

Nnewi Neighborhood Association of Northern California: A Brief History

By Professor Samuel C. Obi, December 9, 2006

"How good and pleasant when brethren live in unity". (King David)

Nnewi Neighborhood Association of Northern California (NNANC) was born on August 22, 1993 in San Jose, California by a group of five families who hailed from the towns located in the former Nnewi Local Government Area of Anambra State in Nigeria. At first, the association was called "Nnewi Local Government Association", but later the name was changed to "Umunwanne Association" (meaning a meeting of brothers and sisters), which was again later changed to its current name, NNANC. Of the original five families, only two are still with the association today, due to the changing needs and the constant mobility of folks in northern California. The members initially identified and established three key need areas as their main goals for forming the association: 1) the need to maintain their cultural identity, 2) the need to strengthen their social life, and 3) the need to foster their unity as a people. Over its 13-year history, many changes have taken place, especially in the areas of membership, activities, goals and maturity.

Today NNANC boasts of some 12 families. Many new members have joined the association over the past years, and many new babies have also been born into the group, boosting the association's current membership to over 50 members strong! These strong and faithful members reside in different cities of northern California, including Brentwood, Fremont, Oakland, Pittsburg, Sacramento, San Jose and Tracy. These great families, guided by the leadership, are credited for the general progress and achievements of the association.

The group initiated many programs and activities over the years. One of its earliest outgrowths was the Nigerian Language and Cultural Institute whose original idea was first discussed in NNANC's first meetings, and later implemented and chartered with the help of other Nigerians in the Bay Area. Founded in the state of California under a non-profit charter, the institute provided language and cultural engagement for American-born Nigerian children, to make the transition into Nigerian culture and language a smoother experience. NNANC has hosted many summer picnics, social excursions to many sites, and end-of-year parties throughout its 13-year history. Through its socio-cultural orientation, the group endeavors to strongly support its members whenever there is a tragedy, such as the death of a loved one in any family. NNANC has also implemented substantial life, death and other social benefits for its members.

But with progress and maturity comes more responsibility. The association has come to realize that to whom much is given, more is expected. Thus, over the past few years NNANC has struggled to find a better way to reach out and help the community from which its member families originated. The association's members concluded, after a long period of much thought and careful considerations, that they will start the challenge by providing some scholarships to several public high schools in the cities of Nnewi, Nnobi and Ozubulu, the representative hometowns of its member families. The group initiated the idea of selling raffle tickets to help raise the needed funds. And most of you who are here tonight have helped to make that effort successful. Tonight, we are here to draw the raffle. All proceeds from tonight's events will go directly into those scholarships.

Ladies and gentlemen, it has been a long journey for this association. It is also clear the group could not have been able to make it to this point without the help of caring supporters like you. We are quickly learning that a friend in need is a friend indeed. And while it is indeed good and pleasant when brothers and sisters live together in unity, it is also clear that this unity includes every one of you here today. May the good Lord help lead us all unto a good ending. Long live Nnewi Neighborhood Association of Northern California! Long live our good friends and all!