

Work in Progress Report

June, 2004

Dear Friends,

Beyond The Neighborhood Center: Transforming our urban community for Jesus has always meant that our work is not just done “on site”. For the last several years, we have also begun to disciple and support children in our ministry through mentoring relationships that meet in schools, on the soccer field, at a fast food restaurant, or wherever necessary. This mentoring is a part of our education programs, which begin with our three year olds who attend Headstart, follows them into elementary school through our Partners In Learning program, and then gives extensive support through the I CAN DO IT! program, going all the way through high school. Educational support is essential for our kids to access opportunities for their future and become the leaders that this community desperately needs.

Debbi Speck is our Education Director. She has created a partnership with Headstart (through the City of Phoenix for 3-4 year olds), Partners in Learning (K-4th grades), and I CAN DO IT! (5-12th grades). All are wonderful ways for our children to pursue educational success, character development, and spiritual growth.



Education Programs – Building Hope Through I CAN DO IT! Job-Shadowing:

Lilian Cabrera-Ramos, an I CAN DO IT! student, just returned from Washington D.C. where she followed a political consultant for 2 days in a job-shadowing opportunity. She also met several national Hispanic leaders, attended the National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast and met with a senator’s aid.

“Her job-shadowing experience is a message of hope” said Debbi Speck, NM Education Director. “Lilian now has a voice and through her experience, her community has a voice.

“Job-shadowing is part of our I CAN DO IT! program which takes us into 13 school districts and 34 schools. By teaming with these schools and partnering with organizations such as Mentor Kids USA and AZ Quest for Kids, we help our kids see that they can succeed,” Debbi said.

Headstart is a national program provided at The Neighborhood Center by the City of Phoenix that gets children ready for school. The 3-4 year olds that participate at our site are the children of our Moms Place teenage moms.

Young students involved in our **Partners in Learning** program are matched with a volunteer education advocate at their school. The advocate provides tutoring for the student and seeks to involve the parents in the education process.

Fifth-12th graders in our **I CAN DO IT!** program are learning not only to stay in school but also to succeed. This period is a vulnerable time,

particularly for our kids. According to the Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center, roughly half of all Hispanic and Native American children do not complete high school. About 40 percent of Hispanics who quit school do so prior to eighth grade.

Our I CAN DO IT! students are monitored for school attendance and academic progress, and they meet regularly with assigned mentors/tutors for support and academic help. They learn how to problem solve, work in small groups, can participate in a job-shadowing opportunity, and can earn incentive trips such as a five-day ski trip to Telluride Ski Resort in Colorado. The incentive trips, which are earned through success in school, serve to enlarge the kids' views of the world and fill them with confidence. Besides academic support, the mentoring relationships provide opportunity for Christian discipleship.



In a world where approximately 40% of Hispanic students drop out before graduation, our I CAN DO IT! kids have a 99% stay in school success rate. Approximately 35% of this year's participants were on the honor roll, with many winning awards in science, math, behavior, principal's list, etc. During a recent eighth grade graduation at Terra Nova Charter School in Glendale, our I CAN DO IT! kids won a significant share of the math and science awards.

Please pray for all our educational programs, mentors, and staff. They connect our core programs at The Neighborhood Center with a child's school, family, and community.

Kit Danley

Kit Danley
President

P.S. If you are interested in being a mentor or helping with our incentive trips, please contact Debbi Speck at debbi.speck@nmaz.net.

Also, if you would like to receive my special prayer email letter, please send an email with your request and email address to office@nmaz.net or contact us through www.neighborhoodministries.org.