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May 2007

**You Made It Happen**

Your support in time and money has enabled Oakdale Neighbors to complete 140 tax returns for lower income families. 15 volunteers contributed 226 hours over 10 weeks to this project. Their work generated \$189,000 in tax refunds and credits!

Korpo Zubah returned to Oakdale Neighbors this year to have her 2006 tax return completed. Korpo, a refugee from West Africa, works at a manufacturing company to support her three children.

Tax volunteer, Mike Bremer, helped her secure a substantial earned income credit (see box) to supplement her income.

**The Money Map**

12 individuals have begun *The Money Map* class, developed in partnership with Macatawa Bank. *The Money Map* is a 12-session financial literacy class that covers banking basics, the importance of



Charlene worked with Alex Vandertol to secure homestead and heating credits that helped her pay rent and gas expenses.

saving, household budgeting, credit, predatory lenders, and more. Participants will be invited to open a savings account at Macatawa Bank which will provide a 50% match (up to \$150) for every dollar saved.

**Making Work Pay**

The Earned Income Tax Credit isn't just for economic policy nerds. This federal program puts real dollars into the pockets of hard-working but low-income families. This year 54 of Oakdale Neighbors' tax clients received the EITC. The average credit was \$1,150. A maximum credit of \$4,500 is available to families with two or more kids that make about \$13,000. What a great way to boost the benefits of a low-paying job by almost 30%!!

No one wants money and paper wasted on useless junk mail. We'll be refining our mailing list over the next few months, and you may be removed. If you prefer not to hear about the work of Oakdale Neighbors, let us know. Of course, we would also love to hear from those of you that want to stay connected. You can call us at 248-2848, email us at [info@oakdaleneighbors.org](mailto:info@oakdaleneighbors.org), or drop a donation in the mail using the enclosed envelop.



Two Macatawa staff are leading the training and helping participants navigate the “money maze.” (If you have an account at Macatawa, stop at the new branch at Breton and Burton and tell them you appreciate their partnership with Oakdale Neighbors.)

## Love and Logic

The *Parenting with Love and Logic* class concluded recently. Attendance was less than hoped for, but the class was beneficial to those that participated. One member—a parent of a student at Alger Middle School—said it was the highlight of her week.

## What’s Blooming Along Kalamazoo?

Thank you to those that have contributed to our tree-planting fund. Our grant application to the *DTE Tree-Planting Program* was denied. So...our tree-planting is on hold until next Spring.

However, Oakdale Neighbors will be working with Youth Unlimited and area churches this summer to enhance our landscaping along Kalamazoo Avenue. We’ll be tending our perennial gardens in the parkways, pulling weeds and adding fresh woodchips.

In addition, discussions are underway about the development of a community garden. If the garden materializes, neighborhood residents will have space and support for growing their own vegetables and flowers.

VanderKodde Construction, a long-time supporter of Oakdale Neighbors, is encouraging others to give by offering a matching grant. VanderKodde will provide a dollar (up to \$1000) for every dollar

donated in response to this letter. You can double your gift by giving today.

Oakdale Neighbors is particularly grateful for those individuals that give a monthly donation for this work. If you are interested in being a monthly supporter, feel free to contact us. Most banks offer easy, electronic, bill-pay systems. You can contribute to Oakdale Neighbors by credit card at [www.oakdaleneighbors.org](http://www.oakdaleneighbors.org). Thank you!

In Christ,

**Tom Bulten**, Director  
Oakdale Neighbors