

The Homewood Star

Volume 4 | Issue 3 | June 2014

neighborly news & entertainment for Homewood

On the cusp of change



One man sees a vibrant community in Rosedale

Terry Slaughter spends time with children who live in Rosedale in the community garden he runs. Photo by Karim Shamsi-Basha.

By MADOLINE MARKHAM

In Rosedale, fatigue can be felt on the inside and out.

Terry Slaughter recalls moving a woman out of a house that hadn't had running water in a year, and another he found heating her house with her stove.

Until 10 years ago, he had driven past the outskirts of Rosedale's approximately 200 residences without thinking anything of it. Now, through his work with his nonprofit organization, Simon Cyrene, he knows how many

homes on the streets north of Central Avenue and Rosedale Drive have absentee or elderly owners who he said have trouble properly caring for their property.

He also knows that many families have owned the homes for generations and feel a strong sense of place in what has been a predominantly black community neighborhood since it was formed in the 1890s.

Going forward, Slaughter envisions a lively, affordable community growing over its tired yet deep roots. He's been planting seeds for it over the past nine years.

The investment

A young woman knocked on the door at 1630 27th Avenue South, the home base for Slaughter's programs in Rosedale.

"Mr. Terry, you probably don't remember me," she said, reminding him of her name.

But Slaughter remembered her. Namiasha Chapman had been one of the original teenagers to participate in his youth development program, Nebemiah's Quest, in Rosedale.

"I came to tell you that I didn't know why

See **ROSEDALE** | page 28

ROSEDALE

Continued from page 1

you made us haul old trees out of lots or why you had us show up on time, but now I see it," she said. "We've had a part in getting our community back on track."

As a young teenager, she didn't understand why work days started at 9 a.m., and if someone showed up at 9:01, they couldn't work. She didn't know why they had to wear their "uniform" (a T-shirt).

Today she's in college studying to be an engineer. Slaughter thinks that her first engineering ideas might have come through her exposure to design and architecture in her days around the house in which she now stood.

The simple red brick house sits four blocks behind the 18th Street post office. On its walls hang photos of dilapidated houses, sketches for new, modern architectural plans, and lists of community development initiatives in the area.

Next to the house is a garden that is now teeming with fresh organic produce grown by the youth in surrounding homes. The stone walls around it were built by youth like Chapman.

Through Nehemiah's Quest, teenagers are hired to build and plant gardens on vacant lots in their neighborhood. Just as in the Bible Nehemiah was tasked with rebuilding Jerusalem after it was ransacked by Babylonians, the program seeks to inspire the people of the community to restore their area. In addition to gardening, the participants harvest honey, blueberries and blackberries and make jams to sell as well as create sculptures to place on vacant lots.

"It's about teaching kids about hard work and great design," Slaughter said. "Architectural beauty is connected with urban renewal and heart



A teenager from Rosedale participates in an area youth program that pays young people to work in gardens and clear vacant lots in their community. Photo courtesy of Terry Slaughter.

renewal."

That's why, for example, to the trained eye, a shed next to the house is more than just a shed. The camera obscura architecture allows light that comes through a small hole in the front of the building to reflect an image of the garden onto an interior wall.

Next steps

Slaughter believes that the next key steps for Rosedale's revitalization lie in architecture and new residents, and architects he knows have drawn up plans for it.

"I think Rosedale will be a vibrant, diverse community," he

said. "The dream is that a diverse group of people — affluent and not, educated and not — will have one thing in common and want to live a peaceful, beautiful life together."

To him, it has the potential to be a true New Urbanist community where residents can walk to any kind of amenity in downtown Homewood. The area is zoned for Homewood City Schools. But he doesn't envision new "cool" people moving in to the point where longtime residents leave. Family roots are too deep for that, he said.

"I think people who want to move into Rosedale will want to because

they think that is what their calling is," he said. "They are wanting to make a change in people's hearts and to be part of the change. They will be interested in urban renewal and heart renewal."

Among the drawings his architectural clients have created is a 600-square-foot modern structure that could cost around \$70,000. Another was modeled after a library in New York and would come with a price tag around \$225,000.

"All it would take is for one or two houses [of inspiration] to pop up that people will see," he said. "I want to build houses that architects would

drive by just to look at the house."

Slaughter is now working with Tim Coker of developer CPM to bring to life his dream for little, modern houses to be tucked into the Rosedale landscape. He hopes to complete the first house before the end of 2014.

"We are now on the tipping point," he said. "People are starting to see an investment in the area."

Slaughter plans to begin construction a new office building for his branding company, Slaughter Group, and Simon Cyrene, the nonprofit arm over the Rosedale efforts, behind Iron Tribe at the border of Rosedale. Next to the modern studio structure will be a new duplex in place of an old one with a similar style of design. These will house future interns who will work with and in the community in exchange for a free place to live.

Recently, Coker has been petitioning the City of Homewood to rezone the duplex site from neighborhood preservation district to mixed use, which raised opposition from neighbors. Lifelong Rosedale resident George Terry said they are concerned that more of Rosedale's residential spaces will be developed commercially in the future.

"It's a small portion, but we know it will eventually start getting bigger," he said. "Once you start with commercial development, it will grow more and more, and people will have nowhere to go."

City Council member Michael Hallman said residents have told him that the City promised the last time they rezoned neighboring property for commercial use that they would not do so in the future, and that families who have lived in the area for multiple generations feel like this is a violation of that promise.

"All they really want is to be left alone," Hallman said. "They don't



Terry Slaughter works with children after school in Rosedale. Photo by Karim Shamsi-Basha.

want the historic nature of Rosedale torn down, because they take a lot of pride in what they do have.”

The council will vote on the rezoning at its June 9 meeting.

The future

In many ways, Slaughter said he has failed. Almost a decade in, he has yet to be able to build affordable housing for the community. Sometimes when he and his wife drive down 27th Avenue South, she reminds him that, from the outside, it doesn't look any different than it did years ago.

Still, he said this is where he feels like he has been placed.

On the days when he can barely discern a thumbprint of change, he envisions longtime Rosedale resident David Thomas, who cuts the grass at the red brick house, and Miss Rosa from across the street, sitting next to a CEO from a client of Slaughter Group for lunch.

And he thinks of Chapman's words.

“I'm 62 now and might be 92 before anything happens, but I believe in my heart that it's about to happen,” he said.

“I can see past what's not there, because I know what's going to be there.”

To learn more, visit simoncvrene.org.

BUDDY

Continued from page 1

Each year after the festival, Buddy would buy all the remaining barbecue and take it to the Homewood Police Department and Homewood Fire Department for dinner. He could also be found at Homewood festivals giving ride tickets to children or passing out dessert from the Rotary bake sale. He sought out the park employees, helped them take out the trash and then gave them a ticket for a barbecue plate.

At the annual Our Lady of Sorrows Fourth of July festival, he would always wash the dishes because he knew no one else wanted that job.

At school auctions, he would bid on items he didn't necessarily want to create activity on the bid, and after he won an item, he would give it to the person he had outbid. He'd never let that person pay him back for the item, though. He was making a donation to the school, he said.

“Dad didn't want recognition for any of what he did,” Billy said. “He did it because he loved people so much.”

In a celebration of Buddy's life on May 14, the Homewood High School Band and Star Spangled Girls performed, and Mayor Scott McBrayer issued a proclamation declaring May 8 as Buddy Wade Day because, he said, the city “has lost a great friend in Buddy Wade.”

Although Buddy's wife, Cindy, retired in 1998 from leading the Star Spangled Girls at Homewood High School, Buddy continued to act as the “father” for the group, assisting students off the field who got sick or overheated. For the band trip to the Rose Bowl this year, he and Cindy gave up their spots on the trip to pay for more students to attend — one of many stories telling of Buddy's generosity to the community.

Born in Alden (near Leeds) in 1942, Buddy grew up moving schools often as his parents followed construction jobs around Birmingham. He worked his way through college, studying civil engineering at Southeastern University and microbiology at Louisiana State University, where he met Cindy.

“I couldn't trust anyone to lead me through life until I met Buddy,” Cindy said, noting how he made sure they studied together before they went out on a date. “He totally changed my ambition to be the best I could be. We were married for 45 years, and it still felt like a date when we went out.”

After earning a degree in pharmacy from Samford University in 1970, Buddy would work less than two years as pharmacist before moving into sales and property management.

Cindy said Buddy's State Farm agency of 42 years was marked by his honesty and sincerity. His office manager of 34 years, Lori Zucco, had become like a family member to the Wades. But that was only one of his entrepreneurial endeavors, which included a mini storage business and various commercial real estate



Buddy Wade ate breakfast at Demetri's every weekday morning, including the day he passed away.

properties.

“His hobby was working,” Billy said, noting how his dad's idea of a fun time was working on his properties.

Buddy's daughter, Katie Wade Faught, recalled how her dad was always doing something he could have hired someone else to do, and always teaching her to be a businesswoman. Under his guidance, at age 19 she took over running Applause Dancewear, which he and Cindy opened in 1981. Also at 19, both Katie and her brother bought their first properties.

“There is nothing more uplifting to me than when my dad would come into the store every day and tell me he was proud of what I had done,” Katie said.

Outside of his devotion to the people of Homewood, Buddy was passionate about his collection of hundreds of antique clocks and traveling westward. He completed several marathons and hiked in and out of the Grand Canyon in the years that followed a five-way bypass heart surgery in 1993.

When Billy was 16, father and son took off for Alaska by car with no itinerary, stopped at places like the Grand Canyon and Mount Rushmore on the way. Billy remembers how they chased a grizzly bear up a hill in their car once they arrived.

“If you dreamed it, we'd go do it,” he said.

Today, Cindy recognizes that her “business manager” is gone, but she knows what he shared with others, especially his devotion to his children and grandchildren, Wade and Hogan Bexley and Abbey Wade, will live on.