

Central Community House east Columbus' neighborhood hub

From **Business First** by **Melissa Dutton**

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Janet Adams | Business First

Pamela McCarthy, executive director of Central Community House, standing, shares a joke with a group of senior ladies who like to visit the community center on Columbus' east side every day for lunch and friendship.

Katerina Harris is proud of her connection to Central Community House.

The staff at the nonprofit organization have positively impacted her life, the 18-year-old said.

“I built relationships there that I’m proud of,” Harris said of the near-east-side settlement house that focuses on strengthening families and building a sense of community in the city’s southeastern neighborhoods.

Harris, a student at [Columbus State Community College](#), attended Central Community House’s after-school program and worked as an intern for the organization’s Transit Arts program, which gives teens the chance to explore the arts. She’s hopeful those experiences will help her succeed in college and in the work force.

Since its inception 75 years ago, the organization has worked to help families become more self sufficient, said Executive Director **Pamela McCarthy**.

“We want to know what their issues are so we can focus on them – help them cope, move forward and make steps toward improving their lives,” she said.

The organization works to build the social fabric of the community, McCarthy said.

“We’re helping families build networks,” she said. “Young people need to be in loving, stable, nurturing families and families need to be supported by the community.”

The organization helps families by offering child care, youth and family services and neighborhood programs. The services run the gamut from senior activities to home-buying classes to health screenings to job-hunting help.

“People are so overwhelmed. We’re helping people sort it out,” McCarthy said. “We’re helping them to build their confidence so they’re not frozen in place.”

Welfare reform

Providing child care became a priority for the organization after the Welfare Reform Act went into effect. The 1996 law contains strong work requirements for welfare recipients.

“There was a huge need for child care,” McCarthy said.

At the time, Central Community House had programs only for preschool-aged children. The organization has since expanded its child care center to include children as young as 6 weeks. Fees are based on a sliding scale.

The programs are designed to give youngsters the skills they need to succeed in school and in life, McCarthy said. The programs focus on teaching social skills and meeting developmental milestones.

Children who are old enough to attend school can participate in the organization’s after-school and summer programs. The after-school program offers homework assistance, art experiences and physical activities. The summer program includes a combination of recreational and education activities.

Central Community House is majority funded by the [United Way](#) and through government grants and is a member of the Columbus Federation of Settlement Houses.

Whole-family help

Serena Harris, Katerina’s mother, said she appreciates the efforts of those involved with the programs. The staff provide positive role models for all four of her children, she said. She’s grateful that her children have a place to go while she’s at work.

“It’s important to me that my kids have a safe place to go,” she said. “My kids have fun there.”

The programs also have provided the children with opportunities to experience art and culture that they would not have had, she said.

“It’s had a great impact on our lives,” Serena Harris said.

She also has taken advantage of some of the other programs at the center. The organization has provided her with boxes of food, assistance paying her utilities and help at Christmas time.

“They’ve had a great impact on my family,” she said. “I’d be more worried and stressed out if I didn’t have Central Community House.”

Central Community House 1150 E. Main St. Columbus, 43205 Phone: 614-252-3157
Fax: 614-252-9164

Website: cchouse.org

Mission: To be a comprehensive, neighborhood-based community center serving the near east side of Columbus in the settlement house tradition since 1936.

Executive staff: Pamela McCarthy, executive director; LaShawn Capito, director of community services; and Tammy Freeman, director of child care center.

Board members: Tamara Cross, president; Monika Roberts, vice president; Laura Fuller, treasurer; Tina Watkins, secretary; Ron Arledge; Jim Arter; Heather Bowden; Dr. Ron Bloomfield; Scott Campbell; Allison Dassani; Shawn Dingus; Anneka Drafton; Laura Fuller; Alisa Hillmon; Felix Klebe; Art Krumsee; Kelly McNeil; John Sunami; Annette Tucker; Tina Watkins; and Linda Wilkins.

Paid staff: 27 Volunteers: 50

Annual fundraisers: Emergence of Spring art show and wine tasting, May; and Village Makers Awards, September.

Member of: Columbus Federation of Settlements

Quick facts: • Located in an area where more than one in three households lives below federal poverty level. • Serves more than 3,000 people a year.