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Private-Public partnership saves community center

A year ago, Greenlaw Community Center was doomed. Along with several other inner-city community centers and branch libraries in Memphis, it was slated to be closed.

An angel, however, has emerged with a plan to not only keep the centers open, but also to increase programming and efficiency. The angel has a name: Memphis Athletic Ministries, which is a faith-based organization that was founded in 1998.

This partnership between city and non-profit is a clear win-win arrangement, with the impacted communities coming out with the biggest win. Memphis Athletic Ministries will operate the centers, providing staffing, recreational activities, and pay utility bills, beginning November 1, 2009. The agreement is structured with one two-year term, with options for two four-year terms, so Memphis Athletic Ministries could operate the centers up to ten years.

Programming at the centers will include computer labs, etiquette lessons, and a financial literacy program, as well as athletic and recreational activities. The centers will be open after school during the school year, from about 2:00-9:00 p.m., and all afternoon in the summer. They will also be open Saturdays.

Greenlaw Community Center, located at 190 Mill Avenue, will be run by Detric Golden, founder of Golden Child Ministries, but better known for his 1997-1998 basketball season at the University of Memphis. Golden has been working with youth in Uptown for years, and his passion for the kids is apparent. Whether recruiting volunteer tutors or seeking donations like board games, or helping at-risk young men increase their grade point average and get into college, Golden cares deeply for the future for Uptown.

The future looks good, at least for the Greenlaw Community Center.
