

ABOUT CITY NEIGHBORS.....

Innovative curricula...diverse population...public education...community leadership

BACKGROUND: Our founding school, **City Neighbors Charter School**, began in the summer of 2003 as a grassroots movement among a group of city neighbors – teachers, parents, business people and educators – who had the audacity to dream big for our children. After a two year battle to get our charter accepted by Baltimore City, our doors opened for the first time in September of 2005. Originally starting with K-5, we are now at full capacity as a K-8 serving 200 children. With effective leadership in the charter school community, a unique and powerful educational program, strong outcomes, and waiting lists of hundreds of students, City Neighbors is one of Maryland's premier charter schools.

The success of City Neighbors Charter School and our desire to serve more students has made us the first charter school in Maryland to replicate.

- In 2009 **City Neighbors Hamilton** opened with grades K-3 (and will expand yearly to a K-8 capacity). A title one school, City Neighbors Hamilton has a current waiting list of 300 students, and is in its second year.
- This Fall of 2010, **City Neighbors High School** opened its doors. A unique design, the High School program is based on an advisory model where students are grouped into pods, and given a workspace and time each day to work within the advisory receiving support and enrichment. What would it take for every high school student to be known, loved and feel a sense of belonging? City Neighbors High School believes that answering that question will lead to superior academic achievement and inspired learning.

City Neighbors' three schools combine eight educational and community elements designed to work together to inspire children and provide an extraordinary public school education with high academic achievement.

1. *Arts-Integration* - We believe in a creative, inquiry-based process of teaching and learning that uses the arts to assist students in understanding and applying skills.
2. *Project-Based Learning* – Our curriculum is based on in-depth investigations of topics driven by student interest and informed by the Voluntary State Curriculum.
3. *Reggio Emilia* – Children are strong, intellectually rich, and possess great potential; therefore we respect children's creative capacities and individual learning styles by entering into a research partnership intended to stimulate and deepen children's critical thinking.
4. *Inclusion* – All students, no matter their ability and as much as possible, should be educated in general education classrooms.
5. *A Strong Foundation of Teacher Empowerment* – Teachers are researchers who study their students and enter into educational partnerships with them. They must be routinely encouraged and well equipped for this task.
6. *Parent-school partnership* – We believe in cooperative governance based on the principles of human dignity, consensus, and freedom; therefore we are structured as a parent/teacher cooperative.
7. *Small School Model* – We value the individual attention students receive and the family feel of in a small school culture; therefore all City Neighbors K-8 schools are limited to 204 students. Our High School will serve 350 students at full capacity.
8. *Diversity* – We strive to create an environment that values all people through practices, procedures, curriculum, and relationships.

In our small-school model that is purposefully light in administration, the Principal of CNH is the only administrator in the school structure. He/she is supported by an Office Administrator and works in close partnership with a working Board of Directors (made up of parents, students, and teachers). Each member of the Board of Directors has an assigned volunteer support role in the school. This unique system of cooperative governance enhances the school culture, empowers the teacher, and brings the school together as a community.



Bobbi Macdonald (*Executive Director of the City Neighbors Foundation, Inc.*)

Mrs. Macdonald has experience in educational leadership, curriculum development and instruction. Mrs. Macdonald received her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Illinois in Human Development and Family ecology, and holds a Master's degree from the University of Maryland, College Park, in Curriculum and Instruction. Prior to founding City Neighbors Charter School and serving as the President of the Board of Directors, Mrs. Macdonald taught in several college child development lab schools, and served as literacy trainer for Head Start and the Children's Literacy Initiative. Mrs. Macdonald also is a Board Member of the Maryland Charter School Network, and a founder of the Coalition for Baltimore Charter Schools. Prior Board work includes leading the Johns Hopkins Toddler Cooperative, as President of the Board for two years. Mrs. Macdonald and her husband, Rob, moved from Chicago to Maryland in 1993 and have chosen to harbor their dreams in Baltimore. All three of their children, Sadie, Eve, and Ramsay, attend City Neighbors.