

# WINDOW ON MANNA

Summer 2018



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## FOUNDER'S CORNER

Dear Friends,

It is with a heavy heart that I announce that one of MANNA's greatest supporters has resigned from our organization. After 35 years of service, Jean Mason has announced her retirement from the MANNA Board of Directors. Jean has been an exceptional board member since our founding in 1982. In addition, for me, Jean is much more than a Board Member; she her family, and I are best friends. She leaves an empty place at our board's table that will not be easy to fill and I already miss her regular presence at MANNA. I want to salute her and thank her for all the years of service to MANNA, her neighborhood (Ward 4), and this city for many years. She has given her love, her concern, her energy, her talents, and resources to help others make lasting changes in their lives, families, and communities.

Please join me in thanking Jean for her overwhelming contributions to MANNA.

Rev. Jim Dickerson  
Founder, President & CEO

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## WE'RE MOVING!

MANNA is excited to announce that we are moving to a new location on August 1st. We thank you for your support during this time, and we look forward to showing you our new place!

### **Our New Location:**

6856 Eastern Avenue NW, Suite 100  
Washington, DC 20012

A FIVE MINUTE WALK FROM THE TAKOMA METRO STOP ON THE RED LINE!

Subscribe to our Email List or follow us on Facebook for updates on the move.

Note: Staff phone numbers and extensions will remain the same at the new location.



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## Window on MANNA

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## LETTER TO THE BOARD



Dear Manna Board of Directors:

It has been thirty-five years since Rev. Jim Dickerson and my late father, Aaron Gibson, came to my job at the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to ask me if I would become a member of the Board of Directors for this organization called Manna.

I fell in love with the mission and challenge. Therefore, I said yes. Manna has ever since been a large part of my and my family's life. For example, in the beginning, daddy and Rev. Jim identified possible housing in areas we could afford. Oh, I forgot to mention, in those days we had no money and no staff. Daddy helped Jim navigate his way through the streets of the city. Daddy made sure Rev. Jim, then this young, white guy from Arkansas, didn't make the wrong step or cut down the wrong tree on a project which would really upset the drug boys.

My sister Gloria was Manna's first paid staffer. She worked as Jim's assistant, and often his protector from some impatient, untrusting, or hostile clients.

Gloria and the first Director of the Homebuyers' Club house-set on a dangerous and challenging project on Galveston, S.E. We all survived and changed the neighborhood.

Gloria later became Frank Demarais' assistant. Gloria worked at Manna until she retired. I remember that Gloria's house was the first one that we ever built from ground up. My whole family volunteered for the house raising. Gloria still resides there with two of her grandchildren.

My Co-worker at my current job with the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation remembers Manna doing that project on Galveston. She was then a young girl, living with her sister and father on Galveston. Now she is an adult who came through Manna's Home-Buyer's Club and is now a homeowner herself.

The next Director of the Home-Buyers' Club worked with me in the Federal Government. Wilhelmina Samuels was a secretary and single parent who believed she would never own a home. I convinced her to join the Homebuyers Club. As the saying goes, the rest is history. Wilhelmina told me that when she became a homeowner, she kissed the floor of her new home. Now both she and her now grown daughter who is also a graduate of our Homebuyers' Club are now home owners. Wilhelmina too worked at Manna until she retired. If someone had told me I would be on Manna's Board for all of these years, I would not have believed them. Manna just gets into your blood.

Every time someone you have brought dragging and screaming, telling them they can do this, and each time you see a person, a family, a community impacted so positively, you just keep on going.

Now it is time for me to retire.

I will always have a place in my heart for Manna.

I must admit that Jim made a believer out of me. God knows that during these thirty-five years, we (Manna) have had probably every kind of challenge one might imagine. When I would allow doubt to creep in because we had no money, space, or anything I thought we needed to be successful, Jim would say, "Just step out on faith." Reluctantly, I would; mainly, because I saw no other way. Low and behold, each and every time, we made it through, even attending those 7:30 a.m. Board meetings, which I told Jim I believed I would not be able to make.

Now, after all these years, I know I can make the 7:30 a.m. Board meetings. I also know we will continue to be successful in our mission if we just keep working like a dog, and "stepping out on faith."

It has been my honor.

Thank you.

  
Jean Mason

# NEW FACES AT MANNA



## HARRY THOMPSON, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Harry Thompson has been hired as MANNA's newest Chief Financial Officer (C.F.O.). Originally from Arlington, Virginia, Thompson has a Bachelor's in Business Administration (B.B.A.) from American University and is a Certified Public Accountant (C.P.A.) in the Commonwealth of Virginia. As Chief Financial Officer, Thompson partakes in day-to-day financial reporting, budgeting, and cash flow projections, and works with Gerardo Belisario, Controller, and his team in the Accounting Department. Throughout his career, Thompson has held positions as an Asset Manager, Controller, Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer (C.F.O.), and Consultant at accounting firms, real estate companies, and nonprofit organizations. Thompson has been a supporter of MANNA for several years and is excited to have the opportunity to work for an organization that specializes in affordable housing. For 2018, Thompson hopes to finish the audit, improve accounting systems at MANNA, and build staff capacity.



## Jonathan Nisly appointed as the New Director of Advocacy and Outreach

On February 5th, 2018, Jonathan Nisly, former Advocacy and Outreach Officer, was promoted to Director of Advocacy and Outreach. As Director, Nisly spearheads the Advocacy Department's public outreach, organizes MANNA's Annual Town Hall event, leads MANNA's Housing Advocacy Team (H.A.T.), and works with other nonprofits and DC Council Offices to coordinate strategies around legislation and budget. Before starting as MANNA's Advocacy and Outreach Officer in May 2017, Nisly was an Advocacy and Outreach Intern for eight months, where he manned H.A.T.'s blog and social media sites, learned about the history of D.C.'s racialized housing, and attended City Council and H.A.T. meetings. In addition, he has a B.A. in Peace Building and Development from Eastern Mennonite University (Class of 2017), where he organized an effort to divert funds from a new prison to a mental health center. Nisly is originally from Bluffton, Ohio, and has been living in the D.C. area for two years. Today, he says he is excited to continue to grow the Housing Advocacy Team and expand MANNA's focus and impact.

## VOLUNTEER CORNER

MANNA has volunteer opportunities year-round, ranging from office volunteering, to event volunteering, to one of our neighborhood beautification projects. Volunteers like Alisha Jones-Cotton and Tarah Cotton, a couple new to the District, allow our impact on housing in DC to survive and flourish. "The housing crisis was one of the first challenges we encountered when we moved to D.C., so we had to help," said Alisha and Tarah. Alisha and Tarah volunteered at both the MANNA 5K and the Homeownership Town Hall and Housing Fair in April. At the Housing Fair, the couple enthusiastically escorted vendors to their tables, waved housing fair signs, and passed out flyers on the street. Through their hard work, they were able to get more foot traffic into the fair. At the MANNA 5K, Alisha and Tarah set up registration tents and passed out snacks and water to runners. "We also got to cheer on the finishers and hand out dozens of high fives," Alisha noted. Today, Alisha and Tarah fully support MANNA's mission and want to stay involved. They enjoy helping the community and being in the company of those who are selflessly dedicated to serving others. "We had a rewarding experience and are grateful to have found MANNA," said Alisha.





## In Memory of our Dear Friend, Bob Pohlman

Sadly, on April 26th, 2018, MANNA lost Bob Pohlman, a dear advocate, Board Member, and friend. Bob Pohlman was the founding Executive Director of the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED) for fourteen years, growing CNHED to be recognized as a leading advocacy and capacity building organization in the District of Columbia for community development.



CNHED has been a partner of MANNA throughout Bob Pohlman's career as the Executive Director at CNHED and a Board Member at MANNA. Today, CNHED works closely with MANNA's Housing Advocacy Team (HAT) to ensure the availability of affordable housing in Washington DC by partnering with us for rallies, advocacy days, and MANNA's Town Hall. As CNHED's Executive Director, Bob created and strengthened the District's Housing Production Trust Fund by advocating for a stable floor of \$100 million for the Trust Fund. Under his leadership, CNHED grew in staff, size, scope, and mission.

"The nonprofit world wouldn't exist the way it is today without Bob and all of the money in the Housing Production Trust Fund wouldn't exist without Bob," said Sarah Scruggs, former MANNA Deputy Director and Director of Advocacy. "He didn't single-handedly create all of these things, but he created other advocates to push for these things."

Bob was the recipient of MANNA's American Dream Award in 2014 in grateful recognition of his efforts promoting the cause of low-income families and their housing needs in Washington DC. Additionally, he served on both of the District's Comprehensive Housing Strategy Task Forces, numerous community advisory committees, and was a Board Member at the DC Housing Production Trust Fund Advisory Board and MANNA for 20 years.

Prior to joining CNHED, Bob spent 23 years working in the District of Columbia government, where he served as Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, Deputy Mayor for Finance, and Chief Financial Officer. "His wealth of experience from working within DC government gave CNHED instant credibility," said MANNA Director of Project Development and CNHED Board Member Rozanne Look. "Bob is not replaceable," said MANNA CEO & Founder Reverend Jim Dickerson. "He is responsible for helping the city move and grow as it has. He is a wonderful friend, colleague, neighbor, brother of Christ, and supporter of MANNA."

## 20th Annual MANNA 5K Race for Affordable Housing

Runners, walkers, and spectators came from around the DC metropolitan area for MANNA's 20th Annual 5K Race for Affordable Housing on April 28th at the C&O Canal in Georgetown. Over 130 people crossed the finish line for affordable homeownership in the District.

- Efoyomi Carr of Goodwin DC was the overall winner with a time of 19:28. He received a 2-night weekend stay at the luxurious Sofitel Washington DC Lafayette Square.
- Jed Barton of Team Christ House won the male division with a time of 19:33. He received a 2-night weekend stay at DC Kimpton George.
- Beth Kennedy of Grace DC was the fastest female with a time of 21:02. She won a 2-night weekend stay at DC Kimpton Palomar.
- The Master's winner was Christie Blanchard of Sofitel at Washington DC at 21:30. She won a 2-night weekend stay at DC Kimpton - Mason & Rock.
- The under 18 winner was Rebecca Spring with a time of 32:54. She won a gift certificate to Sofitel Washington DC Lafayette Square's restaurant.

DC Road Runners managed the 5K, Margie Farrar-Simpson lead the stretching and warmups, and Michael Mebrahtu of I'MKEWL DIGITAL MARKETING was the MC. LaSalle Hotel Properties co-sponsored the race and helped us raise \$27,784 -- more than MANNA has ever raised from the 5K.



# MANNA's Homeownership Town Hall and Housing Fair

On Saturday, April 21st, MANNA hosted its annual Homeownership Fair and Town Hall in Anacostia at Thurgood Marshall Academy. The program featured 26 resource tables and five workshops on a variety of subjects and a Homeownership Town Hall led by MANNA's Housing Advocacy Team (HAT). Over 250 aspiring homeowners attended the Fair and almost 150 participated in the Town Hall. The Town Hall was led by Board Member and HAT Member Tanya Morris, and featured MANNA's Reverend Jim Dickerson, DC Black History Tours' Don Folden, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)'s Polly Donaldson, and At-Large Councilmember Robert White.

## Thank you to our Housing Fair Vendors!

- Capital Area Asset Builders
- Capital One
- The Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED)
- DC Black History Tours
- DC Housing Finance Agency (DCHFA)
- District of Columbia Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking
- Department of Energy and the Environment (DOEE)
- Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- George Mason Mortgage, LLC
- Hillsdale Civic Association
- HomeFree – USA
- Housing Counseling Services
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Industrial Bank
- Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC)
- MANNA
- MANNA – Spanish
- PNC Bank
- Solar United Neighbors of DC
- United Planning Organization
- University Legal Services
- Wells Fargo



## Thank you to our workshop leaders!

- Introduction to MANNA's Homebuyers Club – Thomas Caviness, MANNA
- Legal Estate Planning – Aimee Griffin, the Griffin Firm
- DC Property Tax Relief – Jeffrey Toney, DC Office of the CFO
- Reverse Mortgage and Foreclosure Rescue Scams – Idriys Abdullah, DISB
- Credit Counseling: Spanish Language Workshop – Katherine Canales, LEDC







## Meet MANNA Homeowner Shannon Thomas

On November 8th, 2017, Shannon Thomas spoke at our 22nd Annual Friends of MANNA Reception about her journey to homeownership. Shannon first came to MANNA in 2013 and became a homeowner on July 31st, 2017, four years after she started looking for a home. “Before MANNA, I was aimlessly trying to go through the homebuying process without fully understanding the important terms and procedures,” Shannon says. “I didn’t understand any of the dynamics of owning a home, and I didn’t know how to be mentally prepared for it.”

Shannon Thomas is a native Washingtonian with a one-year old son. She came from a family of homeowners, but she says that they didn’t understand how to communicate homeownership with her. Shannon says that she always had a desire to own because she felt like renting was wasteful and she wanted to invest in herself and her future. Shannon also notes that homeownership became especially important to her after she became a mother, because she wanted to provide security for her son.

When asked about the homebuying process, Shannon describes it as having a “survival of the fittest mentality.” She says she was getting bid out of homes she fell in love with over and over again, and felt like she was in “financial purgatory” because she had to stay within a certain set of guidelines.

Shannon first learned about MANNA through her coworker who had used MANNA’s resources to purchase a home. Once enrolled in the Homebuyer’s Club, Shannon said she felt like she was in a safe space to ask questions. “Whether the housing counselors knew a way that they could help me or they were simply informing me about a new development, I always felt prioritized at MANNA,” Shannon says. In addition to joining the Homebuyer’s club, Shannon also partook in one-on-one counseling. “Their excitement to move me forward was motivating. I might have given up on searching for a home if the MANNA counselors weren’t so excited to help me!”

Today, Shannon describes MANNA as a “full educational tool that helped me from beginning to end.” She says that MANNA made her feel more confident and prepared, and helped her increase her credit score by 200 points. Like many Homeownership Center clients, Shannon also notes that after she joined the program, she started closely monitoring her financial accounts for the first time, and was able to become more financially conscious.

When Shannon was first handed the keys to her new home, she said she felt like a ton of bricks was lifted off of her shoulders, and she was finally free. She says that her family was extremely supportive throughout the process and that her grandmother is especially excited for her because a woman couldn’t even own a home by herself during Shannon’s grandmother’s youth.

Homeownership has allowed Shannon to have an appreciation for her own space. She says she loves the ability to be creative in how she decorates her home. “The American dream is to own your own home and have your own slice of the pie,” Shannon says. “It makes me really proud that I can afford to give my son a better life with a place to play and his own room.”

“I would personally like to thank MANNA; I don’t think they really understand how much what they do means to people and how much of a blessing they are,” Shannon says. To future homeowners, Shannon advises, “have faith and patience; know that all of the ‘no’s will lead to the perfect yes.”

## MANNA Breaks Ground on Six Homeownership Opportunities in Shaw

On Thursday, May 17th at 3:00 PM, MANNA hosted a Groundbreaking of six homes in Ward 1’s Shaw neighborhood located at 8th St NW & T St NW. Polly Donaldson, the Director of the DC Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) was the keynote speaker. Featured speakers included MANNA Founder and CEO Reverend Jim Dickerson, Senior VP at United Bank Joe LeMense, DC Councilmembers Brienne Nadeau, Anita Bonds, Elissa Silverman, and Charles Allen.

MANNA’s project will provide four affordable condo units and two market rate buyers whose income exceed 80% of the Average Median Income (AMI) has defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Low and moderate-income households are defined as those whose income is below 80% AMI. The new homes will be 3BR units, measuring 1,300 to 2,100 sq. ft. These homes will feature all new construction, each unit equipped with individual HVAC systems.



The Shaw neighborhood has seen expansive redevelopment attracting both businesses and rentals. It is also known as a historic neighborhood in Northwest DC. Rev. Jim noted that the project is unprecedented in the Shaw neighborhood, where housing prices have risen dramatically in recent years. “The legacy of this project will be a lasting one not only for the first homebuyers who live there but also for their children and grandchildren who will benefit from this example homeownership,” said Rev. Jim.



828 Everts Street NE  
Washington DC 20018

Please donate to MANNA by visiting [www.mannadc.org/donate](http://www.mannadc.org/donate)



**Leave a legacy...  
It's simple and easy to do**

Including MANNA, Inc. in your Will is an act of generosity, beyond measure. By doing so, you are helping to improve distressed neighborhoods and are creating places people can call home. Membership in the Legacy Program is open to those who wish to make a lasting gift to support MANNA's mission of rebuilding neighborhoods and preserving diversity through affordable housing in Washington, DC.

The wording can be simple: I give, devise and bequeath the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ dollars (or the residue of my estate, or \_\_\_% of my estate) to **MANNA, Inc.**, a nonprofit corporation in the District of Columbia, whose offices are located at 828 Everts Street NE in the City of Washington to be used for its general and charitable purposes.

Consult with your estate planning advisor, financial advisor or attorney. For more information, call MANNA's Donor Relations Office.

*This announcement is for informational purposes and does not constitute legal advice.*

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