



NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Suzanne Clem announced as new 8twelve director

On July 1, former Vice President for Community Engagement at Open Door Health Services, Suzanne Clem, was announced as the new Executive Director for the 8twelve Coalition. Succeeding interim Director, Pat Smith, Clem enters the role with 20 years of experience in marketing, leadership, and fundraising experience. During her tenure at Open Door Health Services, Clem oversaw previous 8twelve Executive Directors as part of the 8twelve Coalition's 2022 partnership with Open Door Health Services.



Clem has been a storied participant in the Muncie community. Graduating from Ball State University in 2002 with a degree in Advertising, Clem worked at her alma mater from 2004 until 2018, primarily as a marketing coordinator. Since then, Clem has been lauded for her work as an advocate for women and public health, receiving the ATHENA Leadership Award from Women in Business Unlimited in 2024 and the Vivian Conely Award for Distinction in Public Health Leadership in 2022.

Clem has a strong foundation in her work with South Muncie, having worked with the George and Frances Ball Foundation to help lead the Cradle to Career Muncie initiative. Additionally, Clem is a member of the Urban Light Community Development Corporation Board of Directors, volunteers for Greater Muncie Habitat for Humanity, and is a member of the Avondale Methodist Church.

About her new role, Clem stated that "The 8twelve Coalition puts resident voices at the center of its work, and I'm excited to jump in and support that good work being done alongside neighbors and partners."

CLEM INTERVIEW

What are some of your happiest memories in the South Muncie community?

While I'm new to the Executive Director role, I've had the pleasure of spending quite a bit of time in the Coalition neighborhoods over the last several years. As a member at Avondale United Methodist, and also through a previous role at Open Door Health Services, I've loved being a part of church parking lot parties, the Thursday night community meals, health screening events, and Trunk-or-Treat. One of my best memories was holiday caroling in TPA-- all bundled up in hats and gloves, we warmed up with hot chocolate at the Ross Center and then set out to spread some cheer house-to-house. Our singing quality might have been questionable, but the fun we had was not!

What is your style of leadership? How will this be seen in your tenure as the Executive Director of the 8twelve Coalition?

One of the foundations of the Coalition is listening, and I think keeping that at the focus of leadership is important. When we listen to each other and sincerely honor the experiences of people around us, our focus becomes clearer and our ideas and plans become better.

What have you learned with your involvement at other organizations, such as Open Door Health Services and Cradle to Career Muncie, that you hope to apply to 8twelve?

Trust is so important to community work. Taking the time to build trust with neighbors and partners helps people feel safe talking about their lives, sharing their ideas, and engaging. Often that takes years, versus weeks or months, and it's worth the time.

What do you hope to have accomplished by the time you leave your role as Executive Director?

Keeping with the theme of listening, I would hope that I've helped Coalition partners and neighbors feel confident advocating for themselves and for the people around them. My overarching goal would be that the visible programming and the behind-the-scenes work the Coalition engages all continue to help align community work with the things residents share are important to them, and that the work continues to support neighborhoods where people feel at home, where they feel seen and understood, and where they have the things they need to live full lives.

A BETTER PLACE TO BE!

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COMMUNITY LETTER

In late June, I opened a text from former 8twelve Coalition director Jena Ashby. “Dirt is moving on Memorial!” There were actually quite a few more exclamation points than that. Workers had begun digging at 1200 W. Memorial Drive to prepare the land for what will become a new permanent supportive housing and community health center facility.

Formerly the Lincoln School site, this space has been at the center of years-long collaborative work to expand healthcare, housing, and social support in the Thomas Park Avondale neighborhood. On July 29, a groundbreaking ceremony celebrated the “Together to House” project, which is a collaboration of the City of Muncie, local housing support agencies, Open Door Health Services, and developers.

The project represents new housing options and healthcare access, but it also represents what can happen when neighbors come together to dream.

In February 2019, alongside community partners, the 8twelve Coalition gathered neighbors in the Thomas Park Avondale and South Central neighborhoods to “re-imagine” the area of Hoyt Avenue and Memorial. In meeting spaces and community gatherings, residents stood over street maps that covered tables from end to end. They identified current resources and neighborhood assets. They shared aspirations on white boards and creative ideas on sticky notes. They identified what was working well and what was missing.

As Jena recently shared, “Their ideas were rooted in what created quality of life—where were those things not represented in this area? Housing, healthcare, and places for connection were desires identified.”

Ball State students took this information and transformed it into 3D renderings representing the neighbors’ vision. These models were shared at community meals and neighborhood meetings, where more resident feedback was gathered.

The following years brought a series of collaborative efforts to move the vision forward: property purchases, consultant research, funding requests, business plans, and more. Rosebud Coffee House opened to provide a place for social connection. Open Door embedded community health workers in parter sites throughout the neighborhoods. And the community’s eventual creation of a Housing Consortium strategic plan led to funding that paved the way for the housing and healthcare initiative we see underway today.

As Jena said so well, neighbors had the “courage to dream.” We’re seeing the fruits of those dreams unfold. It’s long-game work, which sometimes takes years, but it is good work.

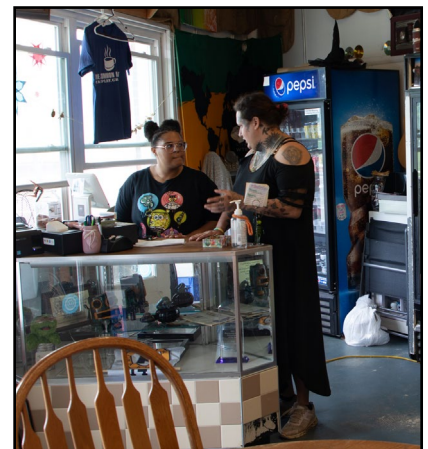
While I’m new to my role in the Coalition—an opportunity I’m deeply thankful and excited for—the Coalition footprint is a space I’ve felt welcome in for several years. Thursday night meals at Avondale United Methodist, perusing spring blooms at Sparky’s, grabbing a fountain pop at the Common Market, picking apples on Jefferson Street, or sitting down for coffee with friends at Rosebud. Most of all, I’ve enjoyed finding community and relationships in these spaces. There is a lot of caring and community-building happening all around in the Coalition neighborhoods, and the dirt being turned over to create stable, supportive housing and high-quality, affordable healthcare access is just the latest example.

If you’re a resident, thank you for sharing your dreams and talents. If you’re a supporter, thank you for believing in the mission. If you’re new to learning about the Coalition, I hope you’ll stay tuned to all the good work happening.

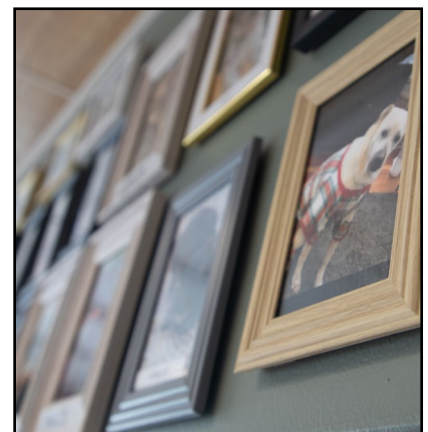
— Suzanne Clem, 8twelve Executive Director



Two South Central residents mapping neighborhood highlights and identifying opportunities for additional resources.



Two 8twelve residents behind the counter at the Common Market.



The wall of pets at Rosebud Coffee House.