

Crawford column: Community workdays bring people together

Ayana Crawford Guest column

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Lancaster Promise Neighborhood community engagement and outreach coordinator Ayana Crawford leads icebreakers with April community workday attendees. courtesy of Ayana Crawford

June 10 was the second community workday I ever participated in, not only as a new resident of Lancaster County, but also as the community engagement and outreach coordinator for Lancaster Promise Neighborhood.

Prior to accepting this position and doing my research, I saw that the community workdays were an opportunity to show community pride and appreciation for the community and environment around Lancaster. I saw individuals of various ages and ethnic and racial backgrounds coming together with smiles on their faces to fill bags with litter.

This told me two things about Lancaster and Lancaster Promise Neighborhood: They care about serving and they look out for their neighbors — something that is rare to find in days like these, when everything is fast-paced, self-centered and very high-tech. I grew up with the “it takes a village” mindset, but in today’s world, that seems to be a thing of the past.

However, I got to see this in person at Centro Cristiano Luz y Verdad that Saturday morning. Volunteers took time out of their weekend (bright and early, I might add), when they could have slept in, attended yard sales or run errands. Instead, 50 people gathered, again, of various ages, ethnic and racial backgrounds, with smiles on their faces, food in their bellies and laughter in the air. Pastor Teodoro Robles and his church members were eager to participate. He prayed for us at the start of the day and community leader, Rosa, interpreted for us. It was a sight to see!

My personal mission in life is to bring people together regardless of their differences to collaboratively combat the division created in our current society. These workdays, for me, are a step closer to doing that, while creating community among those who participate.

Is it different from the norm? Of course. Can it be uncomfortable? It can, but that uncomfortability is an opportunity to learn and grow.

I enjoy environments and opportunities to learn from other cultures and individuals who differ from my background. If you're thinking, "well, that's everybody," then you are catching my gist here.

What problems could we solve by working together with those who differ from us and who would be able to give us a new perspective? That's why I believe the workdays are the starting point to solving real issues here in our community.

On this particular workday, we had groups such as Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce's Young Professionals, the Arras Foundation and the Call Me Beauty mentoring program. Organizations like these help bring change and make a difference in our community and in our youth. It takes groups like these and others to join and work together to change lives and the people we serve.

Here, at Lancaster Promise, we would call this "doing whatever it takes." My role is to connect the community to the work we do to help students and our community thrive.

Like the Earth Day activities we did with the schools in The Zone, workdays aid in community pride and revitalization of our community. It is a chance for people to work together, get to know one another, and learn more about Promise Neighborhood and the community that we are about service. In the future, we hope to continue with litter pickup, among other services, too.

I encourage any and every one to join us. The next workday is on Saturday, Sept. 16. Together with our volunteers, we will serve in different areas in Lancaster County. If your organization or business has space for us to fellowship and serve, feel free to contact me at acrawford@lpnsc.org or call 803-313-4145.

To sign up for a workday or to volunteer with us, you can fill out the volunteer form on our website. In the meantime, you can visit me at our office at 121 S. Wylie St. and get more information about Lancaster Promise Neighborhood. I hope to see you and your family around — doing whatever it takes!

Ayana Crawford is the community engagement and outreach coordinator for Lancaster Promise Neighborhood.

Lancaster Promise Neighborhood (LPN) invites the community to a meet-and-greet event 6- 7:30 p.m. July 25 at the Lancaster County Community Center, 508 E. Meeting St., Lancaster.

This event is an excellent opportunity for members of the community to connect with the LPN team, gain valuable information about our programs and initiatives, and ask any questions they may have about the Promise Neighborhood.

Building on the power and importance of relationships, while fostering open communication, this event will help LPN engage with the community.

Attendees will have the chance to meet the LPN team, including program coordinators, community organizers and volunteers. They will provide insights into the various initiatives offered by LPN, such as extended day and summer programs, service providers and community events.

LPN encourages active participation from the community to provide a deeper understanding of how citizens can get involved and make a positive impact.

Lancaster Promise Neighborhood is a collaborative nonprofit project dedicated to supporting neighborhood revitalization and academic achievement in Lancaster. We believe that every child deserves access to quality education and a nurturing environment to reach their full potential.

For more information about the event, call 803-313-4141 or visit the office at 121 S. Wylie St., Lancaster.

We look forward to welcoming members of the community at this exciting event.

Together, we can create a stronger and more connected community for all!

— Ebony Mitchell