

The Beacon

Building
HOMES
Fulfilling
DREAMS
Enhancing
COMMUNITIES



Paying it forward

People in north Omaha can see that Brian Newman gives back to his community, but he wants to make sure everyone knows there's a reason.

Because others have given to him, he's able to pass it on to others.

Newman's BP regularly donates to causes its owner believes in, such as March of Dimes and the Special Olympics.

"We donate to such causes all the time," Newman said.

The Omaha native is thankful. He credits Steve Buchanan, a BP distributor and owner of the Bucky's Convenience Stores in Omaha, and Monte Brown of Colombo Candy for enabling him to donate items for youth and children through Newman's BP.

"You've got some people in different places who do care," he said.

Now Newman is looking for people to step up and help him with a cause he cares deeply about – reducing the violence among young people in north Omaha.

"I'm a supporter of the youth," he said. "I would like to help stop the violence, if I could do that by myself."

Financial IMPACT

Newman hires local residents, shows 'what could be'

For more than 40 years, there's been a certain gas station on the corner of 30th Street and Ames Avenue.

Brian Newman grew up in the same north Omaha neighborhood, graduated from Boys Town in 1989 and has spent his life investing in the community. Ten years ago, he bought the station. It made sense. They seemed to belong together.

"This is a pivot point," he said. "It's right in the middle of everything."

That's where you can find Newman. He's still surrounded by people he grew up around, and he likes living where everyone knows each other.

"Ames Avenue is pretty much the spinal cord of north Omaha," said Jay Saunders, a regular customer at Newman's BP, which was an Amoco station until Newman became its owner in July 2000.

And the gas station is a nerve center.

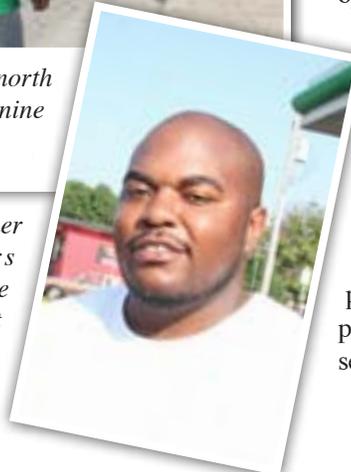
"It's been around a long time; it's been consistent," Saunders said. "It's a place that's been in the neighborhood a long time and people are familiar with it; people are comfortable with it."

Since he bought the business, Newman has added curb appeal. He remodeled the main building, installed new signage and pumps. He keeps the station open 24/7 and has hired nine employees – two full time and seven part-time.

"What I like about Brian, is he gives opportunities to people in the neighborhood who might not otherwise have employment opportunities," said Saunders, an employment specialist for an Omaha-based telecommunications firm. "Everybody knows him. He's always laughing and cracking jokes. He always has his hand open if you need his help with anything. I think it's great that people from this neighborhood are employed there. He goes above and beyond to see that people have those chances."



Brian Newman grew up in north Omaha and now employs nine people there.



Regular customer Jay Saunders recognizes the value that Newman's BP brings to the community.

ECONOMIC STIMULATOR

NeighborWorks worth \$100 million to local economy

A study by Creighton University's College of Business Administration lays out evidence that NeighborWorks Omaha has made an economic impact of more than \$100 million in the Omaha economy from 2001-2009.

It cited \$48.7 million in direct spending, plus nearly \$70 million in secondary spending. The Creighton study broke down the direct spending as follows:

- \$31.7 million spent on single-family home and multiple-family housing projects, including Long School live-work townhouses, the Miami Heights market-rate housing development and Salem Village senior community.
- \$17 million in staff salaries and purchases.

The high amount of secondary spending indicates that businesses and households involved with NeighborWorks tend to buy within their community.

All told, NeighborWorks accounted for \$116.1 million of activity in the local economy, the study concluded.

Authored by Dr. Ernie Goss, economics professor at Creighton, the study said NeighborWorks has been effective by creating and maintaining partnerships with the City of Omaha, and with key organizations in the private sector, including financial entities. It praised NeighborWorks for providing training to more than 900 entrepreneurs and helping both start-up and existing businesses with loans, counseling and networking opportunities.



The Long School live-work townhouses on 24th Street represent a portion of the more than \$100 million impact that NeighborWorks had on the Omaha economy from 2001-2009.

Private sector involvement has been a key. Although NeighborWorks has been successful attracting government grants, it obtained more than \$2.75 in private support for every dollar it spent during the eight-year period covered by the study.

Featured in a story in the July 13 Omaha World-Herald, the study provides evidence that the organization is in line with its mission statement, "NeighborWorks Omaha rekindles pride in neighborhoods and ignites investments in the community."



NeighborWorks contributes to small business growth through its Development Loan Fund, as well as training and technical services.

Financial IMPACT

"Without the customers, we wouldn't be anything. They're beautiful people."

— Brian Newman

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NeighborWorks recently loaned Newman \$25,000 to help build up his business, which understandably took a financial hit during the uproar caused by the massive BP oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico. Things are starting to improve again, Newman said.

He also owns residential real estate. There's a waiting list of people who hope to rent his properties, and he wants to create more opportunity.

"My five-year plan is to buy more stations, to buy more land and property," he said.

But he's not going to lose track of the landmark at 30th and Ames, the place where kids from several different high schools keep in touch.

"Since it's been here so long, it's historical; we've had a lot of generations come through here," Newman said. "Without the customers, we wouldn't be anything. They're beautiful people. It's the people who really make the community work. At the end of the day, it's like any city — people have to work together to make it what it could be."

Newman has a history of overcoming obstacles. At age 13, he enrolled himself in Boys Town, and got an education. Now the young entrepreneur who never knew his own father and saw his mother die young is in a key position to help stabilize north Omaha. He's showing the way things can be, and NeighborWorks is a partner in that process.

Newman said consistency is important in growing a community, and NeighborWorks helps provide support for families with its ongoing investment and leadership.



Starting out working for pizza places while in high school, Jacobie Ross stayed focused on his financial goals and eventually landed a full-time job in environmental services at UNMC's Hixson-Lied Center. Along the way, he's saved enough money to buy his own three-bedroom home.

'I JUST KEPT PUSHING'

Hard work, thrift pay off for young homeowner

Jacobie Ross started by envisioning a good future for himself. But he didn't stop there.

Taking the next step – thinking through life goals and putting together a plan – is a bit harder. Being disciplined enough to put that plan into motion is even more challenging, but Ross has done it.

A lifelong resident of north Omaha, Ross has used his own work ethic, good financial advice from his mother and some help from NeighborWorks to buy a home of his own at age 26.

Buying his three-bedroom, two-bathroom home at 5315 N. 48th Ave., provided him a sense of pride and accomplishment. Ross admits there were delays and frustrations along the way. The main reason he overcame those setbacks was a willingness to work hard at a variety of jobs he did not always find pleasant – and to save a good percentage of the money he earned.

"I just kept pushing myself. I just got up and did it," Ross said. "I said, 'I'm going to get up; I'm going to go.' I don't want to sit around the house all day."

The job application process was tough. He filled out lots of applications, and although he never heard back from many potential employers, he landed some interviews.

"It was a big struggle," he said. "But it was worth it."

Ross is used to pushing himself. He eventually got a couple of jobs that he likes much better, and he currently works about 60 hours a week while he tries to solidify his financial position.

Ross's employment history started when he was a junior at Omaha Northwest High School. He worked at pizza places for the first few years, then got involved with Omaha Public Schools as an assistant teacher for a kids' club, then at a glass molding company.

Ross now gets up early for his 5:30 a.m. shift at the University of Nebraska Medical Center's Hixson-Lied Center, where he's worked since February 2009. As an environmental services employee, he sterilizes medical equipment and facilities, including operating rooms.

Since October 2006, he has worked for FedEx at Eppley Airfield, where he loads packages onto planes and trucks. Typically, he works the 6-10 p.m. shift four nights a week, and 4-9 p.m. on Sundays.

All the work could have been for nothing if he had frittered away his money. He had to go without many things as a child, but money is not a problem for him these days.

Ross recommends setting financial goals, then adjusting your behavior to reach those goals.

"Don't over-budget yourself," he said. "If you're going to go broke, don't buy it. Wait and come back and get it later. The stuff is always going to be there."

Which leads back to the house. He had lived with his mother, which enabled him to save money much quicker, but the day came when he moved out – largely because of his mom's contacts with friends at church who were helped by their involvement with NeighborWorks.

"If it weren't for her, I'd never be where I am now," Ross said.

The NeighborWorks team worked many days finding the right home and financing package for him. The fit had to be right, said Ken Lyons, President and CEO.

"Young men like Mr. Ross will help rebuild north Omaha to a place of respectability and desirability," Lyons said. "He will be a pillar in the community for years to come."

It was a 10-month process, but Ross's patience paid off when he moved in.

"It took me a couple of weeks to get used to it, since I'd never been on my own," he said. "But the wait was worth it. I'm enjoying it."

Mission Statement:

NeighborWorks Omaha rekindles pride in neighborhoods and ignites investments in the community.



"I had no familiarity with NeighborWorks. It's so impressive. It's making a huge difference in the lives of these kids."

— Ellen Duysen,
UNMC researcher

Ellen Duysen, researcher at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, verified the success of NeighborWorks' Lead Elimination Action Program.

UNLEADED

UNMC researcher documents LEAP's success

A University of Nebraska Medical Center study shows that lead abatement practices sponsored by NeighborWorks Omaha are effective in dramatically reducing the probability of lead poisoning in young children.

From the 1870s through the early 1990s, Omaha had several refineries that emitted airborne lead particles that contaminated the soil. Consequently, it's the largest such residential Environmental Protection Agency Superfund cleanup site in the nation. In 2008, NeighborWorks received a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Lead Elimination Action Program, designed to reduce the amount of lead contamination within the 68111 ZIP code.

LEAP is on the right track, according to a master's thesis project conducted by Ellen Duysen, a UNMC researcher.

Earlier this year, Duysen studied 90 Omaha homes built pre-1978 (the year that lead-based paint was banned). NeighborWorks-affiliated contractors removed lead from those homes during 2009. She concluded that homes populated by Omaha children with high levels in their blood were much older than those populated by children with normal levels, and that paint dust in interior window troughs and sills was a significant factor in lead poisoning. A high level of lead was defined as 9.5 micrograms per deciliter or higher.

All 90 homes had a child 6 years of age or younger. Under Duysen's direction, those children had their lead levels tested before their homes were abated and again afterward. UNMC and NeighborWorks obtained a grant to pay for the testing. The results were clear.

"The exciting part was that every child either went down or stayed at the low level they already were at," Duysen said.

Records kept by the Douglas County Health Department and Duysen's study both show the effectiveness of LEAP.

"This is statistically significant," Duysen said.

The project fits the NeighborWorks model of improving north Omaha housing. Another NeighborWorks partner, the Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance, provided a cleaning kit for each household and more information about how to keep the home safe.

Chris Grummons, LEAP Project Manager, said it's gratifying to see evidence that lead abatement improves the physical well-being of others.

"We hope that what we've taught helps these folks be aware of the hazards that are in older homes," Grummons said. "Hopefully, Ellen's study will educate the homeowners on some of these hazards."

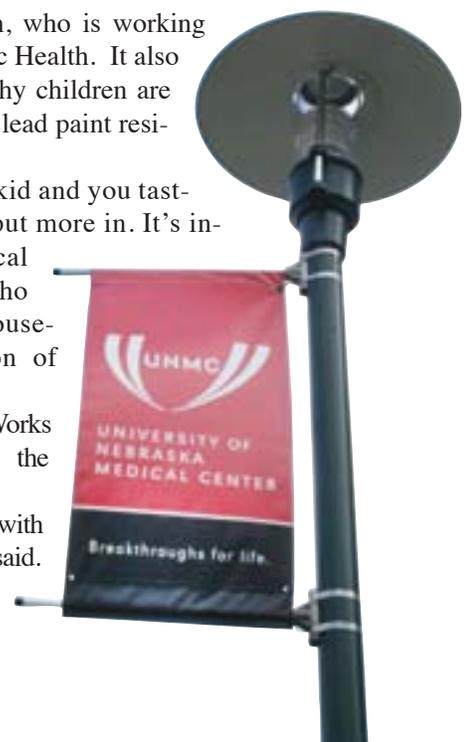
The project helped fulfill educational requirements for Duysen, who is working toward a Master of Public Health. It also helped her understand why children are drawn toward dangerous lead paint residue, which tastes sweet.

"If you were a little kid and you tasted it, you'd attempt to put more in. It's insidious, a terrible cyclical thing," said Duysen, who visited each of the households at the conclusion of her study.

Duysen said NeighborWorks is making an impact in the community.

"I had no familiarity with NeighborWorks," Duysen said.

"It's so impressive. It's making a huge difference in the lives of these kids."



LOWERING LEAD LEVELS

Window replacement improves health of 4-year-old boy

When Rhoda Bearfield and her two children moved into their house at 4128 N. 19th St., she already was monitoring the health of her son.

Doctors at the Charles Drew Health Center in Omaha discovered high levels of lead in the bloodstream of Ahmani Bearfield, 4, when Rhoda took him for a checkup. Ahmani's sister, 6-year-old Dynasty, did not have any symptoms.

Rhoda was participating in the Women, Infants and Children federal nutrition program, so she started getting free information about health issues, including lead poisoning.

"I did notice his anger and aggression had increased at day care," Rhoda said. "I was concerned about that. It made me start looking at his environment. I started reading those pamphlets a little more, and realized it's one of the symptom that goes with lead poisoning."

Rhoda altered Ahmani's diet, but that didn't affect the lead levels.

That's about the time the family moved to 19th Street, and at their next doctor visit, the lead levels increased dramatically – to 19 micrograms per deciliter, about

twice the amount usually considered as a high level of lead.

The clinic reported the results to the Douglas County Health Department. The clinic also referred Rhoda to NeighborWorks Omaha, recommending she take advantage of LEAP.

Before Rhoda moved into the house, most of the standard remedial action already had been taken – much of the house had been repainted; the soil in the yard had been replaced and covered by sod. The windows were the main sources of lead paint remaining.

Paint had been flaking off in powdered form whenever the windows were opened and closed, and Ahmani had been licking the sweet-tasting powder off his fingers.

Soon, NeighborWorks was in touch with contractors who replaced the windows in Rhoda's home and painted two rooms. Then the house was professionally cleaned.

Within a month after getting new windows, Rhoda had Ahmani tested again. His lead levels had fallen about 50 percent.

Helping children like Ahmani escape

the health hazards of lead poisoning is why NeighborWorks is involved with LEAP.

"It was a major thing for Ahmani," Rhoda said.

So far, LEAP has been available through NeighborWorks only for homes in ZIP code 68111. That will change soon. Ken Lyons, President and CEO, said he and the NeighborWorks board are reviewing areas farther to the north and south that have a large number of homes potentially at risk for lead poisoning, and will write a new grant request targeting their selected areas.

Spreading LEAP to new neighborhoods will help give more kids a chance to get started in life free from the hazards of lead poisoning.

"It's absolutely necessary to get outside 68111. It's such a small portion of north Omaha," Lyons said. "I think it's essential we get out and help fix some of these houses for lower-income families and let them know what resources are out there for help."

Lyons said he hopes to have a new grant up and running by Jan. 1.



"I did notice his anger and aggression had increased at day care. I was concerned about that. It made me start looking at his environment."

— Rhoda Bearfield

Rhoda Bearfield – shown with Ahmani, left, and Dynasty – sees the difference replacing the lead paint-contaminated windows at 4128 N. 19th St. has made in the health of her 4-year-old son.

Community Partners

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 Charles Drew Medical Center
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 Nebraska, Inc
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 Nebraska Department of Economic
 Development
 Nebraska Investment Finance Authority
 NeighborWorksAmerica
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 Omaha Economic Development Corporation
 Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance
 Salem Baptist Church
 Security National Bank
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 The Weitz Funds

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Building Homes,
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DOING HER PART

Hankins is valuable member of NeighborWorks team

Jacqueline Hankins is right in the middle of the success of NeighborWorks Omaha. In August, the NeighborWorks staff congratulated Hankins on her three-year work anniversary.

Hankins, Office Manager, started in August 2007 as a receptionist and quickly worked her way up.

As office manager, she is a key part of many NeighborWorks initiatives, including

Business Services, where she coordinates training, technical service, lending and networking; and LEAP, where she coordinates the selection of contractors for lead abatement work.

She efficiently works with a wide variety of people, said Receptionist Trina Brown.

"She keeps things in order," Brown said. "She's very professional and pleasant."

Ken Lyons, president and CEO, said Hankins is someone who sees the good in everyone.

"Jackie is always so upbeat about life," Lyons said. "She likes people and it shows every day, in every way. Jackie is the straw that stirs the drink."



Shortly after being hired in August 2007 Jacqueline Hankins, right, takes part in a community celebration event as former City Councilman Fred Conley receive a T-shirt from Gloria Kellum, Housing Director.