

BungalowFest is a Community Working Together

Posted by: Helen J. Simon [In Community](#) [November 3, 2015](#)



Erma Hannah's home at 2925 2nd Ave. N., one of the properties that will be featured in this year's BungalowFest. The exterior of Hannah's house was recently restored by members of the Historic Kenwood Partnership.

Among the 13 buildings that will be on view during this weekend's Historic Kenwood BungalowFest, one stands out for a very special reason: It's a private home that was returned to its original beauty through the hard work of city workers and community volunteers.

The stately home at 2925 2nd Ave. N. belongs to Erma Hannah, who has lived there almost 25 years.

"The first thing I saw was the two columns," Hannah recalled of her first view of the 1926 Craftsman Bungalow. "I said 'Oh my God. This is my house.'"

Recently, the property needed repairs that were beyond Hannah's budget. When it was cited for ordinance violations, the Historic Kenwood Partnership sprang into

action, said program chair La Auna Lewis. The partnership includes local volunteers, the City of St. Petersburg's N-Team, the Foundry and First United Methodist Churches, Tampa Bay YouthBuild, the Historic Kenwood Garden Workshop, and a number of businesses.

Together, they completely overhauled the exterior of the property. Partnership members scraped the chipping white paint off the 1,640-sq.-ft. house and back yard apartment, and replaced it with a rich green Hannah picked out, along with a maroon trim.

They re-screened the expansive front porch, removed broken entryway tiles that had caused Hannah to fall, repaired concrete steps, and fixed rotten soffits and sagging gutters. A team from Tampa Bay YouthBuild, which works with at-risk young people, removed a broken concrete landing on the side of the house and replaced it with a new deck.

Other volunteers removed large evergreens that hid the house from the street, enriched the soil in the yard, installed new edging and planted low-maintenance landscape plants.

Susan Heyen, vice president of the Historic Kenwood Neighborhood Association and chair of BungalowFest, estimated the value of the labor and materials at around \$8,000.

"I feel really good about it. I love it," Hannah said of the partnership's accomplishments. "I appreciate and enjoyed that they did it. It was a blessing to me."

BungalowFest, now in its 17th year, is just one of several manifestations of Historic Kenwood's commitment to improving the community, Heyen said.

It all started a number of years ago when Kenwood residents, encouraged by the city of St. Petersburg, took it upon themselves to start fixing up abandoned houses and getting rid of neighborhood drug dealers. The idea was "you live here so take responsibility for where you live," Heyen said.

"It all grew from a desire to make our neighborhood better. A better place to live and a better place to work," she said.

A group of residents dreamed up BungalowFest as way to "showcase the neighborhood and houses, and show people what can be done with a lot of work and luck," Heyen said.

The community also began having porch parties, the Pinot in the Park wine-tasting event, and other

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activities that bring residents together and help them get acquainted.

Once residents began to see things improving, explains Lewis, they started fixing up their own properties.

"I've seen it with my own eyes," said Lewis. "That's happened on several blocks."

A year ago, the Historic Kenwood Partnership was formed to help those with limited resources fix up the exterior of their homes. Since then, the partnership has worked on seven properties in Kenwood, including Hannah's. They've also begun helping other communities get their own partnerships going, including North Kenwood and Palmetto Park, said Lewis.

"In the older days, this is the way neighborhoods used to be," she said, adding that residents knew and helped one another. "It's bringing that old concept back."

Added Heyen, "We don't just invest in our own home. We invest in our neighborhood and in our city."

This year's BungalowFest tour takes place this Saturday, November 7, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It includes nine houses, three separate at-home art studios and one historic building. For more information visit historickenwood.org/bungalowfest-2015.



Erma Hannah sits in the entryway to her Historic Kenwood home at 2925 2nd Ave. N., one of the properties that will be featured in this year's BungalowFest.