

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES

1913-2013

100 Years of New Beginnings!

Founding & Early History



In 1913, Good Shepard Center opened its doors on the corner of Dillon and Hickory Street (*pictured at left*) on the near south side of St. Louis, an area at the time that was rundown, bordering on a slum. Churches, along with their congregations, were moving west, leaving the inner city behind.

In those days, the Evangelical Church was still a German church and in St. Louis the first English congregation was only 10 years old. Many of the St. Louis area pastors were strongly influenced by the work of the "Innere Mission" in Germany, a movement to help those in depressed, economically challenged areas. A pastors' meeting in September of 1912 discussed what meaning that movement might have to the clergy in St. Louis. Led by Samuel D. Press of Eden Seminary, a committee was formed and a neighborhood canvass was conducted by Eden Seminary students to determine the needs of families on the south side. Reinhold Niebuhr (*pictured at left*), one of the most influential American theologians of the 20th century, was one of the students helping with the canvass.



The canvass results confirmed that with the deteriorating housing, poverty, delinquency, and crime prevalent in the neighborhood, there was a great need and a mission should be opened:

The object of the City Mission of the Evangelical churches of St. Louis shall be, in general, the promoting of systematic evangelization, the practice of Christian charity, and the assisting and encouraging of reform and uplift movements for the special benefit of the children, the aged and adults among the poor, the sick, strangers, the unemployed, the religiously indifferent, the neglected, the fallen and prisoners.

Good Shepard Center opened its door on April 6, 1913 with the recommending committee of pastors serving as the first board of directors. The center was established to help the working class and immigrant population by addressing the issues of inadequate housing, lack of proper medical attention, and poor education for children.

In the earliest days of this ministry, faculty and students from Eden Seminary delivered milk and food on bicycles. Sisters from Deaconess Hospital made home visits to tend to the elderly

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and sick. Pastors and lay people began recreational and instructional classes for children—sewing classes for the girls and woodworking classes for the boys. E. E. Berlekamp, a seminary student, was the first paid worker and was paid \$10 a month plus room and board.

The programs at Good Shepard Center grew quickly and so the original building was soon too small in addition to needing many repairs. Two brothers, Herman and Ernst Schultz, came to the rescue when they donated a house and lot at 1821 Hickory Street. The new building was dedicated on December 1, 1918 as Caroline Mission, named for Caroline Schultz, the mother of Herman and Ernst.

Growth Over Time



1925

Expansion of Caroline Mission added a **new building** with a 400-seat auditorium, a gymnasium, and a kitchen.

1928

Tillie Hahlen became a social worker for the Mission and would stay for 20 years, serving hundreds of families during the Great Depression.



1936

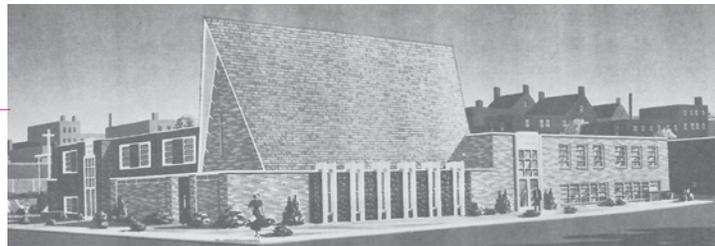
The Mission was serving **2,000 people each week**. More than 90% of the clients were children with 38% of them being from broken homes.

1938

Caroline Mission becomes a charter member of the organization now known as the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries of the United Church of Christ (CHHSM).

1943

The Evangelical and Reformed Church (now the United Church of Christ) accepted the responsibility to provide settlement house services in the 9th & Tyler area in downtown St. Louis, also ministering to a squatter's settlement at the riverfront called Hooverville. **Fellowship Center** was born and in 1955 moved across the street from the Cochran Gardens Housing Project.



1943

The Sunshine Playground, near Caroline Mission, was opened as an interracial playground.



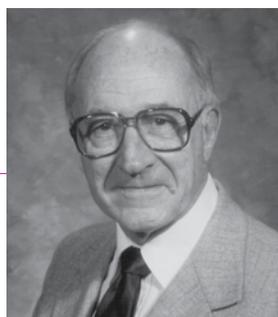
1948

Well ahead of its time, **Camp Potawatomi**, St. Louis' first integrated resident camp, was started.

1949 Caroline Mission integrated other programs including vacation school, nursery school, group work programs, and scout troops.



1950



Rev. Lou Huber became the director of Fellowship Center.

1955 Caroline Mission became a member of the United Way of Greater St. Louis.

1960 **Plymouth House**, at 1521 Carr Drive, started as a branch of Fellowship Center and served residents of the Carr Square area until 1975.

1962 In 1962, Caroline Mission, Fellowship Center, and Plymouth House were incorporated legally as "The Board for Inner-City Mission of the United Church of Christ in Metropolitan St. Louis," but were generally known as United Church Neighborhood Houses. Rev. Huber served as Administrator and Jan Gates was Program Director.

1971 Caroline Mission had offered nursery care to neighbors since 1945, but in 1971 began offering full-day care under the name **Family of Man Day Care** and moved to the basement of the Sisters of Loretto at 3407 Lafayette.

1971 The congregation of St. James United Church of Christ voted to become part of United Church Neighborhood Houses creating **St. James Center** in the College Hill neighborhood.

1973 An after school program for eighth graders and a daycare center opens at St. James Center.

1975 **Dignity House** opened its doors and began providing services to low-income families in the Central West End of St. Louis. Dignity House provided the same services as its sister settlement houses, but with a special emphasis on the arts.

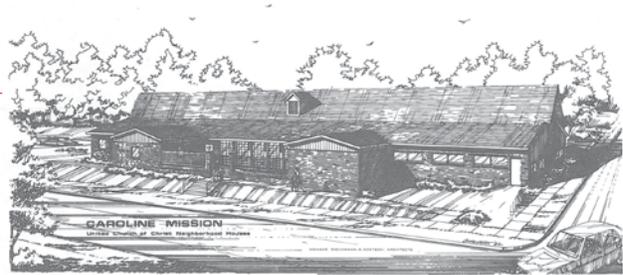
1975 A serious fire at Caroline Mission prompted supporters to find a new location.

1976 Family of Man Day Care implemented a program of home visits by its social worker to better serve the children and parents.

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1981 Family of Man Day Care began working in cooperation with the International Institute, providing daycare services for immigrant parents. While their parents learned English at the Institute, immigrant children got their first taste of English and American customs.

1983 **Caroline Mission** relocated to its current location at 2828 Caroline Street.



1985 Rev. Huber retired and Rev. Jack Aregood was installed as the new Administrator.

1987 **The Children's Rainbow Park**, next to Fellowship Center, was dedicated and used for club groups and day camp activities.

1996 Rev. Aregood retired from Neighborhood Houses and Rev. Eugene Bartell was appointed Executive Director.

2002 Programming ceased at Fellowship Center due to the decline in residents at the Cochran Gardens Housing Project. Cochran was eventually demolished in 2008.

2004 Neighborhood Houses became one of the original Deaconess Foundation Impact Partners.

2006 A new chapter brings a new emphasis on the infrastructure and expansion of after school services within St. Louis Public Schools.

2007 Identifying a need to strengthen the youngest families, **Girls' Night Out** begins serving pregnant and parenting teen mothers.

2008 Rev. Gene Bartell retired and Darlene Sowell was appointed as the first lay President and CEO of Neighborhood Houses.

2010 Board of directors and senior management made a strategic decision to focus on three core program competencies: early childhood education; after school programs; and the young mothers program. This decision resulted in the closure of Dignity House and St. James Center, allowing a realignment of resources.



2012 **After School Program** grows to serving 300 children a day.

2013 Neighborhood Houses becomes the largest provider of free after school services in St. Louis, with 13 public school sites that serve as many as 900 children a day.

2013 **Neighborhood Houses celebrates 100 years of new beginnings!**

Neighborhood Houses Today

Neighborhood Houses' mission statement was revised in 2013 to reflect its current service model:

Neighborhood Houses inspires children and families to reach their magnificent potential through transformative, educational and empowering experiences anchored in faith, hope and love.

To further our mission, we offer a continuum of care designed to improve the quality of life for children and families of the urban core of St. Louis City. Our programs and services include:

- **Early Childhood Education Center at Caroline Mission**
Affordable state licensed and accredited early childhood education and care for up to 88 children ages 6 weeks to 5 years.
- **After School Program**
High-quality, curriculum-based, free after school services at 13 public elementary schools with a capacity of serving 900 children each day.
- **Girls' Night Out**
Support and mentoring program designed to help pregnant and parenting teens (13-19) develop strong parenting skills, finish high school, and acquire the tools necessary to balance all of life's demands.

