



Breaking Ground Plantings

“Breaking Ground is a faith community characterized by grace and truth that seeks and develops those who desire to become instruments of lasting change in their community.” Ora Collins is a beautiful example of the kind of person Breaking Ground is seeking out to nurture and develop. Listen to her amazing story.

Ora Collins grew up in the Abla projects on the near West Side of Chicago. Raised in a single family household, her childhood was a painful struggle. Her mother was a single parent who was often absent; swallowed up by the streets. This neglect left Ora to raise herself and her three younger siblings. The one ray of hope and encouragement in her life was her god mother. Ora felt special to her god mother, learning from her how to love and to nurture. With her own grit and determination, and the encouragement of her god mother, she was the first ever in her family to graduate from High School and College. She then anchored a good job for over 17 years with the Chicago Board of Education.

Ora was a chronic people-pleaser; a practical means of survival. After performing according to the expectations of others for these many years, she became disillusioned and bored with life. She had no clue who SHE was or why she was even here. At this same time she was diagnosed with cancer and was given six months to live. She said to herself, “I’m going to die anyway so I might as well find out ‘some stuff’.” She felt empty and alone with no one to turn to and she didn’t know to seek God. To fill this gaping hole in her soul, Ora began to use drugs to forget her unhappy memories, numb her despair, and to cope with the growing effects of chemo.

Amazingly, she beat the cancer but lost her job. With drugs as her god, her life soon took on the same negative characteristics of her mother’s life. Her own ten year old daughter became the care taker for her other children. Drugs and the streets became her whole life. For the next several years she was in and out of drug treatment centers (to please someone else). And the results were always the same; the cure never stuck.

While in the streets she met Mike. Mike was the love in her life and her kids loved him too. They were the perfect team; together they were known as “Bonnie and Clyde”. He did the crime and she was the lookout. Though prison tours separated them from each other, their love and loyalty remained strong.

One day in 2006 God gave Ora a wakeup call she couldn’t snooze through. She was in the bathroom smoking cocaine and her two year old grand-daughter opened the door and saw what she was doing. This moment of accountability struck at her very core, way deeper than any “people pleasing need” could go. She realized she didn’t want to do to her grand-children what she had already done to her own children. The power of her own grand-mother’s love broke through. She finely entered treatment because SHE wanted to be free!



Executive Director Brief



Jeff Dennis

Ora’s story is one of faith, hope, and love. When God’s Spirit is free to work, everyone wins and God’s name is glorified. This is the Gospel story that we want to replicate over and over here at Breaking Ground.

Please keep our home sales and closings in prayer. The current housing market is impacting even this segment of housing. It appears the Lord would have us move the bulk of our housing development to the South Side of Chicago. Pray for wisdom as we make this transition.



While in treatment Ora was introduced to a personal God; one who really loved her. Connie Milton told his story and sang the song he wrote titled, I Want To Be Free. She realized that if God could save him from his life of drugs and crime, he could save her as well. She wanted freedom more than anything. God showed her that drugs were killing her, and now she wanted life. The gaping hole in her soul had found hope. She began to seek God with a passion. She committed in her heart to live for God, persevering in listening to his voice and responding in obedience. She began to heal by serving and loving those around her and in the process earned the beloved title of “Big Mama” (having more to do with influence than size).

Connie introduced her to Breaking Ground. She attended the Teaching Factory job readiness program, graduating with perfect attendance. After graduation, she left Breaking Ground but couldn't find work. One of the promises the Teaching Factory makes is that it will help its graduates find work. God spoke to Ora and said, “you came for a job, now go back and get your promise.” In obedience she returned, volunteering to clean up and do whatever was needed. She brought along her huge heart for people and a great sense of humor. Students and staff all loved having her around. After two months of selfless giving, Breaking Ground created a position as Facilities Manager for her. The job has grown with her and she is still blessing the Breaking Ground family two years later. Ora says, “What I gained is a new family and new friends. I feel so loved. Serving here is the most rewarding thing I've ever done and the most rewarding place I've ever worked.”

On August 30, 2008, “Bonnie and Clyde” were married, witnessed by their friends and Breaking Ground family. Today, they remain a core part of Breaking Ground, they belong to a good church, they attend Valid Concerns¹, and they are being mentored together weekly. Mike and Ora are living a life that pleases God, blesses people (much different from “pleasing people”), and is fulfilling to live. In Ora, Jesus has fulfilled the prophesy in Isaiah 61 that He would, “provide for those who grieve... (and) bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.” There is no miracle greater than a life transformed by and for the glory of God!

¹ Valid Concerns is a support group open to neighborhood people to share their personal concerns about life and living.

Architect's Choice

The Classic



Available as single family or two flat

Affordable Housing Update:

- 11— Homes have closed this year
- 12— Homes are under construction and are to close by the end of the year
- 6 — Homes are under contract and ready to start construction

Our programs:

Teaching Factory
 Affordable Housing
 Clean Street
 Discipleship House
 Manufacturing Training Center

For information: www.breakingground.net

Partnering with us:

Contribute financially online at
www.breakingground.net

or via mail by making your check payable to:

Breaking Ground
 3501 West Fillmore Street,
 Chicago, IL 60624

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Pray and sign up:

For our monthly prayer letter via e-mail, contact Jeff at: jdennis@breakingground.net