



# Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

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## U.S. ATTORNEY TURNS OVER SEIZED HOUSE TO CLEARWATER NEIGHBORHOOD SUPPORT GROUP

\_\_\_\_\_ Clearwater, FL - Today United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill donated a house once used to sell crack cocaine to Clearwater Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. (CNHS), a neighborhood support group that helps provide housing revitalization in the North Greenwood Community of Clearwater. The ceremony was hosted by Clearwater Chief of Police Sid Klein. City of Clearwater Mayor Frank Hibbard was also on hand to celebrate this historic occasion. Invited guests included Mark R. Trouville, Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and Thomas D. Hurlburt, Jr., United States Marshal. The deed and keys to the property were handed over to Isay M. Gulley, President/CEO of CNHS and W. Pearl Johnson, Board Chairman of CNHS.

The house is located at 1107 Blanche B. Littlejohn Trail in the North Greenwood community of Clearwater, a designated Weed and Seed area. For more than a decade the home was considered an eyesore and the Clearwater Police Department responded to hundreds of calls for service. The majority of the calls were related to the ongoing crack cocaine operation being run out of the residence. In May of 2004 an investigation lead to the arrest of the property owner, Mary Starker Cobb, who was actively involved in the criminal activity at this property.

With the help of investigators from the Clearwater Police Department, Special Agents from DEA, and Deputy U.S. Marshals, the home was forfeited by the Asset Forfeiture Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida. Typically forfeited real estate is sold. However, in this case it was felt that turning the home over to a neighborhood group such as CNHS would have a more positive outcome in the Clearwater Community.

The Department of Justice's "Weed and Seed" program is a sponsored effort, designed to "weed out" drug trafficking and violent crime offenses within a designated area while collaborating with community stakeholders to "seed" neighborhoods with programs of positive change. It is a partnership among local, state, and federal law enforcement, local government, community leaders, residents, and the United States Attorney's Office.

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