

# **Allentown Neighborhood Summit**

**October 20, 2012**

**Sacred Heart Hospital Conference**

**Center**



Submitted by Phyllis Alexander,  
City of Allentown, Neighborhood Coordinator  
October 31, 2012

# Just the Facts

## OVERALL ATTENDANCE SUMMARY

Total registered prior to conference	65
Total registered that did not attend	30
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>PLUS</b> Total attended that registered that day	19
<b>Total attended</b>	<b>54</b>

## Adults Attendance

Total registered prior to conference	45
Total registered that did not attend	20
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PLUS</b> Total attended that registered that day	10
<b>TOTAL ATTENDED</b>	<b>35</b>



## Teens Attendance

Total registered prior to conference	20
Total registered that did not attend	10
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PLUS</b> Total attended that registered that day	9
<b>TOTAL ATTENDED</b>	<b>19</b>

## Evaluations

Very Good	32
Good	6
Fair	1
<b>Total Evaluations completed</b>	<b>39</b>



## Participant Feedback

**What topic(s) did you value the most? (Some chose more than one or made no choice)**

Everything You Wanted to Know but Were Afraid to Ask – 16

How to Effectively Communicate with Teens – 12

Teen Workshop -8

Questions to Police Officers – 6

Housing and the Empowered Neighbor – 3

Emergency Preparedness – 3

Public Safety – 1

**Was the time/length of the Summit adequate? If no, please provide suggestions.**

**Yes 35    No 3    No response 1**

Comments - Could use more time (3)

**In what ways could the Summit be improved?**

1. I like it the way it is - 5
2. Find more interesting things to talk about - 3
3. Make it more known to the public - 2
4. We need more Summits
5. Very well organized and informative
6. No more LEGO's
7. Have more donations
8. More people and more teens
9. Better organized with where people should go
10. More structure. The workshops went off track in some areas.
11. I think it was excellent as it was! I hope these conversations continue – especially in a “neutral” place (not at school, city hall, etc...) and to always include the youth of our community – they have a powerful voice!
12. More time.
13. More teen questions
14. This was very good. Hopefully we can get more people out.



## Participant Feedback Continued

**If we organized one hour events up to 4 times per year, what topic(s) would interest you?**

1. Safety in the neighborhood - 6
2. Communicating and connecting with neighbors - 3
3. Blighted properties - 2
4. Topics that include a teens perspective -2
5. Parenting classes – 2
6. What I can do as a resident to help – 2
7. Communication with difficult neighbors
8. Communication between City administration, City Council and residents
9. Urban revitalization – restoring historical structures to their former grandeur
10. Teen violence
11. Cosas que esten involucradas los teenagers.
12. More time asking kids how we could be better listeners to help make them into being the best citizen for our community.
13. How to follow through
14. Information on fundraising and organizing
15. Focus groups
16. Taking pride in your neighborhood
17. Relationship between adults and teens
18. Police involvement with the community – adults only
19. Know your elected officials
20. Clean, safe and green topics
21. Parents, teenagers and police
22. Anti-gang programs
23. Talking about private stuff
24. Sexual offense
25. Helping teens find out what they want to become when older
26. Abuse
27. Bullying – and its impact on both youth and adults

### **Final remarks**

Thank you for this wonderful summit – 3

Good job -2

I loved this event and would love to attend more and help out

Thank you so much for putting such an amazing event together!!

Gracias por la oportunidad, estuvo bien interesante.

## Workshop Summaries

### **Housing & the Empowered Neighbor**

Speaker – Oscar Squire, Acting Executive Director Redevelopment Authority of the City of Allentown Mayor Pawlowski sat in on a portion of the workshop and greatly helped by explaining the blighted property process beginning with identification of a blighted property and the several steps that need to be taken before ending with eminent domain in the event the owner does not comply with requests for property maintenance and repair. The session encouraged and explained the need for developing neighborhood relationships as a means of empowerment. The discussion explained the merit of fostering relationships and how that would make it easier to correct bad / misbehavior and allow issues to be addressed sooner in keeping the neighborhood a cleaner, safer, and desirable place to live. There were tangents into other neighborhood matters such as homebuyers' resources and other support for acquiring and maintaining property.

### **How to Effectively Communicate with Teens**

Speakers – Dr. Valerie Lewis, Hector Sanchez, Richie Ramos, Alex Rodriguez

1. The audience was quite engaged in the discussion; they often requested to hear the perspective of the young people
2. The young people were candid about their experiences, adding to the richness of the content discussed
3. The main themes revolved around respect for self and others (or lack of) and adult role modeling for young people; respect being a two-way street, need to demonstrate it to receive it – from youth and adults
4. Ways to effectively communicate with teens include active listening, being available, one-on-one quality time with teens, maintaining a habit/routine of communication, non-judgmental approach, and strategies to demonstrate that you have faith in their decision-making capacities
5. Communicating with teens requires firmness and consistency – no mixed messages
6. Distinction of what is normal teen behavior re: communication; developmental reasons why teens sometimes behave the way they do
7. Some generational tensions around acceptable behaviors ex. pants hanging low; points made about “picking battles” with young people – have to look at all characteristics of a child before insisting on a change in (fad) behavior, set some boundaries, but also recognize when the child has done well i.e. don't focus on negatives all the time
8. It takes a village to raise a child – we are all responsible for the children in our communities

Thought this was a great forum to stimulate authentic discussions with community members from a variety of backgrounds, but all with the common goal of better understanding, communicating with, and ultimately supporting teens to be successful. It really comes down to the basics: communal diffusion of responsibility (I am my brother's keeper) and the Golden Rule (do unto others as you'd have done unto you). It was a privilege to participate. The young people's voices were a valuable and necessary

component of the discussion, without which assumptions and misunderstandings would have been perpetuated.

### **How to be Prepared in an Emergency**

Speaker – MaryEllen Shiels, Allentown Health Bureau, also representing Lehigh County Citizen Corp Council

The purpose of this presentation was to demonstrate that emergencies can range from inconvenient to devastating, and to provide information about the four (4) components of emergency preparedness. The presentation included a PowerPoint presentation and a demonstration of a 72-hour emergency supply kit. In addition, each participant received items to include in his/her emergency preparedness kit.

The presentation included the following:

- History has demonstrated that large scale emergencies and disasters can occur with little or no advanced notice, in communities just like ours.
- Examples of local incidents were reviewed and the impact that each had on our community.
- During and following an emergency, police, fire and rescue personnel may not always be able to reach you quickly, such as if trees and power lines are down or if they're overwhelmed by demand.
- The most important thing you can do is be able to take care of yourself and those in your care. The 4 steps to prepare for an emergency include: get a kit, make a plan, stay informed, and get involved. Each step was reviewed with practical tips for creating and maintaining each emergency preparedness component. A handout reinforcing the information was also distributed.

The participants were actively engaged and asked excellent questions. Two (2) participants expressed interest in completing the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training.

### **Teen Workshop – Dating Violence, Sexual Harassment, Sexting and Cyber-bullying**

Speakers – Lorna Clause, Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley and Sara Ullmer, Crime Victims Council of the Lehigh Valley

Over 15 teenagers attended the workshop, most were females. Teens were not certain about the topic for discussion nonetheless they participated. The input and participation from the teens prevented a discussion on all 4 subject areas, however, discussion was worthwhile. Specifically teens learned about: dating violence – how it begins and cycles and how cell phones can be involved in abuse, the differences between rape, sexual assault and statutory sexual assault, and how to help a friend you suspect is being abused or taken advantage of. There were a lot of questions about statutory sexual assault. Even the teens that were quiet appeared to be absorbing the information and discussion.

### **Everything You Wanted to Know but Were Afraid to Ask**

Youth and adults had a chance to ask each other any question they wanted to ask. Adults asked youth the following questions: 1. What do you do when one of your friends throws something on the ground or uses vulgar language in public? 2. Do you see Allentown getting better after today?

3. Is social media and bullying a trend in Middle School or more in High School? Is it a trend to knock someone down to be part of a clique? 4. As a young person, what is one thing you think would improve your neighborhood? 5. Sexting - what is it about social media (the impersonal aspect of this form of communication) that makes it easier to be more uninhibited with pictures and images sent? The youth asked adults: 1. Do you think disciplining your kids physically can help your kids out in the future? 2. Why do adults understand themselves but not teenagers? 3. Why are adults so strict with teenagers 4. Why do you notice the bad things I do and not the good things?

### **Questions from youth to Police Officers**

During the Everything You Wanted to Know...session, youth were particularly interested in learning more about police officers and their work. Teens asked several questions including: 1. How can we answer your questions if we're still in shock from an incident? and how long does it take to become a police officer?

### **Tour of 441 W. Liberty**

Seventeen participants walked to 441 W. Liberty and had a chance to see a beautiful (renovation almost complete) home. Of the 17 participants there were 5 adults and 12 teens. Home ownership and keeping our city clean was promoted.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## **Planning Committee**

Karen Berard  
Milly Canales  
Ibi Ibalog  
Janet Keshl  
Hector Sanchez  
Mitzi Xander

## **Summit support – day of**

Karen Berard  
Adrienne Maio  
Hector Sanchez  
Jessica Tavera  
Kamilah Velez  
Mitzi Xander

## **Contributors**

### **Thank you Allentown Neighborhood Groups, City of Allentown and Individuals:**

East Allentown Rittersville Neighborhood Association, Hamilton Park Neighborhood Association, Library Area Neighborhood Association, Mountainville 30 Crime Watch, Mosser Village Family Center, Muhlenberg Area Community Watch, Old Fairground Neighborhood Association, Park Ridge Neighborhood Association, Raub Area Crime Watch, Mayor Ed Pawlowski, City of Allentown Recycling and Solid Waste, Bob Bernhard, Senator Pat Browne, Mike Donovan, Patti Infanti

### **Thank you Speakers/Facilitators**

Phyllis Alexander, City of Allentown (What you always wanted to know but Were Afraid to Ask)

Lorna Clause, Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley (Teen Workshop)

Dr. Valerie Lewis, Lehigh Valley Hospital (How to Effectively Communicate with Teens)

Richie Ramos – Teen Co-Facilitator (How to Effectively Communicate with Teens)

Alex Rodriguez – Teen Co-Facilitator (How to Effectively Communicate with Teens)

Hector Sanchez – St. Luke’s Neighborhood Center Co-facilitator (How to Effectively Communicate with Teens)

Neal Schroder, Bricks4Kidz – (Communication activity)

MaryEllen Shiels - City of Allentown Health Bureau (How to Be Prepared in an Emergency)

Oscar Squire, Redevelopment Authority of Allentown (Housing and the Empowered Neighbor)

Sara Ullmer, Crime Victims Council of the Lehigh Valley (Teen Workshop)