



Wells Fargo's Leslie Hayes presents the check to Habitat Executive Director Sylvia Oberle as volunteers look on.



Dozens lent their time to the effort on Saturday.

## Habitat Forsyth kicks-off NR program

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County, in partnership with the residents of the North Cherry Street area, officially kicked off Neighborhood Revitalization (NR) with a clean-up and celebration day on Saturday, June 23 at Kimberley Park Elementary School.

Residents and volunteers from the Kimberley Park/North Cherry

Street/Glenn Oaks areas, along with volunteers from Wells Fargo, took part in the effort. They worked in the North Cherry and West 23rd streets area.

During the event, Wells Fargo presented Habitat a check for \$140,000 to help launch NR. The program is part of a national Habitat effort to rehabilitate entire existing neighborhoods in addition to its traditional model of building new

homes. Habitat partnered with Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods to convene a group of interested residents this spring. At the first meeting, the residents held a "visioning session" in which they drew images and discussed their dreams for the area and concerns they would like to address. Among the goals the residents identified were improving the safety and appearance of the neighbor-

hood, which includes some vacant, overgrown lots and houses that are either boarded up or in poor condition.

Out of that meeting grew a coalition of residents who organized the community day as their first major project, said Patricia Caldwell, a leader of the residents' group.

"Community Day is important because it allows neighborhoods to come together with a sense

of pride to work with Habitat and other city organizations to build strong and safe communities," Caldwell said. "When I became involved with our neighborhood association, it gave me a greater appreciation and respect for families that made the neighborhood a very special place to live for so many years."

For now, Habitat will concentrate its NR work in the Cherry Street area because of the organization's previous involvement there. Since 2009, Habitat has built 55 new homes in the neighborhood, and private developers renovated several existing houses and historically significant "Y" staircase apartment buildings.

### Teen Night

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Johnson explained.

"It could have been tied back to the economy and parents not wanting to drive their children across town," she said of Teen Night, which drew a modest sampling of youngsters to the centers last week. "That was part of the thought process of us getting back to the local communities."

The city has offered localized programs for teens in the past and seen solid attendance, Scott-Johnson said, and she expects the turnout of roughly 60 youth across the three centers will grow. Scott-Johnson said it is important for the Department to incorporate programming for adolescents in its offerings regardless of whether the programs draw large crowds or small groups.

"I think it's important for their own self esteem for them to feel valued. It's just an additional way to say (to teens), 'We do care about you guys and we want you to have a grand time at our facilities,'" she remarked. "If we get 50 kids in here on a Friday night, that would be great because that's 50 kids that are in a positive environment."

Late Night Rec Leader Ashley Brown said she



Photo by Layla Garmy  
Stefonz Carter

believes hosting Teen Night at the MLK Center where she has worked the past four summers might help to pique the interest of neighborhood teens who might not have been able to make it to the MIX.

"I think the thing that was hindering them from going to Hanes Hosiery was transportation," said the 26 year-old. "Everybody doesn't have transportation."

Jasmine Williams was among those who came out to Teen Night at the MLK Center. Jasmine, a rising sophomore at Mount Tabor, said the program offered a welcome chance to get out of the house on a balmy Friday

evening.

"I came just to come," said the 15 year-old, who lives close enough to walk to the center. "It's alright."

Thirteen year-old Stefonz Carter was loving every minute of his time at the MLK Teen Night. The rising seventh grader duked it out with his friends on the Xbox Kinect, trying his hands at everything from boxing to the "Michael Jackson: The Experience" dancing game.

Stefonz, who plays basketball at the center almost everyday, said the game system, which allows players to control the games by moving their bodies, gave him a serious workout.

"I've played on the Wii, but I've never played on the Kinect. It was a little chal-


leging but fun," Stefonz said, still panting from his exertion during the game. "...it's harder, but it'll get you more active than the Wii does. It's just like playing basketball downstairs."

Stefonz said the game system was what drew him in. He plans to become a regular at Teen Night and said he highly recommends it to his peers.

"They should come out," he said of fellow teens. "Anytime they have the time to play, they should come out and have fun."

For more information about Teen Night, visit [www.cityofws.org](http://www.cityofws.org) or call City Link, 311.

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