exteriors across town. Their vibrant colors and inspiring images uplift neighborhoods and encourage residents to slow down and admire their surroundings. Some murals invite meaningful conversations about Muncie's heritage and history.

A tour of murals on the south side of Muncie illustrates the heart behind the art. Through different styles and mediums, artists share how their work is a way to give a piece of themselves back to the city many of them call home. These artists are using their brushes to make Muncie as beautiful as the people who make it a community.



*Mike Martin, owner of the Common Market, painted this mural of music notes on fire on the shop. He said murals "bring a city to life and give it character."*

*The market, located at 900 W. 8th St., features a variety of murals in and out of the convenience store, deli, donation center and gathering place.*

# SMALL SPARKS TO IGNITE BIG CHANGE

*The 8twelve Coalition's Small Sparks grants funded 16 projects from residents (both youth and adults) that focus on community engagement, health and wellness, youth activities and more. Highlights from the 2023 recipients include new food storage solutions at The Common Market, new patio furniture at Rosebud Coffee House, fairy garden kits, and care kits for kids in crisis.*

Muncie native Casey Eichenlaub is a man of action. He sees a problem and figures out a way to fix it. If the problem involves power tools, even better.

In 2020, Eichenlaub secured a Small Sparks grant from the 8twelve Coalition to build fence posts for his Thomas Park/Avondale neighbors. This year, he was awarded the grant to complete home repairs, mostly to water heaters and HVAC systems.

“Working and helping neighbors gives me so much life. Fixing homes is a way to give back to a community that has helped me from so much hardship,” he said. “Everyone needs help at some point, and people can change at any age; they just need a push in the right direction: “Who will you push?”

Eichenlaub's focus on service developed when he needed that push. Struggles with addiction led him to the Muncie Mission's Liberty Street Recovery Program, which is a year-long program that walks residents through 12 steps to healing and sobriety.

He graduated from the program in 2019 and began working as a project manager for ecoREHAB, a Muncie nonprofit that rehabilitates homes using

sustainable practices. Jason Haney, ecoREHAB executive director, said Eichenlaub's journey to recovery inspired the organization to partner with Eastern Indiana Works and Ball State University to create a Skilled Trades Education Program, or STEP, for at-risk, under or unemployed youth in Muncie.

The free, 16-week program provides participants with an hourly wage, educational advancement, and experience in the trades of carpentry, electrical, HVAC, masonry and plumbing.

Eichenlaub said the success of STEP inspired him to apply for the Small Sparks grants. That's how supporting others works, he added: “When someone gives you a hand, you want to give a hand to others.”

“Seeing how the program turned out and just the tiny impact it made on kids in the community, as well as it being implemented in a bigger scope in the ecoREHAB program, caused me to want to help do projects on my own,” he said.

The 8twelve Coalition calls out for Small Sparks grant applications on its Facebook page, or you can email [8twelvecoalition@gmail.com](mailto:8twelvecoalition@gmail.com) to learn more about these awards, which are up to \$500 each year.



*Casey Eichenlaub has received two Small Sparks grants to improve the homes of his neighbors.*



*Among the 16 projects in 2023, kids decorated fairy gardens to beautify their yards.*



# COVID-19 AND FLU VACCINES

## **Fight the Flu — for Free**

The CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine every season to prevent sickness and missing work and school. If you get the flu, the vaccine can make symptoms less severe and reduce the risk of hospitalization.

Open Door Health Services provides FREE flu shots for ages 5+ at special events throughout East Central Indiana. Go to [opendoorhs.org/flu](https://opendoorhs.org/flu) for a list of flu shot events near you. (Flu shots are also available at Open Door sites, and insurance will be billed when available).

## **Time to get Boosted: COVID-19 Sites**

Vaccination remains the most effective prevention against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. If it's been at least two months since your last COVID vaccine, and if you haven't had the updated vaccine, then it's time to get the updated vaccine.

The CDC recommended everyone 6 months and older get an updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of the virus. Learn more, and find your eligibility, at [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov).

## **Established Open Door Patients**

Open Door offers no-cost COVID-19 vaccines to established Open Door patients. Vaccination is by appointment. Call 765-286-7000 to schedule your appointment.

## **Community Vaccination Clinics (open to the public)**

Open Door offers the updated COVID-19 vaccine to any eligible community member from noon-6 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month through March (Dec. 14, Jan. 11, Feb. 8 and March 14) at its downtown Muncie location, 333 S. Madison St.

While you will not receive a bill, insurance will be billed when available; be sure to bring your insurance card if you have coverage. Vaccinations are available to everyone 6 months and older.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR STORIES AND VISION

In the spring and summer of 2023, the 8twelve Coalition wrapped up a five-year data collection process to learn more about resident perceptions of the quality of life in the neighborhood and how it has changed in the past few years.

Thank you to all those who took time to complete the survey and offer feedback during the listening sessions and focus groups. The coalition is made up of residents and organizations working together to improve quality of life in South Central and Thomas Park/Avondale. Hearing from residents is vital to address issues and to celebrate successes.



Many residents shared stories of the neighborhood being seen as the “other side of the tracks,” with vivid memories of intergroup tensions and threats of violence.

We heard you, and we are working hard to analyze the data and stories we collected during this process. We look forward to sharing the results and next steps with you soon.

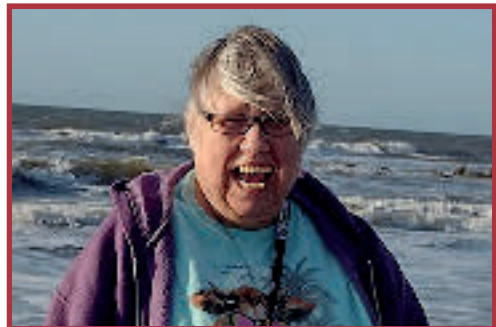
# FACES OF THOMAS PARK/AVONDALE

*Meet your neighbors + Tell your story*



“Collective impact work strengthens our community, especially an under-resourced one, so that we can pool our resources and work together to improve the quality of life and advocate with our neighborhood.”

— **Brian Carless, 8twelve Coalition resident leader**



“What makes a great community is when folks come together, work together and figure out what needs to be done and then get it done.”

— **Jeannetta Presley, Thomas Park/Avondale resident**

Email us at [8twelvecoalition@gmail.com](mailto:8twelvecoalition@gmail.com) to tell your story or share a memory, concern or hope for the neighborhood.



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# 8TWELVE COALITION OPEN HOUSE INVITES NEIGHBORS TO CONNECT, SHARE AND GROW

On a beautiful, warm October afternoon, community members gathered for an open house to celebrate the 8twelve Coalition office space, at 1424 S. Hoyt Ave. The office includes space for the 8twelve staff as well as meeting space for neighbors and partners working together to improve the quality of life in the Thomas Park/Avondal and South Central neighborhoods.

Attendees enjoyed snacks, learned about ways to support the coalition's work, and listened to a brief message from 8twelve Director, Jena Ashby.

South Central neighbors James Sandberg and Lincoln Arthur provided live music, while Thomas Park/Avondale neighbor Michelle Heimlich photographed the event.



*Neighbors shared how to support the 8twelve's mission to improve the quality of life in Muncie.*



*The office includes a lending library and meeting space for residents.*



*8twelve Director Jena Ashby officially opens the office on Hoyt Ave. The Greater Muncie Chamber of Commerce helped with the ribbon cutting.*

## TRUNK OR TREAT ON 10TH STREET

The cutest ghosts and goblins plucked sweet treats out of decorated trunks on Halloween during the 8twelve Coalition's Sixth Annual Trunk or Treat along 10th Street.

About 500 people showed up for this safe and fun event.





# WHEN LIFE KNOCKS YOU DOWN

*Ross Center's Judo Academy teaches strength, self-confidence and discipline on and off the mat*

When students bow their heads and step onto mats for judo training at Muncie's Ross Community Center, they learn far more than martial arts throws. Students gain discipline, self-confidence and strength along with social connection and problem-solving skills.

Carey Mountcastle, who has taught the weekly class since 2016, said judo instills "maximum efficiency with mutual benefit and welfare," which means students work toward their full potential to contribute to the betterment of the world. The unarmed Japanese martial art is also centering and relieves stress, he added.

"You come in from the hustle and bustle of working and raising a family, and all of a sudden you're on the judo mat and the only thing you focus on for two hours is judo," said Mountcastle, who is a financial adviser at Northwestern Mutual.

Long-time judo student, Madison Norris, said judo has enhanced her academic and personal growth. The 16-year-old started training at the academy in 2015 as a fun physical activity for "someone who is not huge into sports."

Judo has become one of her favorite activities to remain physically fit and mentally focused. Norris said the instructions have taught her to focus and develop a solid work ethic.

"Other kids who do judo, and myself included, are always the kids who have A's because we put in the work and take the extra time to do stuff that other kids are like 'bare minimum was enough for me,'" said Norris, who attends Muncie Central High School.

The academy meets from 5-7 p.m. every Monday and Wednesday, and is open to anyone age 5 and up. The class costs \$20 a month per student, with \$5 for each additional student in a family. Scholarships are available.

Learn more about the judo and the center's other programs at [rosscentermuncie.org](http://rosscentermuncie.org) or stop by the center at 1110 W 10th St. in Muncie.



*Community leaders and neighbors celebrate completion of a three-day training about violence prevention and juvenile justice.*

## MENTOR, MOTIVATE AT-RISK YOUTH

More than 50 community members and organizations participated in a three-day training in late September to learn about an innovative model of restorative justice.

The Academy for Transformation Change provided the on-site training, Credible Messenger Mentoring, which focuses on connecting with at-risk youth and motivating them to challenge and transform destructive thinking, attitudes and actions.

The training continues to inform work in Muncie to support disconnected youth and their families, especially those in underserved populations.

Support for the training was provided by the 8twelve Coalition, through a CenterPoint Energy Grant, Delaware County's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Grant, the City of Muncie, and the Delaware County Commissioners. Urban Light Community Development managed the local training logistics.