



Spotlight on: Gloria Cartagena

For winner of national leadership award, helping her neighbors is second nature

Her husband calls her “The Mayor.” Her neighbors know her by her signature hugs and her trademark “smooches.” If you live in Kensington, chances are you have met Gloria Cartagena, who is President of the Somerset Neighbors for Better Living, block leader, and a Kensington resident for over 30 years. When she heard the news that she was a recipient for the 2018 NeighborWorks America Dorothy Richardson Resident Leadership Award, she was in shock.

“I never expected to win. I was so emotional because I do this work for my community, not for the awards,” Gloria said.

Each year, the Dorothy Richardson Resident Leadership Award honors seven leaders from around the country each year for their outstanding contributions to their communities.

Gloria has a lifetime of experience in community activism, organizing, volunteerism, and leadership. She developed these passions at a young age working alongside her father and she carries this dedication to service and community throughout her life.

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Under Gloria’s leadership, SNBL—founded in 2012 with the assistance of New Kensington Community Development Corporation—has become a force of advocacy for the Kensington community representing and serving one of the most diverse neighborhoods of the city, as well as one with some of the largest challenges.

Gloria serves as the lead advocate for the neighborhood in conversations and strategy planning with various partners, including Rebuilding Together Philadelphia and the City of Philadelphia.

As part of the NeighborWorks America network, NKCDC had the opportunity to nominate a resident leader for the award this year.

“We rarely have the opportunity to celebrate a community leader like Gloria at this large of a scale,” Tess Donie, Associate Director of Community Engagement at NKCDC, said. “NKCDC is incredibly grateful to be working side by side in the Kensington neighborhood with Gloria, as we see the impact she’s had on our staff and neighborhood each day.”

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Home repair programs from the City of Philadelphia

The City of Philadelphia Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) supports NKCDC in its capacity as a Housing Counseling agency and Neighborhood Advisory Committee office as part of its work to help Philadelphians face the challenges of homeownership. One way to prevent homelessness is to help people currently in homes stay there, which is why Philadelphia offers programs to help low-income Philadelphians with home repairs.

- **Adaptive Modifications Program** helps individuals with permanent physical disabilities live more independently in the home.
- **Basic Systems Repair Program** provides free repairs to the electrical, plumbing, and heating systems of owner-occupied homes.
- **Weatherization Assistance Program** helps homeowners and renters make their homes more energy efficient.

For more information on these programs offered by the City, please call the City hotline or contact NKCDC at 215-427-0350. The Hotline number is 215-448-2160 and is open on Monday through Thursday between 9am-4pm and Friday between 9am-12pm. Please note many of these programs have a waitlist.

Celebrating 10 years of saving homes

Every Thursday morning, NKCDC housing advisors and counselors from agencies throughout the city gather in a Philadelphia City Hall courtroom with homeowners, attorneys, and lenders to try to work out solutions to save homes and avoid foreclosure.

This year marks the 10 year anniversary of the Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program, which was created after the 2007 mortgage crisis with a simple goal: keep residents in their homes. Over the past decade the program has met with great success, —NKCDC and housing organizations from across the city have saved more than 11,000 homes.



When life is unpredictable, foreclosure

could happen to anyone, according to Joe Filipski, NKCDC Assistant Director of Housing Services. "The most common issues we see are when people don't have an emergency fund for housing repairs," he said. Delays in receiving unemployment or unexpected income changes can also prevent a homeowner from paying their mortgage on time.

According to Joe, NKCDC sees clients from all backgrounds, income brackets, and neighborhoods in Philadelphia, as well as the surrounding counties. Keeping families in their homes is a powerful tool to prevent displacement and stabilize neighborhoods.

Are you at risk of losing your home to foreclosure? Make an appointment with our housing advisors today at 215-427-0350.

HOST YOUR NEXT EVENT AT THE NKCDC GARDEN

Looking for an affordable space to hold your next birthday party or community gathering? The NKCDC Garden at Frankford and Berks is available to rent for private and public events! Onsite bathroom, water, and electrical hookups.

RATES

Non-Profit/Community Group: \$25/hour

All other: \$50/hour

Visit nkcdc.org/gardencenter for more info.

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Beyond her civic leadership, Gloria is a trusted resource for all of her neighbors. She sits on the advisory board of the Kensington Storefront, a community resource and arts hub run by Mural Arts Philadelphia, where she determines community programs and provides outreach. She also serves as a lead Community Connector with NKCDC.

Gloria, who credits her husband and family for being the backbone of her community work, also thanked NKCDC staff for the support they have given her in leadership development and community organizing.

"They've always been there providing opportunities to learn and to answer questions," she said. "Tess saw something in me and brought it out."

According to Tess, Gloria connects with the community from the heart. "She has an extraordinary ability to treat every neighbor like family, listen to the point that they feel understood, meet people where they are, and help them envision a future for themselves," Tess said.

In October, Gloria and her daughter will travel to Houston, Texas where she will be honored at the annual NeighborWorks America Community Leadership Institute, an annual event that strengthens the skills of local leaders. She recalls attending the event two years ago in Columbus, Ohio, and admiring the work of that year's award winners.

"It hit me—one day, that could be me up there," she said, "but I thought it would be way down the line, so I kept doing the work for my family and my neighbors every day."



Kensington families bring Trenton & Auburn Playground to life

On June 30, 2018, the playground at the intersection of Trenton Avenue and Auburn Street burst into life for NKCDC's Kensington Family Empowerment BBQ and resource event. Families from all over the neighborhood lit up the Trenton & Auburn Playground with dancing, eating, and mingling with neighbors and organizations such as the Philadelphia Defenders League, IMPACT Services, and Lutheran Settlement House.

"The purpose of the event was to provide families with tools to help them succeed in a fun, informal way," Rodney Mobley, NKCDC Community Engagement Associate, said. "We had partners who provided information on free job trainings, criminal record expungement, and parent support. But overall, the day was about having fun with your family."

This is only the beginning of big things to come to the playground, which was selected for the first round of Rebuild, the

City of Philadelphia's initiative to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in parks, recreation centers, and libraries.

Before the City begins the process for Rebuild, the playground will be closed for upgrades this fall as part of the citywide Green City, Clean Waters program (phillywatersheds.org). The Philadelphia Water Department will be closing the site in September to install underground

storage tanks to catch excess rainwater during storms. The playground will re-open in spring 2019 with the basketball courts moved to the Trenton Avenue side of the site and an open lawn to the east.

The Neighbors of Trenton and Auburn Playground will resume meetings after the completion of the construction to oversee stewardship of the playground.

NKCDC HOUSING SERVICES IN MAYFAIR

NKCDC is partnering with the Mayfair Business Improvement District to make housing services accessible to renters and homeowners in Northeast Philadelphia. Twice a week, NKCDC housing advisors will be onsite at the Mayfair Rec Center for appointments and walk-ins. NKCDC will offer first-time home buyer counseling, energy assistance, rent and property tax rebates, credit counseling, and foreclosure prevention. Our services are open to all Philadelphia residents.

NKCDC counselors are at the Mayfair Recreation Center (2990 St Vincent St) Mondays and Fridays, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To make an appointment, please call 215-427-0350. Walk-ins based on availability.

What is NAC?

NKCDC organizes four quarterly educational events in the neighborhood as part of the Neighborhood Advisory Committee, or NAC. This activity is made possible with funding from the City of Philadelphia's Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The NAC contract helps NKCDC keep residents informed of key resources available to them from the City of Philadelphia and other partners. For more information about the NAC program, contact NAC contract staff at NKCDC:



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215.427.0350 Call for an appointment. Income and residency limits apply.

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