

Jan Thrope of Shaker Heights pens book of stories of truth, hope

By SALI McSHERRY

Jan Thrope, volunteer and counselor, said it was a satori for her when she met 17-year-old Ramone Foster who had interviewed 100 kids in Cleveland. He found everyone wanted the same thing; they all wanted someone to listen to them. The young man who initially wanted to become a motivational speaker decided instead he would be a motivational listener, she said, and that made a profound impact on her life.

Mrs. Thrope, of Shaker Heights, set out to listen to the stories people wanted to tell, and record them in her book "Inner Visions – Grassroots Stories of Truth and Hope." She also founded Inner Visions, a group dedicated to transforming East Cleveland neighborhoods into thriving communities by supporting improvement projects that are initiated and led by residents.

Through the written word and photographs, readers take a journey through the inner ring of the city. She asks, "Do you see what I see? Extraordinary improvements are being accomplished by ordinary people — people who see what some of us don't see when we look at the inner city," Mrs. Thrope said.

"These visionaries can teach us the way to see and believe in our city so their success can be replicated elsewhere."

There's Vel Scott, who teaches portable cooking classes for teenagers, adults and seniors in the city, meals that can be made on a hot plate or a toaster if a resident doesn't have a stove and oven.

Then there's Barbara Anderson, who owns a home that was updated for homeless Veterans and two others that are being updated, one for youth aging out of foster care and another for women who have been in abusive relationships.

Vicky Trotter and her mother Clare have owned a "green" dry cleaner in the city for the past 45 years and have been reaching out to families in the neighborhood, including a group for youth called "Young Entrepreneurs for Global Change."

The book features stories from a variety of people in neighborhoods making a difference, but there's more to it.

Inner Visions periodically hosts "good news tours" for 15 to 20 people; through neighborhoods where good things are happening. "Small bucks can bring about big change when neighbors work toward shared goals and contribute their talents to projects."

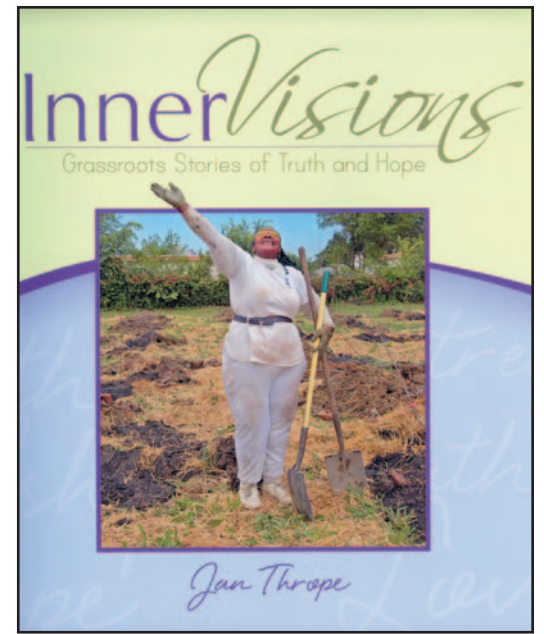
She is working to connect people from outer-ring suburbs to help support resident-led projects. "We are all on journeys from pain to passion to purpose, regardless of our economic situations," she said.

Janis Foster Richardson, of Small Grassroots Grants Makers, described the tours by saying, "They are relationship-building excursions designed to challenge the perception that poor neighborhoods are devoid of hope and possibilities. The tours plant relationship seeds that can grow into purpose-driven connections."

From vegetable gardens planted to replace areas left barren by demolition, recreational and cultural arts centers like the Rainey Institute on East 55th Street for youth, to mentorship programs and safe places for those who need respite from turmoil, there is good news.

It's about the power of what happens when neighbors connect to neighbors to co-create the life they envision, Mrs. Thrope said.

To purchase the book, visit innervisionsofcleveland.com or local bookstores. For more information about *Inner Visions*, call 216.965.4721.



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"Inner Visions" Exhibit

Photographs of challenges and positive changes happening in Cleveland by grass-roots efforts

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