
New Dollars/New Partners Success Story

Druid Hills Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia



Druid Hills Presbyterian Church

In September 2004, Partners completed a nine-month *New Dollars/New Partners* training program sponsored by the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, in which eleven Atlanta-area Presbyterian churches participated. Partners had a conversation with The Reverend Mary Jane Cornell and members Ron Miller and Eric Dusenbury, of Druid Hills Presbyterian Church (DHPC), which participated in *New Dollars* to learn about training outcomes.

For years the congregation had known there was extensive and ongoing water damage to its 1940 sanctuary, but hadn't known where to start. "Nine years ago, when I first got here, we had a meeting where we talked about water damage.... Partners gave us the nuts and bolts to say 'let's do this now and not talk about it any longer,'" explains Cornell.

One of the most useful tools the DHPC team picked up from the training was the role-playing segment, where they practiced approaching people for donations. "I'd never been part of a capital campaign before, so this gave me an appreciation of how you go about asking for money... it's important not to ask for too little." said Cornell.

Once the congregation finished the training, they worked swiftly and efficiently. A lesson they took from the training was the importance of performing a building conditions study, which helped DHPC confirm a list of priorities and costs. The congregation devised a theme for its campaign, "Keeping the Promise", which was tied in with the 125th anniversary of their congregation in 2008. The fundraising that followed was so successful that it exceeded its \$1.1 million goal in five months, and have already completed an upgrade to the interior of its Night Shelter. While these accomplishments are impressive, they are not unique to Druid Hills. A survey of the graduates of the *New Dollars* program found that many congregations who have completed assigned tasks shortly after the training were more likely to have made progress toward major goals, such as the completion of a capital campaign. Some of the important skills participants gain include:

- * Making a strong case, and finding motivation and a starting point for necessary repairs;
- * Learning how to frame priorities and communicate the scope of the project to the congregation, so members become stakeholders in the process;
- * Cultivating new community partnerships and activating latent relationships within the congregation.

Many times, a capital campaign can be a launching point for evaluating the services a congregation provides to the larger community. When DHPC first came together with the other Atlanta churches, they initially found it difficult to define what made them unique "What we had thought was unique about Druid Hills – that we're in town, that we're open and affirming – isn't what makes us unique at all... it's our outreach programs that set us apart," explained Dusenbury. Their church's Child Development Center is a ministry, and also a separate 501(c)(3), which allowed them to tap into many more sources of funding than are normally available to religious organizations. Their Night Shelter is hosted at DPHC's McIver Hall, but draws in volunteers from other organizations. The church is now working on strengthening relationships with those organizations and turning to them for additional assistance.

While the capital campaign has drawn to a close, the congregation and the church's mission continue to benefit from the training. "The efforts we made have caused us to re-evaluate how we look at our mission... A lot of times, when you do a church budget, your two big costs are salary and maintenance. Examining those helps the congregation understand where their money is going," says Dusenbury. Relationships have been strengthened: the congregation is more aware of its partnership with the Child Development Center; and the church is working to re-establish ties with people whose families had historically been involved in the church.

If you have questions about the *New Dollars/New Partners* program of interest in bringing it to your community, please contact Elizabeth Terry, Director of Training, at 215-567-3234, ext. 19 or eterry@sacredplaces.org.