



WEED & SEED **INSITES**

January/February 2001
Volume IX, Number 1



The Weed and Seed Dive
Program in St. Thomas
page 13

Weed & Seed In-Sites

is a publication of the

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs

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On Cover: Advanced open water diver
Katisha Ritter and rescue diver Evonette
Nathaniel are graduates of the Weed
and Seed Dive Program in St. Thomas,
U.S. Virgin Islands.

From the Director

Over the past few months, I have received many inquiries about how the new administration would affect the future of Weed and Seed. Our initiative has always been revered as one of the most successful bipartisan Federal initiatives—created by President George Bush in 1990 and taken to remarkable heights over the past 10 years. We have made significant progress and experienced unlimited support. This August, we will celebrate a decade of Weed and Seed at our 2001 National Conference, appropriately titled **Leave No Neighborhood Behind**.

Whether the new “hot topic” in criminal justice is hate crimes, gun violence, substance abuse, truancy, elder justice, or victimization in the community, EOWS is called on more often than ever to educate Federal partners on



not only the problems but the solutions that are experienced in America's communities. While these issues

can be characterized by media as national epidemics overnight by a single incident, the social ailments involved have been a part of daily life for many Weed and Seed communities for a very long time.

Today, there are three times the number of people living in State and Federal prisons than in 1980. More than 500,000 ex-offenders will reintegrate into America's communities in the next year, posing a major challenge to communities that already have limited resources. This issue of *In-Sites* magazine provides readers with an introduction to Weed and Seed reentry initiatives, sharing stories from sites that are practicing innovative approaches to address the needs of releasees.

EOWS celebrates the new look and utility of *In-Sites* through this introduction of the magazine. I want to thank our Training Division and the *In-Sites* team for their hard work to make *In-Sites* a publication you can be proud of. Our *In-Sites* editor will work with those of you who want to submit site stories to either the magazine or the EOWS Web site. We look forward to your feedback.

Stephen Rickman
Director, EOWS

In-Sites magazine is here! In 1999, the *In-Sites* newsletter team began a gradual redesign of a newsletter that had seen little change since its launch in 1993. The publication was expanded by 8 pages, a 4-color cover was designed, and new feature sections were added. That year, *In-Sites* was awarded an Honorable Mention by the National Association of Government Communicators in the category Most Improved Federal Publication.

In 2000, EOWS Director Stephen Rickman directed that the newsletter add more “usable resources.” He projected a publication that would educate readers on the intricate concepts of Weed and Seed and give readers

cause to think about the vision of Weed and Seed as a movement. By implementing gradual editorial changes in each issue, the challenge was met. Every issue has received great reviews, more site representatives are becoming comfortable providing EOWS with stories and commentary, and each week, EOWS receives an increasing number of requests for new subscriptions.

EOWS welcomes your comments and your contributions. Please visit *In-Sites* on the EOWS Web site at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/eows/publications.htm.

Penne Soltysik
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Inspiring a Community

find out more—
page 4

- 4** A Dream Realized
- 5** Reclaiming the Streets in Gainesville, Florida
- 7** Funding Assistance for Victims of Crime
- 9** Trinity Gardens Neighborhood Receives Official Recognition
- 13** Diving to New Depths

Reentry Initiatives

- 6** A Challenge for Law Enforcement: Tracking Ex-Offenders
- 8** Community Supports Seattle Reentry Project
- 12** Building Job Linkages for Ex-Offenders
- 14** New Program Helps Young Probationers and Their Families

DEFY

- 10** Atlanta's DEFY Youth Go Door to Door
- 11** Camp DEFY Participants Express Thanks

Winners

- 16** A "Nobel" Idea From Death Row Changes Lives Around the World
- 17** Syracuse Youth Recognized by the Kennedy Center Alliance

Conflict Resolution Series: Part I

- 18** "Working It Out" Through Conflict Resolution

Departments

- 20** Web Sight
- 21** Conference Corner
- 22** EOWS News
- 23** Resources



Succeeding Through Teamwork

find out more—
page 14

A Dream Realized

Daphne Sloan

When Sheila Jennings, a single mother, moved to the College Hill Courts public housing development a decade ago, the Westside community of Chattanooga, Tennessee, was in a serious state of decline. Like many inner cities in the early 1990s, the Westside community was ridden with crime, drugs, and violence. The closed elementary school that sat empty in the heart of the community for years was scheduled for demolition.

In 1993, Jennings enrolled in a program administered by the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) School of Nursing called A D.A.R.E. to Parents. The program teaches parents about alcohol and other drug abuse and provides strategies for fostering community bonds that will discourage alcohol and other drug abuse by children. (D.A.R.E. stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education.) Jennings believes her participation in A D.A.R.E. to Parents prompted her



Sheila Jennings stands in front of Home Girls Catering, the business she cofounded and now owns. Jennings' success is an inspiration to her Chattanooga neighbors.

with the problems in their neighborhood and the visions they had for its recovery. They realized that they needed to form partnerships to get

Also in 1996, the Westside Community Development Corporation (WCDC), a nonprofit corporation, raised \$2.4 million from dozens of public and private organizations and from College Hill Courts residents (who contributed \$5,000) for the renovation of the old James A. Henry Elementary School. Jennings was the primary driving force in the fundraising initiative, which led to the transformation of the old school building into the James A. Henry Resource Center, where residents can access a host of social services.

While serving as chairperson of the WCDC Board of Directors, Jennings and a few other College Hill Courts residents began preparing meals for the monthly board meetings—first from their homes, then from the commercial kitchen in the James A. Henry Resource Center. A WCDC board member liked the food so much she suggested that Jennings seriously consider going into the catering business. Jennings shared the idea with Gwen Charles and Gwen Scott, administrators of the A D.A.R.E. to Parents

In 1993, a Chattanooga Weed and Seed resident enrolled herself in a community intervention course offered in her inner-city neighborhood. The course inspired her to get involved in her community. Today, the story of her success and the catering business she runs inspires others in her community to take chances, face challenges, and fulfill their dreams.

to get involved in other community activities, helped her meet other single parents with children, and, ultimately, sparked her interest in community revitalization. Jennings and her neighbors turned to community groups and local nonprofit and civic organizations, including the Junior League of Chattanooga, to assist them

the financial backing and technical expertise necessary to transform the Westside neighborhood. In 1996, the Westside community applied for and received Official Recognition as a Weed and Seed site. The site strategy focused on increasing local entrepreneurship and job training.

continued on page 19

Reclaiming the Streets in Gainesville, Florida

Lt. Ed Book

In north central Florida, 85 miles south of Georgia, the city of Gainesville has maintained a strong commitment to a local Weed and Seed strategy that has helped convert a few crime-ridden neighborhoods into areas where people can live without fear for their safety.

Gainesville is home to approximately 208,000 residents (44,000 of whom are students of the University of Florida). The population of the Weed and Seed target area is 9,400, according to the 1990 census. In 1996, before Weed and Seed was on the scene, more than 50 percent of black males between ages 16 and 26 were unemployed, more than 3,000 mothers received Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC), more than 10,000 children lived in poverty (36 percent of families lived below the poverty level), and the high school dropout rate was 10 percent. Like most cities its size, Gainesville's greatest citywide crime problems were drug dealing and use, burglary, assault and battery, loitering, and theft.

"There was a time . . . when drug dealers were actually stopping cars in both lanes, making people wait while

they sold drugs," said Eleanor Loseke, who has lived in the neighborhood for more than 30 years.

In 1997, Gainesville was funded as an Officially Recognized Weed and Seed site after the Gainesville Police Department partnered with the Alachua County School Board to form a Weed and Seed coalition. This team immediately began weeding efforts in the target area, a small neighborhood in the northeastern portion of the city. In December 1998, an extensive street-level drug market operating in the heart of the Gainesville Weed and Seed Highland Court Manor neighborhood was eradicated by local law enforcement agents. The U.S. Attorney's Office, working with the local Weed and Seed residents, secured 13 Federal guilty pleas to conspiracy to distribute cocaine. A focus on street-level crack dealing led agents to bigger dealers and more connections. Eventually, the operation seized 2 ½ kilos of crack cocaine, which would have been broken down into 225,000 crack rocks to be distributed in Gainesville.

The weeding strategies in Highland Court Manor were matched with equal enthusiasm on a different front

by a neighborhood crime watch group to combat street-level drug dealers. The crime watch group began work by seeding innovative, effective, and widespread practices in the target area, including removing literally tons of refuse from the area through neighborhood cleanups; coordinating a "Paint Your Heart Out" event to spruce up neighborhood homes; enhancing code enforcement efforts for nuisance violations such as unkempt lawns, abandoned cars, and dilapidated housing; installing traffic "calming" devices such as speed humps that slow down cars and make neighbors feel more neighborly; and increasing lighting along alleys in the area. Coordinators alerted and involved the media, welcoming them into the target area to meet with police officers, residents, and city officials.

While seeding efforts have focused on the Highland Court Manor neighborhood, the benefits of the Weed and Seed strategy have filtered into surrounding areas, particularly the schools. A local resident started a tutoring program with the help of the Weed and Seed board, and Stephen Foster Elementary School created an extended-day summer enrichment program (EDEP) that was funded and staffed with Weed and Seed funds. EDEP curriculum programs have been designed to stimulate young minds and feature activities such as sailboat design classes, nutrition workshops, and art projects. Educational field trips include visits to the Florida Museum of Natural History, the Santa Fe Community College Teaching Zoo, and the Fred Bear Archery Museum.

Gainesville has enjoyed smaller seeding projects on an equally successful scale. These projects include a community and school garden where families and students learn to cultivate



Three dumpsters were needed to collect the trash at the 1999 Highland Court Manor Crime Watch Cleanup.

continued on page 19

A Challenge for Law Enforcement: Tracking Ex-Offenders

Capt. Bob DeMoura

Law enforcement officers ensure the safety of the citizens and business owners living and operating within a designated area. Weed and Seed community police officers go one step further by building positive relationships between the residents and business owners of the area they serve. They also work with support services within the community, including local schools, churches, and social service organizations operated by community groups and the city. Such efforts have certainly made Lowell a better place to live for everyone.

In years past, many people in the Weed and Seed target area lacked a feeling of community ownership; they were afraid of their own streets. The community was ruled by individuals who were bringing the drug business into the neighborhood and bringing down the quality of life. Through local weeding efforts, these individuals were either incarcerated or forced to move elsewhere, and Lowell Weed and Seed community residents made the streets safer for themselves and their children. By taking ownership, residents set goals for a better future.

Many of the men and women arrested in Lowell during early weeding efforts are nearing the end of their incarceration—and are about to return to a community much different from the one they once knew. Local law enforcement must ensure that, on release, ex-offenders quickly learn that their “old ways” are not going to be tolerated and that the streets as they once knew them are very different today.

The Lowell Police Department teamed up with the Massachusetts Department of Corrections and Spectrum, a non-profit support group, to create the Lowell Prisoner Reentry Initiative. The Initiative is designed to alleviate the frustration brought on by the “life in a turnstile” in which some offenders find themselves trapped—a circle of arrest, court appearance, jail or prison time, release, and arrest on a new charge or a technical parole violation.

When an inmate at an area prison is nearing his or her release date, prison personnel contact representatives from the Lowell Prisoner Reentry Initiative. Officers study each ex-offender’s

characteristics and the neighborhood to which the inmate is returning. Community police officers examine the ex-offender’s case history to determine the number of arraignments, times on probation, adult incarcerations, and parole releases; number of disciplinary reports filed while incarcerated; age at first arraignment; age at latest release; marital status; family support and contact (before, during, and after incarceration); and education level. The ex-offender risk assessment is also based on whether the inmate was held in a minimum security, maximum security, or prerelease facility.

Finally, at the correctional facility (prior to the inmate’s release), a police officer meets with the soon-to-be ex-offender and a support person from Spectrum, an organization that offers support services for inmates being released from prison. The meeting is an opportunity to discuss the offender’s release date and reintegration into the community. The meeting also gives the police officer an opportunity to meet the inmate and see what he or she looks like. Usually the officer who attends this meeting is the officer who works in the ex-offender’s neighborhood; this allows the officer to become familiar with the individual and learn his or her habits, friends, overall attitude, education level, and so on. The most important goal of the prerelease meeting is to establish a positive relationship between the community policing officer and the inmate before his or her release.

Lowell Weed and Seed hopes that this interaction with inmates prior to their release will reduce local recidivism rates by successfully reintegrating ex-offenders into the community while maintaining the quality of life and safety of the community. The Lowell Prisoner Reentry Initiative gives community police officers the best opportunity to serve the community. 🏡

While many law enforcement agencies have separate divisions for community policing, the Lowell Police Department in Massachusetts dissolved its community policing unit years ago. Today, all officers, regardless of assignment or rank, are expected to embrace the philosophies of community policing. It is no surprise that Lowell officers took a highly active role in coordinating the Lowell Prisoner Reentry Initiative, through which officers help ensure positive reintegration of ex-offenders while protecting the community they serve.

Funding Assistance for Victims of Crime

Romia Ray

Funding and technical assistance are available to communities that want to improve or expand their victim assistance efforts. The Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) established the Crime Victims Fund, which serves as a major funding source for victim services throughout the country. Administered by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), the fund is supported not by tax dollars but by fines, penalty assessments, and bond forfeitures collected from convicted Federal offenders.

"Crime victims from across the Nation benefit from these programs in real terms—through direct financial and personal assistance when they most need it. Over the past 15 years, the Crime Victims Fund has made a tremendous impact on the services that States are able to provide."

—Kathryn Turman, Director, OVC

About 90 percent of VOCA funding goes directly to the States to support victim compensation and local victim assistance programs. Most States make awards on a competitive basis, and any local agency that serves crime victims is eligible to compete. Through VOCA funding, community organizations have been able to support law enforcement by providing victims with on-the-scene crisis intervention, information and referral services, followup contacts, assistance with obtaining shelter and emergency finances, and help filing victim compensation claims.

VOCA funding isn't solely for criminal justice agencies. It supports any government or private nonprofit organization that serves victims—survivors and families—of crimes that include drunk driving, homicide, assault, child and spouse abuse, robbery, elder abuse, fraud, school violence, and gang activity. VOCA funds also can be used to pay for technology that fosters improved service delivery to victims, such as computers for case management systems.

OVC also operates a Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC), which serves as a centralized access

point for OVC's training and technical assistance resources. Through TTAC, OVC provides expert, focused support and mentoring in program management, program evaluation, and policy/procedure development to improve services to crime victims. TTAC also ensures that training materials developed through OVC discretionary grants are available to the victim services field and that expert trainers are available to present them. Finally, TTAC enables OVC to supply speakers who have expertise in a wide range of criminal justice- and victim-related topics for conferences, focus groups, and other meetings.

Municipal officials interested in expanding their victim assistance services can visit the OVC Web site at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc for contact information for their State VOCA offices and application procedures. Anyone can call OVC at 202-307-5983 for information about State victim compensation and victim assistance agencies. 🏠

Office for Victims of Crime
OVC
Advocating for the Fair
Treatment of Crime Victims

Coming in April . . . the Weed and Seed 2001 National Poster Contest!

Visit www.ojp.usdoj.gov/eows/philly.htm for all EOWS National Conference news. Poster contest details will be posted soon!



1999 Weed and Seed National Poster Contest Winner

Sandy Valdivia
10 years old

From:
Benavidez
Elementary
School
Houston, TX



1999 Weed and Seed National Poster Contest Winner

Byron Bumpers
15 years old

From: M.T.
Blount High
School
Prichard, AL

Community Supports Seattle Reentry Project

Kay Godefroy

The Weed and Seed site in Seattle, Washington, received Official Recognition in 1994. During the program's early years, local law enforcement cracked down on drug crimes and made numerous arrests. Today, many of these offenders are being paroled or released back into the neighborhood—a neighborhood that now enjoys a higher quality of life and is not tolerant of the drug activities that once plagued its streets.

Under the new Weed and Seed Offender Reentry Pilot Project, support and treatment services are provided to people recently released from

TASC (Treatment Alternatives to Street Crimes), a community organization that receives private, Federal, State, and local funding to provide services to drug-dependent adult felony offenders. The TASC mission is to facilitate community-based treatment; decrease drug abuse, criminal activity, and incarceration; and link the criminal justice and drug treatment systems.

Case managers from TASC of King County, Washington, then manage the ex-offender's **final assessment**, a phase in which each participant is assigned a treatment plan with service

Central Seattle Weed and Seed community partners who provide program support include the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington, the Washington Insurance Council, the Seattle Metropolitan Urban League, the Seattle Neighborhood Group, the Seattle Vocational Institute, Pioneer Human Services, the Central Area Motivation Program, New Hope Baptist Church, the Seattle Human Services Department, the Seattle Police Department, King County Councilmember Larry Gossett, and Mid-Town Commons. These partners work together to ensure that ex-offenders returning to the community are given the support they need.

Seattle's Offender Reentry Pilot Project provides support and treatment services to ex-offenders who are returning to the community, ensuring the health of the entire community.

This pilot project gives Seattle Weed and Seed the opportunity to help the segment of the community that has spent the past several years behind bars. By reintegrating them, the health of the entire community is ensured. The Weed and Seed Offender Reentry Pilot Project is on the right track—and in Seattle, the community has the commitment, partnership, and determination to help ex-offenders feel they, too, are on the right track. 🏠

incarceration who are returning to the central Weed and Seed community. The project's goal is to welcome ex-offenders back to the community while keeping them informed of current "community standards." The project began in January 2001 with a carefully planned 4-phase approach, targeting a group of 20 inmates nearing their release dates.

During the first phase, the **prerelease phase**, program staff join Department of Corrections staff to work with offenders who have expressed interest in committing to a reentry program. This prerelease work, which begins 3 to 6 months before the inmate's release, assesses the ex-offender's needs for housing, health and treatment services, and employment training and placement.

In the **release/assessment phase**, the now ex-offender is introduced to

providers who are partners in the program. The treatment plan promotes rehabilitation—providing family services, job skills development, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, anger management counseling, and more. All participants must sign a contract agreeing to the stipulations of the project and understand their responsibilities as they go through reentry. (The stipulations require that the participant agree to work with a case manager, undergo drug treatment if needed, and locate employment and housing.)

The Offender Reentry Advisory Committee is committed to working with case managers to find resources that meet ex-offender needs. Participants will stay in the program approximately 1 year. Those who adhere to their contracts will be rewarded and promoted to the final stage—**graduation!**

Challenges to Reentry

- Balancing the ex-offender's need for a range of services against the community's need for accountability.
- Assisting the ex-offender by identifying his or her needs, making appropriate referrals, and providing advocacy and support on his or her behalf.
- Addressing the community's concerns by monitoring the ex-offender's progress and helping to prevent him or her from "falling through the cracks" of community support services.

Trinity Gardens Neighborhood Receives Official Recognition

The morning rain did not keep the more than 200 children, parents, residents, service providers, and local elected representatives from a recent ceremony at the Joseph Dotch Community Center in Mobile, Alabama. The event marked two important Weed and Seed milestones: the Trinity Gardens Neighborhood received its newly issued certificate for Official Recognition and residents from the Martin Luther King, Jr., and Maysville neighborhoods received awards for their accomplishments within the Weed and Seed strategy. EOWS Director Stephen Rickman was joined by city of Mobile Mayor Michael Dow; Armand DeKyser, representing Senator Jeff Sessions; U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama J. Don Foster; City Council President Clinton Johnson; and Chief Samuel Cochran from the Mobile Police Department. Eric Day, LECC Coordinator, moderated the ceremony.

Students from the Brazier Elementary School offered a musical prelude, the ROTC Honor Guard from Blount High School presented the flags, and Quintan Beasley led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Dow presented a proclamation for the day, commending the dedication of



Trinity Gardens Civic Club and Bay Area Women and Explorers Post 402 advisers attend the Official Recognition ceremony for the Trinity Gardens Neighborhood.

neighborhood residents and local innovations, such as the teaming of social workers with police officers in every precinct, that have brought about positive change in these communities.

U.S. Attorney Foster thanked the residents and all of the Weed and Seed partners for their remarkable efforts to make the neighborhoods safer. “Because of your commitment,” Foster told the audience, “we have seen an overall 15-percent reduction in violent crime and drug-related crime in the neighborhoods.”

“About 7 years ago, under the leadership of Jeff Sessions, planning for Weed and Seed began in Mobile. I have come to Mobile, Alabama, today to join you in celebrating 6 years of people coming together to create a safer community,” Rickman said. “Perhaps most important, these neighborhood improvement efforts have provided hope and opportunity to a younger generation of community residents who can participate in the American dream and are America’s promise. But change in this community, like any other community, does not happen overnight. . . . It takes time; it takes patience; it takes a committed group of leaders to stay the course. It takes sustained partnerships. It takes mutual trust. It requires compromise and understanding. It also takes faith. Faith that we can succeed—faith in ourselves, our neighborhoods, and our communities.”

Mobile residents and leaders of neighborhood associations receiving awards included Wiley Butler, Levones Dubose, Lowell Friedman, Donald Jackson, Annie Kersh, Patricia Lucky, Patricia Maddox, and Charles Stefan. Patricia Jackson, Director of Mobile Weed and Seed, helped coordinate the awards ceremony. 🏠



From left: Mobile Mayor Michael Dow; U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama J. Don Foster; Armand DeKyser, representing Senator Jeff Sessions; and EOWS Director Stephen Rickman celebrate Trinity Garden’s Official Recognition.

Atlanta's DEFY Youth Go Door to Door

Gloria Walker

In Atlanta, Georgia, DEFY (Drug Education for Youth) is a big deal. If you were to go to any of the four Weed and Seed communities and ask about the positive things in residents' lives, you would hear kids and parents talk affectionately about DEFY and "Chief" Sheats.

The 2000 class represents Atlanta Weed and Seed's fifth year of participation in DEFY and is sponsored by the U.S. Attorney's Office in conjunction with the U.S. Naval Air Station-Atlanta and the city of Atlanta. Talk of Atlanta's DEFY program has spread into other communities as well, so much so that the Vine City Civic Association and Community invited Richard "Chief" Sheats, Community Relations Specialist/DEFY Coordinator, to bring DEFY youngsters to the Vine City Millennium Cleanup

event on October 7, 2000. The association wanted the DEFY youth to serve as an example for Vine City residents that other inner-city youth are involved in exciting, positive programs.

The youth were bused to the cleanup site, courtesy of the Atlanta DEFY 2000 military partner, the Naval Air Station-Atlanta, of Marietta, Georgia. Youth and adult volunteer mentors wore their DEFY shirts and DEFY pride. "We wanted to make a good impression on the kids of Vine City, especially because I'm told that the majority of them are not involved in any meaningful activities," Chief Sheats said. He led the group into formation and marched them through the community, chanting DEFY cadence and songs. "The community knew we were there," said Naval Air Station-Atlanta Coordinator Petty

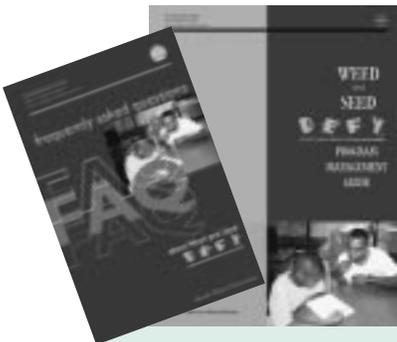


Mentor Russell Hawkins watches mentee Raynell Cornell knock door to door during an Atlanta DEFY Phase II neighborhood event.

Officer James Crawford. Onlookers stopped and admired how proud the DEFY group appeared and sounded. Atlanta DEFY staff seek out opportunities to further strengthen the community throughout the year.

Parents of Atlanta DEFY youth gave DEFY staff very positive feedback about the day's efforts. Most said their kids came home talking about what they did with their day and the people they met. 🏠

In Atlanta, Weed and Seed DEFY programmers cleaned up with a Phase II event that educated and mobilized residents for a good cause.



Two New DEFY Tools Online!

Visit the EOWS home page at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/eows and click on "Publications" to access the latest DEFY resources added to our Web site.

What is DEFY? What are the requirements to become a DEFY site? What can DEFY funds be used for? These and other questions are addressed in the *Frequently Asked Questions About Weed and Seed DEFY* brochure, which provides a brief overview of the DEFY program, Weed and Seed's role in implementing the program, and how your site can get involved.

The *DEFY Program Management Guide* is a practical, hands-on tool that describes the phases of DEFY and the responsibilities of each partner in the program. The *Guide* provides step-by-step instructions on planning and implementing the program and contains sample forms and handbooks for staff and parents/guardians.

Camp DEFY Participants Express Thanks

Al Overbaugh

Shayla and Shyla Dameron are 11-year-old twins who live in the Des Moines, Iowa, Enterprise Community (EC)/Weed and Seed neighborhood and attend sixth grade at Meredith Middle School. Shayla looks forward to attending college. Shyla knows already that she wants to be a lawyer. Both girls participated in this summer's DEFY (Drug Education for Youth) camp, funded in part by the EC/Weed and Seed program.

Weed and Seed funds have helped to finance the Des Moines DEFY Phase I Summer Training Camp for the past 3 years. In 2000—the summer the Dameron twins participated—42 campers attended the week-long residential program. Counselors and mentors came from the Iowa National Guard, Employee and Family Resources (EFR), and the local U.S. Attorney's

Des Moines Weed and Seed has fostered a strong commitment to promoting youth services since its inception in 1996. This commitment produces a very successful DEFY program. Here, two gifted twins share with *In-Sites* readers thoughts on their first DEFY experience and give thanks to their mentors.

Office. The curriculum included a number of team-building, goal-setting, and self-esteem building activities. Campers also played games and went swimming every day and took field trips to the Des Moines Fire Station, Saylorville Lake and Visitor Center, and the Jordan House Historical Site in West Des Moines. A National Guard helicopter and other

military equipment were on display for the kids. The week ended with a recognition ceremony attended by camp participants and their parents at which Don C. Nickerson, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Iowa, was the keynote speaker.

DEFY Phase II began in August 2000. During Phase II, mentors meet monthly with the same group of kids to provide mentoring, reinforce life skills taught at summer camp, and have fun.

The Dameron sisters wrote the following letters describing their summer camp experiences:



Dear DEFY Staff:

I would like to thank everyone for taking their time to teach us to become leaders, not followers. I also want to thank the staff for teaching us to use teamwork and to have manners.

While I was at Camp DEFY I learned to work with people instead of being at home lying on the couch sleeping and being lazy. So thank you everyone for helping me to become a better person.

Sincerely,
Shyla Dameron

Camp DEFY is a truly remarkable program for young people who don't have as many things as other young people. Camp DEFY is a program that teaches young children like me about self-control, self-discipline, and teamwork. Throughout the week at Camp DEFY, I learned these three great things.

But there is another thing I forgot about, and that is having fun. I learned to have fun, but there is a line where you need to be more serious. I really hope that in the near future younger kids like me can have as much fun at Camp DEFY as I had.

Thank you,
Shayla Dameron

Building Job Linkages for Ex-Offenders

Penne Soltysik

Each State, in partnership with the Federal Government, offers varying programs to prepare inmates for release. However, it is the success of programs similar to Texas's Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders) that has sparked Federal funding of local initiatives nationwide. Evaluation of such programs has revealed that progressive reentry initiatives, fueled by services at the local level, go the distance in providing solutions to core problems often overlooked in correctional prerelease programming. Mental and physical illness, child support responsibilities, lack of legal identification, homelessness, and lack of sufficient aftercare support and monitoring all work against ex-offenders after their release and contribute to the staggering statistic that, based on past trends, 2 out of 5 inmates released this year will be reincarcerated within 3 years.

The chances of inmates returning to a life of crime depend on many things, including their ability to locate productive work after they are released. Studies have demonstrated that an ex-offender who obtains employment is three times more likely to stay out of prison than one who remains unemployed. Ex-offenders who find immediate employment benefit not only from financial stability but also increased self-esteem. A few points should be considered when attempting to establish effective offender job linkages.

Give 'em Credit!

Federal tax incentives, especially for small business owners, go a long way in making ex-offenders more attractive to potential employers. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a Federal tax credit that encourages employers to hire specific groups of job seekers with barriers to employment, including economically disadvantaged ex-felons trying to find work. Under WOTC, employers can reduce their Federal income tax liability by as much as \$2,100 per qualified

new worker. Last year, in the State of Illinois alone, more than 23,419 individuals went from welfare public assistance rolls to meaningful employment through WOTC.

Building Strong Bonds

Many employers carry insurance to protect themselves against employee dishonesty, theft, or embezzlement. However, many insurance companies refuse to cover individuals they consider to be high risk, including ex-offenders.

In 1966, the U.S. Department of Labor created the Federal Bonding Program to help increase the employability of these applicants through provision of free fidelity bonding insurance. The bond program is a business insurance policy that protects the employer in case of money or property loss due to employee dishonesty. The bond insurance is issued free of charge to the employer for a period of 6 months. If the worker demonstrates job honesty during the 6 months of Federal Bonding Program coverage, that worker can become bondable for life under commercial bonding made available to the employer for purchase. Approximately 40,000 applicants have obtained jobs under this bonding program, and 99 percent have proved to be honest employees.

Know and Promote Their Rights!

Although reentry program directors and case managers cannot always represent their clients as legal counsel, they should be able to identify when someone's rights have been violated. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) prohibits decisions made by employers based on an individual's prior conviction record. The employer must, by Federal law, consider the nature and gravity of the offense(s), the time that has passed since the conviction and/or completion of the sentence, and the nature of the job held or sought.

Many job seekers recently released from jail or prison are afraid that if they reveal their criminal records they will automatically be turned away by potential employers. Case managers of reentry participants should make their clients aware that employers are allowed to ask applicants about their conviction histories but not their arrest records. If an applicant fails to disclose this information or misrepresents his or her past, he or she can legally be fired.

A Bad Rap

Felix Lopez, Senior Staff Attorney for the Legal Action Center (LAC), presented legal considerations for reentry programming at the EOWS Reentry Initiative Meeting in Las Vegas last fall. According to Lopez, 87 percent of the ex-offenders referred to LAC had errors on their rap sheets. He suggested that by reviewing a rap sheet together, the individual and the case manager both become familiar with what a prospective employer might see. If, during an interview, the applicant cannot remember details of his or her convictions, the employer naturally may assume the individual is being dishonest and is not to be trusted. During rap sheet review, inaccuracies can be discovered, and the channels for correction can be considered (see the *In-Sites* Resources section).

Reentry programming for any community must build on existing resources in the community. In large cities in particular, organizations have developed local projects for ex-offenders in an uncoordinated and unsystematic way, reducing their effectiveness. However, programs that built partnerships for prerelease care as well as postrelease support and monitoring were up to 90 percent successful in helping ex-offenders overcome their challenges. Weed and Seed is built on these types of partnerships. In the next year, *In-Sites* will report on the successes and the obstacles met by the Weed and Seed Prisoner Reentry Initiative. 🏡

Diving to New Depths

Adrien Huggins and Luis Magras

To introduce children to the marine environment, the Virgin Islands Housing Authority Police partnered with the St. Thomas Diving Club to create the Weed and Seed Dive Program. The ongoing program provides free dive classes to youth living in the Weed and Seed target area. These classes were made possible by a Community Development Block Grant, the St. Thomas Diving Club, the U.S. Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Dive program planners wanted to involve local residents—especially young people—in a hobby popular with police officers from the Weed and Seed target area: scuba diving! Master Dive Instructor Wayne Bryan was asked to help start a dive program for the kids in the target area. Bryan contacted the St. Thomas Diving Club Course Director, Bill Letts. Introductions followed, things started to happen, and before long, the Weed and Seed Dive Program was a reality.

Community interest grew immediately. Weed and Seed Coordinator Zelda Williams and Weed and Seed Administrative Secretary Petra Phipps were

quick to give the program their full support. The next step was targeting potential students for the program.

Seven young people between 12 and 18 years of age participated in the first Weed and Seed Dive Program, which commenced on March 18, 2000. To qualify, the youngsters had to be comfortable in the water, possess basic swimming skills, be in good health (especially their respiratory and circulatory systems), and maintain a mature attitude, good judgment, and self-discipline to follow guidelines and

Weed and Seed target area on St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

The students learned the basics of confined (in a swimming pool) and open water dives and basic knowledge and dive skills under an instructor's supervision and guidance. All students became PADI (Professional Association of Dive Instructors) Scuba Certified. (PADI is the world's most respected and sought-after diver training organization.) The St. Thomas Diving Club, where the lessons were held, is an authorized five-star

Not far from the world-renowned beaches of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, sits the Bovoni Weed and Seed target area. Scuba diving was a pastime Weed and Seed residents most often observed from afar . . . until a few partners put their heads together to transform local youth into certified divers.

principles required for safe diving. All students came from the Estate Bovoni Housing community located in the

Instructor Development Course (IDC) facility. The students also gained extensive knowledge in medic first aid and CPR training, enabling each to acquire an additional Medic First Aid card and Rescue Diver Certification Card.

To date, there are seven graduates of the program:

- Alston Venzen—Open Water Diver
- Kevin Breezie—Advanced Open Water Diver
- Katisha Ritter—Advanced Open Water Diver
- Edgar January, Jr.—Advanced Open Water Diver
- Simon Lettsome—Rescue Diver/Medic First Aid and CPR



Rescue diver Alliston Ritter examines his species identification card as Evonette Nathaniel and Katisha Ritter dive in the background.

continued on page 24

New Program Helps Young Probationers and Their Families

Norma Rabago

Like so many other young adults, 20-year-old Roy Elizardo of San Antonio, Texas, wanted to better himself, but he didn't have the job skills or education to make it happen. Determined to break bad habits and make better choices, he started to focus on serving the community and participating in physical and spiritual training provided to him by the Christian Boot Camp (CBC).

"Now that I have the opportunity to make better decisions, I put all my effort into it so that I can prove to people that I can change and that I am willing to change," Elizardo said.

CBC is a faith-based, 32-day training, rehabilitation, and restorative justice program for young offenders that is a component of San Antonio Fighting Back (SAFB) of United Way's Value Based Violence Prevention Initiative (VBI), which began in 1999.

Funded primarily through EOWS and administered by the National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED), VBI is designed to help young probationers ages 18 to 29 stay out of jail and on the right track. San Antonio Weed and Seed also uses a portion of its dollars to fund the voluntary program, which can accommodate up to 50 probationers at a time.

"[SAFB] decided to be part of VBI because it is a one-stop-shop approach



Bootcampers use teamwork to move barrels during the Christian Boot Camp.

to crime and recidivism prevention," said Beverly Watts Davis, SAFB Executive Director.

VBI comprises Love Demonstrated Ministries, Inc. (a faith-based organization), Bexar County Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc. (BCOIC, a citywide job-training program), Elite Counseling Services and Alamo Recovery Center (substance abuse and family counseling services), and Bexar County Adult Probation (probation counselors). Private funds were used to help fund the boot camp component of the program. BCOIC was funded through SAFB's mini-grant

program. The counseling programs and treatment services were funded by Bexar County's Treatment Alternatives to Incarceration program.

"For the first time, all of these organizations are coming together to help the young offender stay on the right track," Watts Davis said. "But the program isn't just helping the probationer; it's also helping family members. Parents and siblings of participants are eligible to receive family counseling in an effort to create stability within the family structure."

A Targeted Population

All of the ex-offenders in the program have either a drug or alcohol problem or an offense related to substance abuse; this is a requirement to participate in the program. Treatment is provided by Bexar County's Treatment Alternatives to Incarceration program.

"The local probation officers and judges love the program," Watts Davis said. "They have agreed to serve as mentors and are planning a 3-day retreat with the individuals who did

The Weed and Seed site in San Antonio, Texas, offers a value-based approach to recidivism prevention. The Value Based Violence Prevention Initiative offers young offenders a productive alternative to incarceration while providing them treatment and broader horizons.

not go through the residential boot camp.”

The key ingredients for a probationer to complete the program successfully are a desire to make permanent changes and a belief in oneself.

Charles Flowers, a former Air Force training instructor, left his 12-year military career to develop the 32-day residential CBC program for youth ages 13 to 19. CBC was launched in summer 1995. The program remains free to all participants, funded through private donations to the camp.

Using his military skills and convictions of faith, Flowers fashioned the program to challenge individuals in new ways. A typical day for a CBC participant begins at 8 a.m. with an open-rank uniform and shoe inspection. The schedule proceeds with a workout followed by a 2-mile run. Campers then participate in community service projects that may include cleaning up vacant lots or repainting a senior citizen’s home. Participants return to camp late in the day for what Flowers considers the most important part of the training: the nondenominational church service that emphasizes God’s love for them. The day ends at 8 p.m. and participants return home.

“It isn’t the inspection; it isn’t the physical training or community service that changes people,” Flowers said. “It’s God’s love that changes people.”

After joining the VBI collaborative, Flowers agreed to conduct boot camps for young-adult probationers between the ages of 17 and 29 who have felony convictions or have been charged with misdemeanor crimes. Flowers now runs two types of camps: a summer residential program and a nonresidential program that preserves the key components of the residential program. The summer program is for youth ages 13 to 19 and is still funded only by donations. During the rest of the year, Flowers conducts camps only for VBI participants as part of the collaborative.



A young mother and summer job participant receives her certificate of completion and a bag filled with school supplies during the Summer Youth Job Activity’s graduation ceremony.

Through physical exercise, community service, and spiritual training, CBC members learn to make responsible decisions without being influenced by their peers.

“We give young people the opportunity to open their hearts and minds so that when they leave here, they will know the difference between right and wrong,” Flowers said.

“Typically, what happens is a young offender on probation violates probation. If he or she fits the criteria, he or she is offered participation in the program as an alternative to going to jail.”

—Beverly Watts Davis,
Executive Director of SAFB

Elizardo said that he was nervous yet excited about enrolling in a program that requires rigorous physical and spiritual training. Elizardo said he is thankful that he completed the boot

camp because he is now leading a better life for himself and his infant daughter.

“The program taught me to work hard and help people who are in the same situation I was in,” Elizardo said.

Now that Elizardo has the tools to stay focused, he is eager to start working toward a degree in electronics. “I’m happy that I am doing something with my life and not just wasting my time,” Elizardo said.

“Out of five cities nationwide selected to adopt the VBI program, San Antonio is the only city that chose to work with the criminal justice system,” said Jorge Cuellar, a Bexar County probation officer. “Those selected to be in the program have unique needs,” Cuellar said. “They need intervention, and this is what we provide for them.”

From October 1999 to December 2000, 116 individuals were referred to VBI, and of these, only 18 reoffended. A complete progress report will be developed to further evaluate the program in April 2001. 🏠

A “Nobel” Idea From Death Row Changes Lives Around the World

In 1971, Stanley “Tookie” Williams, now 46, cofounded the Crips, one of the Nation’s largest and arguably most violent street gangs. For 10 years he was a gang leader in South Central Los Angeles, but since 1981, Williams has been living on death row at California’s San Quentin State Prison. This year, Williams was nominated for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize for his writing, peer mentoring, and computer literacy efforts targeting at-risk youth.

Not far from San Quentin, Barbara Becnel, an economist and policy analyst turned journalist, directs the activities of Neighborhood House in North Richmond, California—a community-based organization that is one of the service providers for Weed and Seed, Contra Costa County.

Becnel first met Williams in 1993 while researching the evolution of gang warfare. “I was told he hated journalists and that he probably wouldn’t talk to me,” said Becnel, “but that I should try. So I wrote to him. We exchanged a lot of letters before we actually met.”

Initially, Becnel sought out Williams as a source for a book she was working on about the history of South Central Los Angeles’ black street

gangs; soon, they were coauthoring children’s books that send a message to children about the importance of staying away from gangs and drugs. During weekly 15-minute phone conversations and periodic prison visits, Becnel compiled Williams’s stories and messages to use in their children’s book collaborations. *Life in Prison*, released in September 1998, made it to the Young Adult Library Services Association’s list of “Quick Picks” for Reluctant Young Readers. Prior to that, Williams and Becnel collaborated on an eight-book series for elementary school youth called *Tookie Speaks Out Against Gang Violence*.

Williams and Becnel went on to found the Internet Project for Street Peace, a Web-based afterschool program that teaches violence prevention along with hands-on computer training. The project gives youth in impoverished North Richmond (an area familiar with drug and gang violence) the opportunity to communicate via e-mail and Internet chat rooms with youth in South Africa and Switzerland about keeping peace by not joining gangs or doing drugs. Other countries and other sites in the United States have expressed interest in setting up similar online exchanges for their youth.

Becnel has traveled to Switzerland and South Africa to meet with country leaders to set up “technology hubs” for the Internet Project for Street Peace. The project has also attracted return visits to the United States from internationally known leaders. In 1999, Winnie Mandela, an apartheid activist and the former wife of South African President Nelson Mandela, visited North Richmond to meet with youth who participate in the Internet Project for Street Peace at the Laura Hunter Center in North Richmond (one of many programs designed and operated by Neighborhood House).

Mandela also met with Williams for 2 hours at San Quentin, a visit she later called the main reason for and the highlight of her trip from South Africa.

“This is a dream come true,” said Williams. “This is a historical event for me. She’s showing she appreciates what’s going on.”

Joanna Flanders Thomas, who traveled with Mandela and works with inmates at South Africa’s Pollsmoor Prison, commented, “The fact that he has authored books while on death row is an inspiration to many inmates who have often felt a sense of hopelessness and despair at the prospect of a long-term sentence.... It is proof that success and personal triumph are possible, even while on death row.”

Each year, the Nobel Foundation awards the Nobel Peace Prize to those who, during the preceding year, “have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind.” The nomination of Williams for this prestigious award could not have been accomplished without the determination and dedication of Becnel. She has worked tirelessly to increase the number of programs that Neighborhood House sponsors and has attracted more than \$1 million dollars in funding but has never forgotten Williams’ plight and has supported his antiviolence and outreach efforts.

Becnel is one of the local Weed and Seed site’s key service providers and a Steering Committee member (as Chairperson of the Youth Council, a mandated Workforce Investment Act policymaking body for youth programs). Becnel’s contributions to not only the Contra Costa Weed and Seed site but to people across the world (including Tookie Williams) are immeasurable. North Richmond is honored to have both Williams and Becnel as community members. 🏡



Barbara Becnel is interviewed by an NBC reporter.

Syracuse Youth Recognized by the Kennedy Center Alliance

The Syracuse, New York, Weed and Seed Community Partnership is delighted to announce that a key partner in its Youth Leadership Development Committee has been awarded a Creative Ticket National Schools of Distinction Award from the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network.

On November 3, 2000, 25 students from the Franklin Magnet School of the Arts traveled to Washington, D.C., to perform at the national conference of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network, an organization that brings together educators, school administrators, parents, cultural leaders, and citizens from across the Nation, reaching more than 2 million people per year. Cheryl Driscoll, EOWS Supervisory Grants Manager, attended the event and presented Syracuse Weed and Seed with an EOWS Director's Award for Excellence in Arts Programming to acknowledge the talents of the Franklin students. On December 14, 2000, Syracuse Weed and Seed Coordinator Nancy Kronen and Steering Committee Chairperson John Edwards presented EOWS Certificates of Appreciation to each Franklin student who participated in the Washington performance.

Franklin Magnet School of the Arts, a public school in Syracuse's northside Weed and Seed neighborhood, is one of only five schools in the country selected for this national award. The award recognizes schools for an outstanding job in making the arts an essential part of the education of their students. Students at Franklin Magnet School of the Arts have participated in Syracuse Weed and Seed's Prevention Through the Arts Special Emphasis Initiative, which includes programs that focus on community education and beautification through art.

Through Weed and Seed funding and support, students at the school have designed and painted two multistory murals to brighten up the neighborhood. A Summer School for the Arts was held in 1999 in cooperation with other neighborhood summer youth programs. A school-community partnership was formed with the Open Hand International Mask and Puppet Museum. Syracuse Weed and Seed has helped support the school's yearly community showcase, a large-scale original performance. The production of "North Side Story," an original play created by the school in partnership with neighborhood seniors and other residents, featured all of the students



A Franklin Magnet School of the Arts student performs for the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network.

as well as community members with diverse cultural backgrounds. The 2½-hour production that was presented at the Civic Center chronicled the history and growth of the northside neighborhood, an area that has been home to many immigrant/refugee populations.

In addition, Syracuse Weed and Seed participates in the Visual Voices art project, an innovative program created by Michael Yonas (see "Visual Voices: Uniting Youth" on page 9 of the *In-Sites Millennium Issue 2000*). The program was originally funded through EOWS and has continued with students at Franklin through a separate grant received from the Syracuse/Onondaga Drug and Alcohol Abuse Commission.

The Syracuse Weed and Seed community is very proud of the commitment and contributions of all of its residents. Planning the Special Emphasis initiative and focusing on prevention through the arts programming have provided target-area youth the opportunity to stay on the right track while expressing themselves creatively. Syracuse Weed and Seed is looking forward to seeing what the students will come up with in the coming year! 🏠



Cheryl Driscoll, EOWS Supervisory Grants Manager, presents the Weed and Seed Director's Award to Franklin Magnet School of the Arts Principal Dominick Sabatino.

“Working It Out” Through Conflict Resolution

Kathleen Severens

Conflict is everywhere. It is part of life—in the family, the school, the workplace, and the community. People have individual values, backgrounds, and perspectives; when brought together, disputes and disagreements may surface . . . sometimes easily.

The way differences are resolved is what is most important and has a lasting effect. When heated arguments or intense personality clashes arise, it is best to know how to deal with them constructively. When conflict is truly understood and resolved effectively, it can serve as an incredible learning tool and valuable opportunity for strengthening the underlying relationship.

Both adults and youth can learn skills for settling disputes peacefully. Weed and Seed sites across the country are incorporating conflict resolution into their strategy development processes. In addition, they are enhancing their prevention and intervention plans by taking advantage of EOWS’s Conflict Resolution Special Emphasis Initiative. This initiative offers the opportunity to establish, expand, or enhance conflict resolution and mediation programs and to forge new community partnerships. Depending on the needs

and desires of the particular site, these programs may

- Teach young people and adults techniques for solving conflict in a positive way.
- Teach youth, adults, and staff how to be mediators themselves.
- Establish conflict resolution or mediation programs in schools, youth centers, and Safe Havens.
- Provide Weed and Seed area residents access to existing conflict resolution, mediation, and collaborative problem-solving services and training in the community.

All types of neighborhood disputes can be mediated. In the past few years, the use of conflict resolution skills and interventions has greatly expanded. Traditionally in Weed and Seed communities, conflict resolution tactics have been applied to gang disputes. Today, new focus areas include parent and teen mediation, truancy mediation, race and ethnicity study circles, community problem solving, victim-offender dialogues, family group conferencing, youth and police partnerships, and community mediation and community policing partnerships.

Once a site identifies its problem areas, conflict resolution strategies can be tailored to local needs.

Resources for conflict resolution are becoming more readily available throughout the country. Today there are well over 500 community mediation programs in the United States and more than 30 State offices of dispute resolution. In addition, a growing number of universities and colleges have dispute resolution programs, many of which work in partnership with community organizations. Typically, these dispute resolution programs offer some or all of the following services: individual and group case handling, conflict resolution and mediation training, community education and outreach, and dispute resolution referral and systems design. Sites should research the resources in their community. Chances are, local resources are available.

For example, Ocala Weed and Seed staff learned that the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Institute for Non-violence at the Miami Dade Community College offers conflict resolution training services that could be a valuable resource. When a law enforcement officer was involved in a shooting in the Weed and Seed site, the need for conflict resolution services escalated. By leveraging funds from the Florida Commission on Human Relations and securing support from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Community Relations Service, Ocala Weed and Seed staff and the Ocala Police Department were able to hire the MLK Institute to train the entire Ocala police force through the Institute’s Law Enforcement Nonviolent Conflict Reconciliation Program. Police personnel responded well to the training and found their new conflict resolution skills to be a valuable additional

EOWS has offered an overview of dispute resolution, or conflict resolution, at many conference training sessions. Each Weed and Seed strategy is founded on partnership, and differences may arise between community stakeholders who disagree on what is best for their community. The resolution to these differences can have an extremely powerful impact on the site as a whole. *In-Sites* offers this introduction as Part I of a four-part series on conflict resolution.

continued on page 20

A Dream Realized

continued from page 4

program; and before they knew it, the women were in business.

The business began small, catering lunches for public agencies and non-profit groups. In October 1996, the business adopted its current name, Home Girls Catering, and received an invitation to exhibit at the annual fundraiser of the Junior League of Chattanooga. At the event, Home Girls sold triple chocolate cheesecakes and almost 1,000 loaves of pound-cake, which put the business's baked goods on the proverbial map and gave Home Girls an opportunity to broaden its customer base.

In 1999, Jennings became the sole owner of the business. Since then, she has hired three other public housing residents as a cook, a cashier, and a cashier trainee.

Hard work, dedication, and holding steadfast to her dreams has paid off for Jennings. Home Girls caters affairs ranging from business lunches to elaborate evening receptions. The company also provides breakfast, snacks, and lunches for the children and staff of the Siskin/Westside Child Development Center daycare, located in the James A. Henry Resource Center.

Jennings still lives in College Hill Courts, where she stays close to

the developments in her community. Through her efforts, the neighborhood now has the Community 2000 Neighborhood Association, which provides leadership-training opportunities for Westside residents.

Following her example, other Westside residents have adopted the belief that community involvement brings them closer to realizing personal dreams. Napoleon Jackson, owner of Beginning to End, and Michael Ellis, owner of Metro Paint Company, Inc., have begun traveling the road of self-actualization. Jackson, who has a landscape and lawn care business, graduated from the local community college in December 2000. His first contract was the Westside Grove Street Community Park, located in the heart of the Westside community. Ellis is Westside's resident painter, having won a contract to paint units in the Chattanooga Housing Authority that are located in the Westside community. He began a painting training class in May 2000 and graduated six residents in August. All six became employees in his business.

Westside Weed and Seed plans to provide educational opportunities for youth and nurture them in entrepreneurship. Each entrepreneur gives back to the community and the Weed



A Westside community resident bakes cakes at Home Girls Catering.

and Seed program by sharing his or her dreams, goals, and accomplishments with local youth and other residents. By witnessing the achievements of their neighbors firsthand, residents are motivated to build their own success stories.

“Many people who live in housing projects feel there are certain boundaries they cannot cross. They just need to see that it can be done,” Jennings said. 🏠

Reclaiming the Streets in Gainesville, Florida

continued from page 5

and grow fruits and vegetables. The garden is one component of a family nutrition program that is offered to parents and students at schools in the Weed and Seed areas.

The Gainesville neighborhoods, schools, art programs, and community groups all agree that Weed and Seed has made a positive difference in northeast Gainesville.

“We go out walking at night and say hi to each other. Nobody would ever even think of doing that before,” said 15-year resident Kim Mobley.

Today, the Highland Court Manor and nearby Pine Forest neighborhoods are much safer, much cleaner, and much more livable—in large part due to the tremendous cooperative

work of landlords, local police, the Alachua County School Board, and, mostly, the committed residents in the target area. Gainesville Weed and Seed now enters its fourth year of funding and is excited about continuing efforts to rebuild other city neighborhoods. 🏠



Readjustment to the community is a difficult process not only for an ex-offender but for neighbors, business owners, and police officers as well. While major cities such as New York or Chicago may offer a laundry list of services from which ex-offenders may pick and choose, many smaller, more rural communities must look to national groups for support. For the victim advocate, the prisoner awaiting release, the community police officer, Web Sight researched online resources to help support successful reintegration. Here are a few to get readers started.

News, research, and funding resources are all available at the Recovery Road Web site. If it ties in with addiction, recovery, or treatment, chances are you'll find what you're looking for at www.reroad.com. The Web site is maintained and updated daily by jointogether.org, a project of the Boston University School of Public Health that serves as a national resource for communities working to reduce substance abuse and gun violence.

The **American Probation and Parole Association (APPA)** is the only professional organization devoted solely to the needs of probation, parole, and community corrections professionals. The APPA Web site has information and resources regarding advancements in the field of community corrections. Web users can learn more about APPA's efforts to support rural communities and national training opportunities by clicking on www.appa-net.org.

Many Weed and Seed sites are involved with local **Volunteers of America (VOA)** chapters. VOA is a national, nonprofit, spiritually based organization that provides local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement. A goal of VOA is to teach ex-offenders how to live within the law and to successfully make the transition back into the community. VOA operates 66 correctional programs, 53 of which are residential programs. In 1997, VOA served more than 19,000 individuals in correctional programs in 18 States. To locate a VOA program in your area, visit www.voa.org.

The **Legal Action Center (LAC)** is the only nonprofit law firm and policy organization in the United States that fights to protect the legal rights of and improve public policies and services for people with histories of alcoholism or other drug addictions, people with HIV and AIDS, and people with arrest or conviction records. In 1999, the center provided legal

assistance to 5,507 individuals. The center's lawyers and policy experts in New York City and Washington, D.C., take legal action to fight discrimination against and protect the privacy rights of the people they serve. They also promote alternatives to incarceration for people whose alcohol or drug problems entangle them in the criminal justice system. To request an annual report or to learn more about LAC services, publications, and videos, visit www.lac.org.

Whether you're a seasoned treatment counselor looking for updated reference manuals or someone interested in learning more about treatment approaches, www.treatment.org of the **Treatment Improvement Exchange (TIE)** is a must! Sponsored by the Division of State and Community Assistance of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), TIE provides an information exchange between CSAT staff and State and local alcohol and substance abuse agencies. The Web site offers information exchange services and covers special topics in criminal justice, public health, rural issues, and more. 🏠

Web Sight editors have spotted some impressive Web pages out there—created and maintained by Weed and Seed sites! In the past year, many sites have become more comfortable with this new technology. Visit the EOWS Web site for links to Weed and Seed sites across the country (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/eows/neighborhoods.htm). Check out these efforts—they serve as great sample Web sites!

“Working It Out” Through Conflict Resolution

continued from page 18

strategy in responding to conflict and violence. Both Maj. Guy Howie and Site Coordinator Bill Patten think all Weed and Seed sites could benefit from this type of training.

The Ocala experience is one of many possible scenarios for applying community dispute resolution. In the months ahead, *In-Sites* will be highlighting how sites are taking advantage

of local and State dispute resolution resources to develop their community's capacity to respond effectively and constructively to area problems and crime. 🏠

CONFERENCE CORNER

The Weed and Seed Pilot Prisoner Reentry Initiative

EOWS brought together representatives from seven Weed and Seed sites that participate in the Weed and Seed Prisoner Reentry Initiative for training and peer-to-peer networking in Las Vegas, Nevada, November 8-9, 2000. Site coordinators; professionals from treatment, adjudication,

corrections, and law enforcement; and personnel from churches and community-based organizations shared with one another the challenges of reentry programming from the viewpoints of the ex-offender, the program coordinator, the case manager, and the community. Community leaders from areas outside of Weed and Seed who are practiced in handling prisoner aftercare also attended.

The meeting gave professionals from a variety of fields the opportunity to exchange information on their community needs and program missions and to discuss planned or

in-progress initiatives in their Weed and Seed target areas. Additionally, the meeting provided the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs the opportunity to learn about the challenges to reentry programming from field experts.

The Weed and Seed Reentry Initiative comes on the heels of recent statistics reporting that in the next year a proposed 500,000 inmates will be released, making reintegration support a priority for many Federal agencies. At the same time, these agencies have also renewed their commitment to the Nation to ensure public safety. The EOWS Web site (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/eows) will feature updates and resource links for this Weed and Seed initiative and other federally supported reentry projects.

Weed and Seed Site Accreditation

The first of six Weed and Seed Accreditation Series trainings took place in Los Angeles, California, in January 2001. Approximately 170 representatives from law enforcement, site coordination, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, and the Weed and Seed community attended the intensive 4-day training.

The Weed and Seed movement has experienced enormous growth in the past decade. As the success of the initiative spreads, more communities

are competing for Weed and Seed Official Recognition and funding. EOWS expects this growth to continue in years to come. To prepare for it, EOWS is focusing on training teams in sites that are currently recognized and funded. The accreditation of existing sites ensures that everyone is positioned to move with Weed and Seed into the next decade. Photos of the Los Angeles training are posted on the EOWS Web site.

Leave No Neighborhood Behind

The Weed and Seed 2001 National Conference has a title—the headline above! The title for what will prove to be the largest Weed and Seed conference ever was developed from several proposals and thus EOWS cannot credit one submission as the name-contest winner. It will be difficult to match the success of the last national conference, but EOWS is on track—celebrating 10 years of neighborhood renewal is bound to generate a lot of energy and enthusiasm. Information on the conference program, the Annual Poster Contest, exhibiting, and more is coming soon! Stay tuned to www.ojp.usdoj.gov/eows/philly.htm for more information as the program develops. 🏠

"Good Morning Weed and Seeders!"

On January 29, 2001, EOWS Director Stephen Rickman greeted more than 250 Drug Education for Youth (DEFY) partners with typical enthusiasm in Phoenix, Arizona, for the DEFY 2001 Train-the-Trainer workshop. EOWS conducted the workshop to prepare sites to host DEFY programs in 2001. In his welcome statement, Rickman reminded attendees that if children can be prevented from using drugs by the age of 21, prevention efforts have been successful.

The 3-day workshop provided attendees with training on DEFY administrative and operational matters, including DEFY Phase I (Summer Training Camp), DEFY Phase II (Mentoring Program), and a review of the application process for DEFY funding. Presentations were offered on liability insurance, program evaluation, procedures for screening workers, and the psychology of working with at-risk youth.

The popular DEFY program, which began in three pilot sites in 1996, is now reaching more than 2,600 at-risk children in 90 Weed and Seed sites nationwide. *In-Sites* will provide readers with news and reports from sites as they plan for DEFY 2001.





Weed & Seed

Welcome

In recent months, the EOWS staff roster has grown, allowing for some internal reorganization. This expansion and reorganization mirrors the growth of the Weed and Seed movement, which today is embraced by more than 250 communities—a tremendous increase from the 36 sites EOWS managed in 1991! As Weed and Seed has grown, EOWS has undertaken new initiatives and focus areas to accommodate the interests of all Weed and Seed communities.

In January 2001, the **Office of Community Dispute Resolution (CDR)**, established by the U.S. Department of Justice to promote the use of community dispute resolution as a crime prevention tool, was moved to EOWS. Under the direction of Kathleen Severens, this Special Emphasis area will afford EOWS the resources to train and educate communities on approaches to resolving disputes involving schools, police, courts, and communities. Sites can reach CDR directly by calling 202-514-8827.

CDR will be providing *In-Sites* readers with a column on Weed and Seed conflict resolution in each forthcoming issue. Sites with effective approaches, commentary, or questions regarding dispute resolution are encouraged to call CDR.

Cheryl Driscoll, Supervisory Grants Manager for EOWS, recently joined the EOWS Training and Technical Assistance Division on special detail to help coordinate the Weed and Seed 2001 National Conference. The management of EOWS program staff and activities is now under the direction of Deputy Director **Bob Samuels**.

Farewell

After a career in Federal service, EOWS Program Manager Meredith Nielsen has left the Office of Justice Programs to serve as Deputy Drug Policy Advisor to the Governor of the Virgin Islands. Nielsen, originally from the Virgin Islands, will reside permanently in St. Thomas. Over the years Nielsen worked with many sites on many initiatives, most recently Seed-Tech, NCCED, and Kids House.

FBI's Executive Fellowship Program

Many sites aren't aware of the FBI's Executive Fellowship Program, created in 1994 as an extension of the Safe Streets Program. The program solicits nominations from police departments across the country for management-level police officers to take a 6-month assignment at FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C. There they act as consultants to the FBI in matters related to the Safe Streets Program. EOWS provides funding to the fellowship program to allow these personnel the opportunity to work onsite at EOWS as part of their fellowships. Under the direction of Andrew Press, fellows help track asset forfeiture activities in Weed and Seed sites. In November 2000, site representatives attending the Weed and Seed Prisoner Reentry Initiative meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, met Lt. Kevin York, a visiting fellow from the New York Police Department. Sites will have the opportunity at future trainings to meet Lt. C.D. Dye, who joined the FBI Executive Fellowship Program in January 2001. Lt. Dye, from the Virginia State Police, specializes in narcotics enforcement in rural communities. *In-Sites* will feature a column in future issues for fellows to offer perspectives on their experiences.

The Weed and Seed Poster Contest

Yes, it's that time! The popular Weed and Seed Poster Contest will once again coincide with the Weed and Seed National Conference. Sites will be sent information as it becomes available. 🏠

Weed and Seed Application Kits and Program Guides for FY 2001 are now available!

Deadlines for Grants Management System (GMS) online application (and GMS Faxline submissions) for grant funds *and* the paper submission (postmark date) are as follows:

- Competitive Funding submissions: May 31, 2001.
- Continuation Funding for sites in Group A: April 30, 2001; for sites in Group B: June 29, 2001. (Please see application kit for description of groups.)

Visit www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fundopps.htm for details and further instruction. Call EOWS at 202-616-1152 for assistance.

For More Information

Contact these organizations for more information on articles featured in *In-Sites*, or visit the EOWS Web site for related links at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/eows/publications.htm.

Page 4: A Dream Realized

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Page 5: Reclaiming the Streets in Gainesville, Florida

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Page 6: A Challenge for Law Enforcement: Tracking Ex-Offenders

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Page 7: Funding Assistance for Victims of Crime

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Page 8: Community Supports Seattle Reentry Project

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Page 10: Atlanta's DEFY Youth Go Door to Door

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Page 11: Camp DEFY Participants Express Thanks

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515-284-6283

Page 12: Building Job Linkages for Ex-Offenders

U.S. Department of Labor
Federal Bonding Program
1-800-233-2258

Legal Action Center
www.lac.org

Page 13: Diving to New Depths

Adrien Huggins and Luis Magras
Officers
Virgin Islands Housing Authority
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
340-714-2098

Page 14: New Program Helps Young Probationers and Their Families

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Page 16: A "Nobel" Idea From Death Row Changes Lives Around the World

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Page 17: Syracuse Youth Recognized by the Kennedy Center Alliance

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Page 18: "Working It Out" Through Conflict Resolution

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Diving to New Depths

continued from page 13

Alliston Ritter—Rescue
Diver/Medic First Aid and CPR

Evonette Nathaniel—Rescue
Diver/Medic First Aid and CPR

The students also assisted with community projects, including a dive beach cleanup initiative, in which debris and foreign objects were removed from the ocean floor at Bolongo Beach on St. Thomas.

Dive program staff encourage students to take advantage of all the skills and information they've acquired. St. Thomas's main economy is based on tourism, so the demand for diving instructors and leaders of other water-related activities is great. Three of the students are now employed part time at the St. Thomas Diving Club. In addition, program graduates are role models for other young people in the community.

Upcoming classes are planned to certify new students and to advance current divers. 🏠



Above: Weed and Seed target area resident Alliston Ritter is a certified rescue diver thanks to the Weed and Seed Dive Program.

Left: Weed and Seed Dive Program students prepare for a pool dive under an instructor's supervision and guidance.



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Office of Justice Programs

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