



"...this is a good-bye, thank you, keep the faith letter and on the other hand..."

Allentown Weed and Seed, the local, state and federal community revitalization initiative with the odd name, merged with the [Jordan Heights](#) Revitalization initiative effective January 2012. Our chair and co-chair joined the Jordan Heights steering committee and our sub-committees continue to meet.

As Allentown Weed and Seed approached the end of its funding road; we thought about which path to take going forward (because after all there is no going back, and you can't simply stay stuck on the road – then you're in the way) and were pleased to be welcomed by the Jordan Heights initiative.

On one hand, this is a good-bye, thank you, keep the faith letter and on the other hand it's a check out and please partner with Jordan Heights they're doing good work letter.



ASD students training at the Allentown Boxing Gym

We've also done good work! Come with me on a short trip down memory lane. Look at these babies – they're boxers from our Allentown Boxing Gym. Coach and founder Luis Melendez dedicates himself to these young people. Because of this Weed and Seed initiative more than 45 youth have a safe place to learn discipline, experience healthy competition and success, engage in physical activity, and be coached, guided and loved into being productive young citizens who are practicing a pro-social activity. We have a number of other youth partners e.g. St. Luke's Neighborhood Center, Children First Community Academy and HALA, who have equally compelling stories of success.



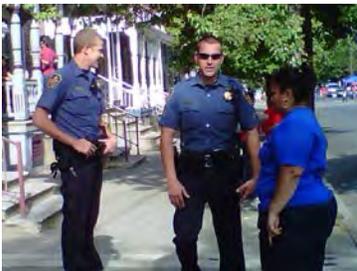
Cecilia Rodriguez – remember our amazing Employment Counselor? There is a myth – a narrative that says poor people don't want to work. We established a counter-narrative – our residents want to work – they do, however, need help to realize their aspirations. Cecilia met them halfway and guided close to 400 residents to full-time employment with benefits! Our former Chairperson, Bob House, loves to share the

numbers associated with this project – at an average wage of \$12.00/hr., more than \$9 million has been generated with some portion of those dollars returned to the community. By the way, Cecilia is now the Community Liaison for Jordan Heights!



The City of Allentown has been a great partner and directed the Bureau of Building Standards and Safety to conduct systematic inspections throughout the Weed and Seed community. More than 300 homeowners throughout Center City and the First Ward were able to benefit from a \$20,000 forgivable loan (the loan is reduced each year they remain in the home down to \$0 by the 10th year) to abate code violations. Homeowners were eligible to receive a \$5000 grant for façade work. In addition to the commitment of the City of Allentown, local housing non-profits e.g. Housing Association Development Corporation, Alliance for Building Communities, Neighborhood Housing

Services of the Lehigh Valley and Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, worked cooperatively to provide safe and affordable housing in the Weed and Seed community.



Police put their lives on the line to protect us; residents are engaged and willing to hold the line against criminal elements taking over the neighborhood – we brought the two together during 8 Police/Resident Community Relations workshops. Each workshop was successful and each workshop increased the number of police and residents working cooperatively to reduce crime. During the period 2003 to 2010 crime within the Weed and Seed

community fell by 54.9%. Similarly, during the same time frame, city wide crime fell 19.9%. We made a difference.



The Jordan Heights initiative will continue to make a difference. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the community. Thank you for all that you do.