



# Carla Dawkins: A Valuable Community Resource

by Betty Banks

The very young sounding voice on the other end of the phone when called was Carla Dawkins. She was also peppy and very energetic. This Mother of two and Grandmother of two is a Chicago native and came to Madison when she landed a job as a Leasing Consultant at the Old Gaslight Square apartment complex.

First American Properties hired her and so she uprooted her two daughters in 1999 and moved to Madison. The job included the apartment they moved into. "I was on a mission", she says with pride in her voice. "I wanted certain things to happen for my family and me, so I worked two jobs to accomplish those goals".

In 2006 she moved to the Allied Drive neighborhood and at first she asked herself, "What have I gotten myself into?" She was dismayed about the drug and gang activity but at the same time encouraged by the neighborhood residents who had launched a campaign to "move forward and not out"

The marches through the neighborhood and the interest she saw gave her hope. Freddie Clark



was one of those residents she met. It was he who got her involved in the mobile food pantry and when he left, she took over as its Coordinator. She marvels at the leadership that Alice Howard demonstrated. "I

see so many positive changes now. Kids can play outside more. You don't feel threatened by what you see when you walk through the neighborhood."

Jaimie O'Dea was another person who helped her get on her feet. "The great thing about Allied Drive is that there are so many people who want to help others and they work hard every day to see that programs and services are available," she goes on to say.

Volunteer work for Carla includes being a strong contributor to VOICES, a board Member of the Allied Wellness Center, and working on Breast Cancer awareness so that African American women

become more aware of the risks and what to do about them. She also works with the Wisconsin Well Woman Program another program that educates women about how to become healthy and remain that way. As a past graduate, Carla, continues to be a supporter of (MAP) Madison Apprenticeship Program.

When asked where she got her work ethic and drive, she talks about her family who worked hard and valued being able to attain the things they needed and wanted. "No one hands you anything," she says, "you have to work for what you want." Her advice, "Find something you like to do and work at it".

*"I see so many positive changes now. Kids can play outside more. You don't feel threatened by what you see when you walk through the neighborhood."*

Carla likes taking care of her Grandchildren, working hard on her job and reaching out to others. I think I was meant to help people, whether I get paid or not. It makes me happy."

This is how Carla sums it all up. For her it is about family, work and community. This is how she lives her life and builds her bridges.

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## S.I.S.T.E.R. House, Inc. : Making a House a Home by Tamra Oman



S.I.S.T.E.R. (Sisters In Sobriety Together Engaging Responsibly) House, Inc. has a dream and we are working to make it a reality! SISTER House, Inc. is an organization with an innovative vision of change for women transitioning into the Madison community from prison, jail, or treatment.

There are approximately 1200 women imprisoned in Wisconsin. There are additional women in jail or in treatment programs (in lieu of incarceration or in post-incarceration programs). Most of the women committed non-violent property or drug-related crimes. Many of the women grew up in chaotic family situations and many were abused as children.

This year at least 400 women will return to Wisconsin communities from prison. Most of the women will return

without the education, employment history, and life-skills necessary to successfully reintegrate into society and find employment.

Without help the chances of these women re-offending is very great and the cost to house a person in prison is \$30,000 a year. It would seem to make more sense to invest in a woman's recovery than just maintain her in prison.

The goal of S.I.S.T.E.R. House, is Two Fold First, S.I.S.T.E.R. House will provide a safe place for women to live as they transition back into the community. Many times women return from prison to their former neighborhoods or to relationships or households that have negatively impacted their lives and the result is re-offending, sending them right back to prison.

The mother feels there is no hope and their children suffer. We believe that each woman has the potential to become all she was created to be and with support and the right skill set, she can achieve more than she ever dreamed possible. S.I.S.T.E.R. House, Inc. is on the "cusp" of securing the perfect house to make a "home". We are hoping and praying to open the doors

by early to mid-summer.

No matter what road led her to this place, we want to assist, her on a positive path to becoming independent, stable, confident, and healthy and be the mother, sister, or daughter she desires to be!

S.I.S.T.E.R. House, a 501 (c) (3) organization, whose mission is to assist women returning to our community from prison, jail or treatment needs your help. If you are interested in more information contact Tamra Oman at 608-279-2000or

sisterhousemadison@yahoo.com or check out the website at:

<http://www.sisterhousemadison.org>

On Saturday, April 24th a beloved community activist was laid to rest.

Minister Lucille Badger was known for her joyous personality and loving kindness.

High Point church was filled with those who knew her for a celebration of her life. And, that it was. Her endearing and strong spirit filled the church as the gathering remembered her through music and tributes. We will miss this warrior for justice but we can keep her memory alive through the continuation of her work.

*May she rest in peace.*

