

MAKING FOOTPRINTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Senior residents are creating an impact with our youth through storytelling and dance

CMHA senior residents are teaching life lessons through the ancient African tradition of storytelling and dance to youngsters in a program called Griot! A Culture and Wisdom Exchange Program.

Griot! is a national award-winning program recognized by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, that has teamed with the Cleveland Browns Foundation and are reaching hundreds of kids in the area.

“We’re entirely committed to intergenerational programming here at CMHA,” said Jacci Griffin, Senior Services Administrator. “It’s an immense enjoyment for our seniors to interact with the children and share their life experiences. It keeps them active and engaged, while letting them express their creativity.”

Seniors Ester Stowers and Diane Howard, who both self selected themselves into the program, really see the merit in giving back to our young people. Their stories incorporate morals, teach values and intertwine fun, energetic activities for the students using dance and music.

Tiny little arms and feet were moving to the steps of the new dance they learned that day. Smiles lit up the entire room. The connection the seniors make with the younger generation through the program, has special meaning and resonates with both age groups.

“Today was my first day telling my story to the kids. I have been practicing on my great granddaughter who lives with me,” said Diane Howard, Local Advisory Council (LAC) member at Lakeview Terrace.

Eighty-two-year old Ester Stowers also shared her story that day, dressed in gold and black African garb. The children in the room were mesmerized by her expressive facial expressions and gestures. At the end of the tale, she even got down on the carpet with the kids to their level and interacted with the entire group.

“A program like this truly does leave a lasting mark on the lives of everyone involved,” said Stowers.