Community: Common Unity

Gwen Buchanan
Community: Common Unity

STORYTELLER: Gwen Buchanan

CARILLON

Community activism was huge in my upbringing. It taught me the importance of being a good neighbor, a good person, and a servant. I owe my success to my past and to those who took the time to guide me. I had a calling to be a community servant. God inspired me to work in the community. I am the president of the Carillon Civic Council, a life and wellness coach and many other roles on top of being a daughter, a mother, a grandma, and Auntie Gwen. I’m carrying out the legacy of community involvement that Carillon was founded on and guiding our youth to be leaders of our future.

My parents moved to Carillon in 1965 during a transitional period after I-75 divided the Edgemont community. The transition opened...
up the community for other black middle class working families to move up and become first
homeowners. It was a prestigious little
draw; people want to live here because it is a nice
neighborhood. There appears to be less home-
owners. I believe that there is a strong sense of
pride in becoming a homeowner, in additional to
the emotional and financial investment. There's a
decline in community involvement and the pride
that comes with it; more folks from different
worlds and values. Many of the newcomers don't
want to get to know their neighbors ... some
don't keep up the properties. It's "neighbor apa-
thy". It saddens me to see trash on the lawn and
the grass is overrun. We try to lead by example
in the way we take care of our homes. We reach
out and let them know the community standards
and for my whole life she expected me to be
someone and do something in the communi-
ty. When someone needed something, she told
me I had a job, no questions asked. If the el-
derly needed help cleaning out their house, she
volunteered me to do it. When the association
needed help passing out flyers for the meetings,
I was appointed to the City
of Dayton Housing Appeals board as a volunteer,
and for my whole life she expected me to be
an active by creating an expectation for our youth
to be community-minded and service-oriented
as I was taught and as I have taught my chil-
dren.

When I was 18, I got my taste of the fast life
while living out in the Edgemont neighborhood. Mrs. McNeal's son
is my neighborhood. It was also the house that a
childhood friend use to live in...and as a child I
eventually lived in her home. GROWING UP, I KNEW
EVERYBODY. IT WAS MORE THAN A NEIGHBORHOOD;
IT WAS A FAMILY. THE CHILDREN WERE EVERYONE'S
CHILDREN—WHEN THEY SAY IT TAKES A VILLAGE,
THEY MEAN IT.

In my early thirties, a couple years after mov-
ing back to Carillon, I started putting Mrs. Mc-
Neal's lessons she ingrained in me into action
after I graduated from the Neighborhood Leader-
ship Institute in 1995. I was appointed to the City
of Dayton Business Board of Directors as a volunteer, and
followed by many other volunteer opportunities.
Before she died, Mrs. McNeal told me, "You
know it’s your time to lead this community". Al-
though it wasn’t the best time for me, it was the
best time for Carillon. I’ve known since I was 5
years old, but she gave me the call to action. I
knew what it took, I watched them to see what it
meant to lead as a community leader. I sit outside and I talk to each and every
kid I see on the street and try to engage them in
conversation: what's your name, where do you
work? Does your home need help cleaning? Does your trashcan need to be pulled up?
Helping out.

I believe that there is a strong sense of
pride in becoming a homeowner, in additional to
the emotional and financial investment. There's a
decline in community involvement and the pride
that comes with it; more folks from different
worlds and values. Many of the newcomers don't
want to get to know their neighbors ... some
don't keep up the properties. It's "neighbor apa-
thy". It saddens me to see trash on the lawn and
the grass is overrun. We try to lead by example
in the way we take care of our homes. We reach
out and let them know the community standards
and for my whole life she expected me to be
someone and do something in the communi-
ty. When someone needed something, she told
me I had a job, no questions asked. If the el-
derly needed help cleaning out their house, she
volunteered me to do it. When the association
needed help passing out flyers for the meetings,
I was appointed to the City
of Dayton Housing Appeals board as a volunteer,