



**Friends of Ed Pawlowski**

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## **PRESS ADVISORY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

September 21, 2009

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# **WEED AND SEED WORKS FOR ALLENTOWN**

Allentown's Weed and Seed program has seen many measurable achievements over the last several years.

But one of its greatest successes is harder to quantify: The accomplishment of residents and community leaders coming together with the administration to improve center city Allentown.

“Allentown's Weed and Seed Initiative demonstrates the benefits of the power of collaboration and cooperation in our community,” said Mayor Pawlowski. “Active input from community members has helped to improve these neighborhoods in a significant way.”

The community-based safety and revitalization initiative known as Weed and Seed began in Allentown to fight crime and improve quality of life in a targeted area. The area consists of 48 blocks, stretching from Tilghman to Hamilton streets, and from the Lehigh River to Eighth Street.

Weed and Seed addresses the roots of crime and poverty in the targeted zone through prevention, intervention, treatment, and neighborhood revitalization strategies.

Measurable accomplishments include a drop in crime, increased employment, grants for businesses, affordable new housing, more recreation and educational opportunities for children.

Crime in the target area is down. Overall, State Police and FBI statistics show that crime in Allentown has dropped over the past three years. Likewise, crime in the target area has decreased in relation to the city as a whole. In 2002 total crime in the target area made up 22.4 percent of crime in the city. In 2008, crime in the target area made up just 16.6 percent of crime in the city. Total offenses in the target area have gone down for four consecutive years.

Law enforcement -- the "Weed" part of the equation -- includes cooperation among the district attorney's office, DEA, the Pennsylvania attorney general's office, state police and the Allentown Police Department working to fight crime and expedite prosecutions in the zone.

Its goals are to eliminate drug dealing hot spots and reduce prostitution, loitering and quality-of-life complaints and the number of juveniles on the street during school hours.

The "Seed" part of the equation includes efforts to improve the availability of human services and youth development programs; reduce vacancies and elevate housing stock and neighborhood desirability; increase employment; and spur economic development.

Drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programs, with an emphasis on post-treatment support are under way. Community outreach for social services has been increased in the target area.

A community garden project was created, concluding with a Harvest Party on August 20.

A Youth Coalition made up of program providers meets regularly to collaborate on how to best serve the needs of youth. Every week, youth coalition members serve more than 200 youths and their families in the target area. The goal is to enhance educational, recreational and personal development opportunities for youth; provide more positive role models; better prepare teenagers in the target area for the transition to productive adulthood; and to help families deal more effectively with behavioral and developmental

challenges.

More than 300 residents in the target area have found full-time jobs with benefits.

“The importance of these jobs bringing income into the community cannot be underestimated,” Mayor Pawlowski said.

More than 50 small businesses in the zone have received grants and loans. The money has gone toward equipment, inventory and façade improvements.

“Weed and Seed has successfully captured the interest and involvement of residents in the revitalization of their neighborhood,” Mayor Pawlowski said. “Thanks to this initiative, many organizations that for years fanned out in different directions are now working together with the residents of the community for one common goal: the betterment of our community.”