

# NLI NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER

Neighborhood Leadership Institute *Greater Cleveland's Connection to Neighborhood Leadership and Community Engagement*

## NLC Grad's Leadership Journey: *Training and Networking Are Key*

Spring 2007  
Volume III, Issue 1

There is no question that the Reverend Ric Wilberg was already a grassroots community leader long before he graduated from Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland (Class 22) in the spring of 2006.

Back in 2004 Rev. Wilberg, then the pastor at Denison Avenue United Church of Christ, had taken the initiative to address a need that he saw in Cleveland's West Side neighborhoods: He and his wife, Barbara, created the Joyful Noise Music School, a free music school for children who cannot afford music lessons.

One might think that a person such as Rev. Wilberg—a longtime pastor and successful program founder—would hardly need a program like Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland. Yet his experiences over the past few years demonstrate the many benefits of participating in the Neighborhood Leadership Institute's growing network of grassroots leaders, training programs, and institutional partnerships.

The Joyful Noise Music School began late in the 2003-2004 school year with 13 students. With an eye toward expanding the program for the 2004-2005 school year, Rev. Wilberg applied for and received a grant from Neighborhood Connections, a Cleveland Foundation initiative that provides small grants to neighborhood projects in Cleveland.

It was through Neighborhood Connections that Rev. Wilberg first came in contact with the Neighborhood Leadership Institute (NLI). Since the inception of the small grants program, Neighborhood Connections has contracted with NLI to provide technical assistance to grantees. Rev. Wilberg worked with then-NLI staff member Lee Gleason Kay (Class 15).

In the fall of 2005, Kay urged Rev. Wilberg to apply to Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland. At first



Rev. Ric Wilberg (right) with NLC classmates Sarah Beiderman and Erik Johnson.

Rev. Wilberg dismissed the idea, telling Kay that a younger person would surely be a better fit for the class. But Kay persisted, explaining to Rev. Wilberg that class members typically ranged in age from 20 to 80 and that the diversity of participants was one of the program's greatest strengths.

Rev. Wilberg submitted his application, and he was called in for an interview. When he arrived for his interview, Rev. Wilberg encountered a familiar face in NLI board member Julie Candela (Class 15), whom he had met years before when Candela was running for the Ward 18 City Council seat.

Candela recommended Rev. Wilberg for admission to Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland, but she did not stop there. Candela works at Baldwin-Wallace College, an institution renowned for its music programs. She put Rev. Wilberg in touch with the director of one of the college's summer music programs. As a result of that connection, Baldwin-Wallace offered to reserve six scholarships for Joyful Noise students to attend a summer music camp at the college.

*Continued on page 3*

# Grassroots Leadership



**Don Slocum**  
Executive Director

## Leadership Link

Mayor Frank Jackson of Cleveland recently delivered his "State of the City" address. You can listen to the speech by going to the Web site of the City Club of Cleveland ([www.cityclub.org](http://www.cityclub.org)) and clicking on "podcasts." The text of the speech is also posted on the City of Cleveland's Web site at [www.city.cleveland.oh.us](http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us).

While you're browsing through the list of City Club podcasts, check out the February 23 speech by Angela Blackwell of PolicyLink. She urged Northeast Ohioans to pay attention to equity as we continue discussions of regionalism. NLI had a full table of attendees at the speech.

We also had a full table at the February 28 presentation by Juan Williams of National Public Radio and FoxNews. Williams spoke about "The Leadership Challenge for Black America."

We have DVDs of the speeches by Blackwell and Williams. Call the NLI office if you would like to borrow them.

## Neighborhood Linkages

### *Dear Neighbor,*

The story of Rev. Ric Wilberg and the Joyful Noise Music School (see page 1) once again demonstrates the power of NLI's network. When the graduates of our leadership programs work together, wonderful results tend to follow. That is why NLI's role as a connector and network-builder is so important.

But NLI does more than just connect grassroots leaders to one another. We also create what we call "neighborhood linkages," connections that link our grassroots leaders to local institutions that desire community input and involvement.

NLI's work with The Cleveland Foundation is a perfect example of the neighborhood linkage concept. In addition to being a grantee of the foundation, NLI is also a program partner.

The partnership began in 2003, NLI's first year of existence. At the time, The Cleveland Foundation was launching Neighborhood Connections, an initiative designed to provide small grants for neighborhood improvement projects. Foundation staff sought out NLI to help applicants navigate the grant process and to assist grantees with project planning and management.

We also spread the word about the grants throughout the NLI network. Our efforts to publicize the grant program have been quite successful. Since 2003 more than 40 projects involving graduates of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland have received Neighborhood Connections grants.

In addition to being recipients of grants, NLI graduates have played an important role as grantmakers. Over the past four years, nine of our graduates have been selected to serve on the Neighborhood Connections Grant Making and Monitoring Committee. NLI staff provided initial training for the committee.

In 2006 The Cleveland Foundation started another new initiative called Project Access. Project Access makes training available to faith-based and community-based organizations. Once again The Cleveland Foundation sought the involvement of NLI to make the link to grassroots leaders.

And once again we put the word out. As a result, seven members of the first graduating class of Project Access were also graduates of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland. Jacquie Gillon and I served as trainers and coaches for several of the participants.

I am grateful that organizations such as The Cleveland Foundation recognize the importance of reaching out to grassroots leaders and that they see NLI as an effective vehicle for doing so. Thanks to the neighborhood linkages that NLI creates, community institutions get citizen input and participation, and community residents get access to much-needed resources.

Warmest Regards,

*Don*

The Neighborhood Leadership Institute exists to develop grassroots leadership that will contribute to rebuilding the bonds of community and improving the quality of life for neighborhood residents throughout the Greater Cleveland area

# Leadership in Action

## NLC Grad's Leadership Journey

*Continued from page 1*

When Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland classes began, Rev. Wilberg quickly established a strong rapport with his



diverse classmates, including Sarah Beiderman, a residency coordinator for the SPACES art gallery in Cleveland. Impressed with Beiderman's knowledge of and commitment to the arts, Rev. Wilberg invited her to serve as a board member for Joyful Noise.

Beiderman has thrown her energies into supporting Joyful Noise. In February she turned her birthday party into a fundraiser for the music school.

After his graduation from Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland, Rev. Wilberg joined another Cleveland Foundation program. Project Access, which the foundation operates in partnership with the Board of County Commissioners, helps faith-based and community-based organizations



Photos by Jerry Mann

build organizational capacity. Included among the "coaches" who provide training are NLI's Don Slocum and Jacquie Gillon.

"We knew we needed some more training," says Rev. Wilberg. Project Access sessions addressed topics important to his growing program, including fundraising, strategic planning, recruitment, volunteer management, and marketing. Upon Rev. Wilberg's completion of the training program, Project Access made a grant of \$5,000 to Joyful Noise for marketing and strategic planning. Rev. Wilberg hopes to develop a strategic plan that will serve as a roadmap for expanding the program.

From the initial class of 13 students, Joyful Noise has grown to include 105 children in the current program year. Rev.



Wilberg would like to see the program develop the capacity to serve 250 children. He would also like to expand the program offerings beyond instrumental music. This year's program includes the first classes in vocal music and a new partnership with Lakewood's Beck Center that makes drama classes available. Rev. Wilberg hopes to add a dance class next year.

While Joyful Noise may hire its first staff person (part-time) next year, the program's accomplishments to date have been powered entirely by volunteers. Fourteen volunteer instructors, whose musical backgrounds vary from Juilliard-trained to self-taught, provide the instruction. Rev. Wilberg says of the program, "It really is a great testimony to volunteerism." And to what grassroots leaders can accomplish when they connect with and learn from one another.

**The Joyful Noise Music School needs teachers, certain board positions, and board committee members. If you would like to volunteer in any of these capacities, please contact Rev. Ric Wilberg: (216) 671-5528 or [revricjw@adelphia.net](mailto:revricjw@adelphia.net).**

# What's Inside

## Neighborhood Leader

Spring 2007  
Volume III, Issue 1

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### SUPPORT FOR NLI HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY:

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CLEVELAND CITY COUNCIL  
EVA L. & JOSEPH M. BRUENING FOUNDATION  
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## NLI NOTES

The graduation ceremony for Class 23 of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland will be held on Thursday, May 10, at 7 p.m. The ceremony is supported by a grant of \$3,000 from the Parker Hannifin Foundation.

NLI has received a substantial donation of fitness equipment and office supplies from Philips Medical Systems. The equipment will be used at NLI's Schools As Neighborhood Resources sites.

NLI has received a grant of \$5,000 from the Roy A. Hunt Foundation to support youth violence prevention efforts.

Through a new partnership with Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court, NLI is providing leadership workshops for pre-teen and teenage girls who are on probation. NLC graduate **Charmin Leon** (Class 21) is leading the workshops.

The 2007 Cleveland Leadership Summit will be held on Saturday, April 21, at the Cleveland City Hall Rotunda. This year's summit focuses on youth.

NLI staff member **Jacquie Gillon** has been chosen to participate in the James P. Shannon Leadership Institute, a program for experienced civic and philanthropic leaders.

### Check Your E-Mail

NLI sends out weekly e-mail announcements every Friday. If you are not currently receiving the announcements, please call Jason Lewis at NLI to get on the mailing list.

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