



### **For Immediate Release**

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## **NeighborWorks America Trains Top Community Leaders and Recognizes Local Heroes with Award**

*Awardees include Jason Amboo from MHP's Glenville Road Green Club. The Silver Spring teenager is youngest ever honoree.*

**October 23, 2014 - Cincinnati, OH** – This week community leaders from around the country are being honored at the annual Community Leadership Institute, sponsored by NeighborWorks America. The Community Leadership Institute strengthens the skills of community leaders of all ages and income levels.

NeighborWorks America, which creates opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities, supports a network of more than 240 nonprofits, located in every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Participants from around the country attend the Community Leadership Institute as part of teams of up to eight people from areas served by NeighborWorks organizations.

Also at the institute, NeighborWorks America recognizes the Dorothy Richardson Resident Leadership Award honorees. This year's awards honor eight leaders from around the country for outstanding contributions to their communities. The award is named for a Pittsburgh-based pioneer in the community-development movement who was the leading force behind the creation of the agency that eventually became NeighborWorks America.

"This year's honorees share a positive, resilient and proactive spirit," said Chuck Wehrwein, acting chief executive officer of NeighborWorks America. "They are problem-solvers who created new opportunities that strengthened their communities."

The eight honorees represent all regions of the country. Among their stories are three from the northeast, including a Maryland teenager who is the youngest person ever to be honored:

- **Jason Amboo from Silver Spring, MD**, showed that one is never too young to lead. In fact, at 14, he is the youngest "resident leader" to be sent to the national institute. When he was 11 years old, Jason formed a "green team" to clean up his apartment development and recruited others to join. He brought the idea to his Homework Club teacher at **Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP)**, a NeighborWorks organization that owns five of the 16 buildings on the cul-de-sac. MHP responded to Jason's initiative by assigning two VISTA volunteers to start and staff the Glenville Road Green Club. The Green Club piloted in 2011 and became a fully funded program in 2012. In 2013, the club's activities included a community garden, which produced 20 pounds of produce that year.

- **Kenneth Grubbs from Boston, MA**, figured out how to change the dynamic between police and local communities. Grubbs is active in the neighborhood association where he polices and serves on planning committees to help tackle community challenges. Every year, Grubbs selects 10 “Summer Explorers” to mentor, bringing them to community meetings and putting them to work at block parties and other events.
- **Sharon Bagley from Orange, NJ**, demonstrated how personal tragedy can be reshaped into hope and opportunity for others. When her 19-year-old son was killed in the crossfire of a gang fight, she put her grief to work by creating a safe neighborhood where young people can thrive. **NOT ORANGE**, a nonprofit dedicated to combatting violence and encouraging youth to strive for personal excellence, is Bagley’s brainchild. Since the organization began, drug traffic is down and there has not been a murder in more than two years.

“Jason Amboo has shown us the critical importance of youth engagement and involvement in community building,” said Robert Goldman, President of MHP.

“His environmental vision, energy, inspiration, and activism are invaluable traits to have at such a young age. The beneficiaries of his efforts are not only his peers who he mentors, but the other building owners on Glenville Road whose property values are improving because of the cleanup efforts spearheaded by the Glenville Road Green Club. It has become the model by which MHP now engages other students in neighborhoods throughout Montgomery County to teach them meaningful ways to become better stewards of the environment,” said Goldman.

More information about the Dorothy Richardson Award honorees can be found at [NeighborWorks.org/DRAwards](http://NeighborWorks.org/DRAwards). Follow MHP and its affordable housing outreach at [MHPartners.org](http://MHPartners.org) or at [Facebook.com/MHPartners](https://www.facebook.com/MHPartners).

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### **About MHP**

Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) creates quality, affordable homes in Montgomery County. Based in Silver Spring, MD, the private, nonprofit organization is celebrating 25 years in business. It accomplishes its mission by housing people, empowering families, and strengthening neighborhoods. Through its affiliates, MHP has developed and owns more than 1,400 apartments, condos, and townhomes.

### **About NeighborWorks America**

For 35 years, NeighborWorks America has created opportunities for people to improve their lives and strengthen their communities by providing access to homeownership and to safe and affordable rental housing. In the last five years, NeighborWorks organizations have generated more than \$19.5 billion in reinvestment in these communities. NeighborWorks America is the nation’s leading trainer of community development and affordable housing professionals.