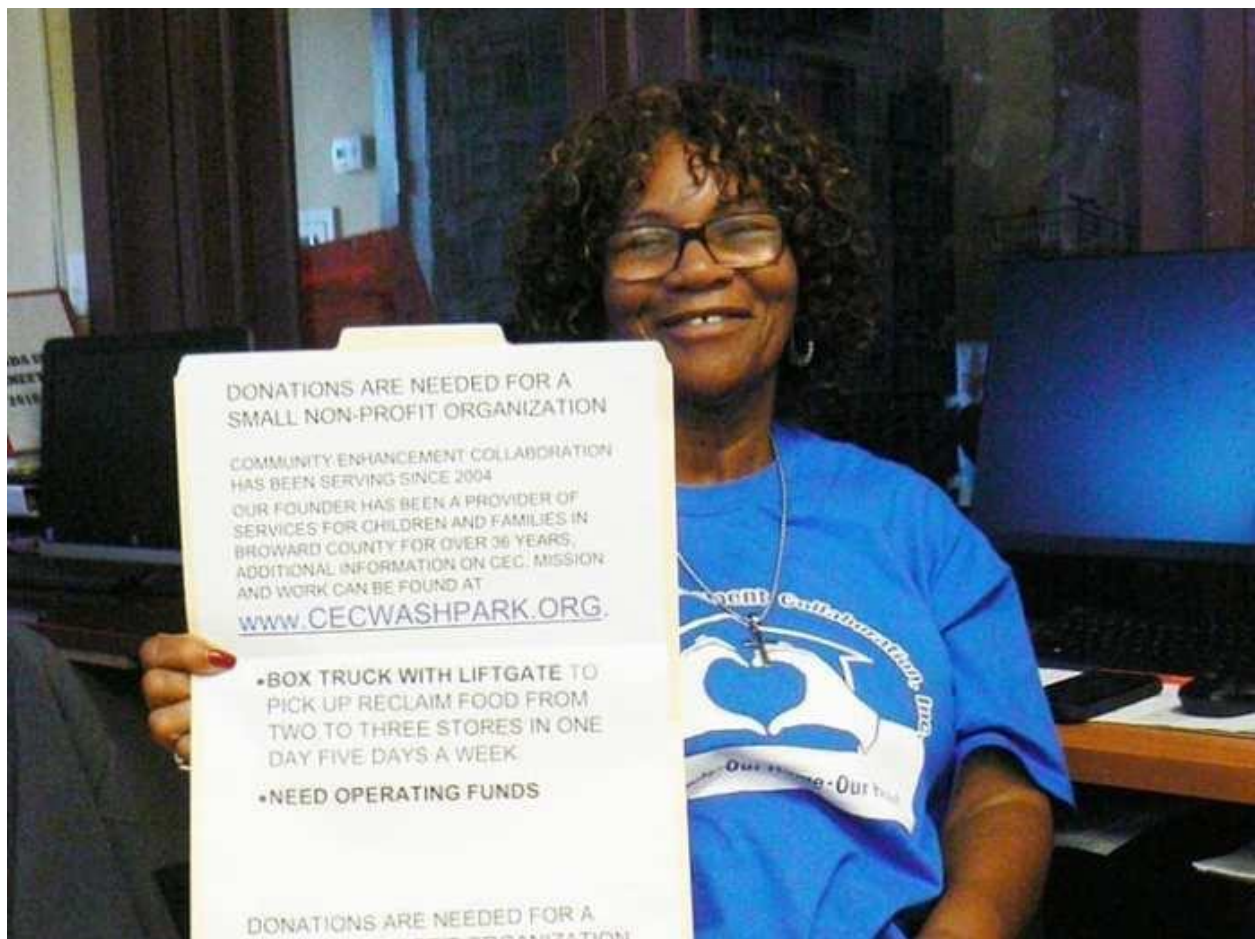


Community activist hopes to retire, seeks new leadership to sustain essential non-profit serving Washington Park

By [Robin Kerr Drulard](#) - September 27, 2018



It Really Does Take a Village...And Ms. Nadine is Finally Ready to Admit It!

There is no one in Hollywood that does more for the community than Nadine McCrea, the founder of the Community Enhancement Collaboration, Inc. (CEC), a non-profit organization started in 2004 to help her neighbors in the Washington Park community.

In reality, though, Nadine has been working to enhance her community since she moved to Hollywood back in 1982. That is when she started feeding her neighbors, taking in latchkey kids after school and calling in the cops when things got scary in the streets outside her Wiley Street home.

Today, almost 40 years later, the CEC is the prime food bank in town, housed in a city building in the Washington Park Villas — itself developed to serve lower-income Hollywood residents — and Nadine is proud of their accomplishments.

And while the food is generously donated by a host of local corporations and supported by Feeding South Florida, Nadine explained that even with a large and tirelessly faithful team of volunteers, she can no longer run and fund the many behind the scenes expenses on her own anymore.

A \$40,000 City of Hollywood grant in January 2018 — the largest single influx of cash the CEC ever received — allowed the organization to continue its mission of feeding the neighborhood, as well as providing a host of other services. The grant will keep it going at least through the middle of 2019. But Nadine is at a loss to predict what will keep them afloat past that date.

“What we need, is capital to take us to the next level,” she said. “We need operating funds, and really, paid staff — an office manager or a program manager — who can help us raise funds, and really, pay for themselves!”

And, she pointed out, that paid director cannot be herself.

With the energy and beauty of a much younger woman, Nadine actually took her official retirement a few years back, and her husband (and tireless supporter) Ulyses, an employee of the City of Hallandale Beach, is planning to do the same sometime in the next few years.

“Volunteers are the backbone of our organization,” she acknowledged gratefully. “They’re so loyal. They stay beyond their promised hours. They make sure everything is perfect so when people come shopping in the pantry.

“But now we need help at a different level. Somebody who has the business experience to come in here and look at our operation and tell us what we need to do to take it to the next level, who can do some fundraising, write some grants, get us the money we need so we can continue to do the work.”

Nadine said she’d be thrilled to have someone even for three months, six months or a year — she just needs someone who knows how to run a business and can tell them what they need to do.

“It’s already a successful business,” she explained. “I just can’t keep lying awake at night trying to figure out what to do, so I’m reaching out before I go into the panic mode and, like I did in January of this year, almost shut down.

“I have between 18 and 30 regular volunteers on a typical week,” she explained. “Five days a week, we go to two or three stores a day, pick up food, sort and stock it, weigh boxes and file reports, submit the info, put it up on the shelves so that when people come to shop they have a good experience. Some mornings my husband and I go at four in the morning to pick up food — we would never ask a volunteer to go at that time!

“I’ve been going to SCORE [a national nonprofit that connects small business owners to provide mentorship], going to meetings about applying for grants, writing out goals, and my coaches there say, ‘Hey, Ms. Nadine, you’re doing the work, but you don’t seem to have a management team in place.’ And they’re right. My volunteers don’t want to go to meetings. They want to be here. That’s why we need people with business knowledge. They can go to the meetings, learn, and bring it back to us so we can make it happen.



Nadine McCrea with Sandra Bernard-Bastien

“I don’t pay rent here thanks to the city, but I do have to pay utilities, plus we have vehicles which need gas, upkeep and insurance, and lots of other operating expenses. So I am reaching out.”

She’s currently in contact with Children’s Services and other government agencies, and graciously acknowledged many local businesses and nonprofits that keep the CEC going.

On average, in a year, the CEC handles over 200,000 pounds of food, plus other merchandise including personal items and cleaning supplies which are donated by the same stores and organizations.

But by far the biggest surprise about Nadine and the CEC, at least to this writer, is the revelation that she’s virtually been piloting this plane, in regards to the organization’s funding, without a flight plan since takeoff. Funding the organization has always been at the grassroots levels and sporadic.

“We run fundraising events every year. We get donations from individuals, and some organizations like the Hollywood Women’s Club, the Rotary, the Jaycees, and the Kiwanis Club, which have all been very very good to us. A little here, a little there, sometimes banks donate money to Feeding South Florida and then there’s overflow and we get a lot of food for free, and that’s how we’ve been able to make it. But we’ve got nothing set up on an ongoing basis.

“All these years, I never know on any day what’s coming in.”

At one point, Nadine even cashed in one of her own personal life insurance policies to keep her agency alive — “with my family’s blessing,” she beamed. “You do what you gotta do!”

I had to ask: “Ms. Nadine, you do so much, for so many. What about you? Don’t you worry about yourself?”

“You know,” she pondered. “I don’t. And I don’t know why.

“The way I look at it, God gave me this vision, and to me, it enlarged my territory, I met so many great people, and so if it’s my vision, I don’t worry about me. know God’s got me, and I know my husband’s got me, and they look out for me. I’ve been doing this for 36 years. I put my life into the community, I don’t regret it. I’m thankful that I have my husband, or I would not have had the opportunity, but now, he’s going to retire and I have to start looking out a little more for the family.”

Nadine hears from the people she helps day in and day out how much she is loved and honored — not just for the food, but for the respectful way she treats the people. The special way she handles their requests. The extra care she provides.

“These kind of stories make me know that what we do is needed,” she said. But at the same time, I need the funds to keep it running. So I’m reaching out. I need help.”

The word is out. Nadine, helper of all, needs some help.

Know anyone? Maybe you? Want to help? Contact Nadine and the CEC at 954-629-9142.



Volunteers stocking the shelves at the CEC Food Pantry.



The CEC Wall of Fame/Serving Area.