

CCDO's Faith-based Success Stories

Church on the R.O.C.

(Reclaiming Our City)

2518 Delaware Ave.

Flint, MI 48506

Reverend Gene Warren

810-238-4701

Grant Programs and Funding Amount

Weed and Seed: FY2004 \$10,890 (sub award)

Church on the R.O.C. (Reclaiming Our City) and Flint Eastside Weed and Seed have developed and facilitated the "Clean and Green" initiative to help remove illegal dumping and to cleanup and maintain blighted properties in the Weed and Seed community.

In 2003 Reverend Gene Warren, Pastor of Church on the R.O.C. and chairperson of the Flint Eastside Weed and Seed steering committee, worked in partnership with the Genesee County Land Bank, several neighborhood block clubs and other local community-based organizations to hire neighborhood teens to clean vacant lots and properties and maintain them. In 2003 the initiative maintained 45 lots and properties, ten of which were further renovated into fenced community gardens and pocket parks. These communal properties have been further adopted and maintained by the neighboring residents.

As a result of the program's success, there is less dumping, more community beautification, and residents have taken an increased ownership in their neighborhood. In 2004 the Clean and Green initiative grew from 45 properties to 160 in the Eastside community alone. Clean and Green is now a citywide initiative and has expanded its services to renovating housing units and helping residents to gain homeownership. Seven homes are currently being refurbished for low income homeowners and an abandoned school is being turned into a one stop shop community center. Genesee County, Flint Eastside Weed and Seed, Church on the R.O.C., and a host of other agencies continue to aid in this neighborhood restoration effort.

Mount Moriah Baptist Church

24 Pleasant Street
Brockton, MA 02301
Reverend Eugene Neville
508-588-0833 x101

Grant Programs and Funding Amount

Weed and Seed: \$18,000 (sub award)
Project Safe Neighborhoods: \$12,000 (sub award)

Mount Moriah Baptist Church (Mt. Moriah) and the Brockton, Massachusetts, Weed and Seed Initiative have developed an innovative program to reduce the rates of recidivism of young offenders returning to Brockton through pre-release counseling, family visits, and post-release supervision, including “ride-alongs” with state parole officers. Mt. Moriah works in partnership with the Plymouth County District Attorney’s Office, Massachusetts State Parole, Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) and the Plymouth County Sheriff’s Office. Nearly 500 offenders return to Brockton annually from the Plymouth House of Corrections.

In early 2004, Reverend Eugene Neville, Mt. Moriah’s pastor and the Brockton Weed and Seed Initiative coordinator, began working with the District Attorney’s Office and the State Parole Office to create a prisoner mentoring program targeting those returning to Brockton by establishing a video link between the jail and the church. The video link allows mentors to begin case management well before the inmate is released. It also allows family members to visit the prisoner without traveling to the jail. This is particularly important since many of these men have young children and visiting the jail can be frightening for children in the best of circumstances. Keeping the family connected facilitates the father’s transition home.

In addition to the video link, the church coordinates with area service providers to provide returning offenders with employment and housing assistance, counseling, and substance abuse services. The program also includes a “faith-based parole ride-along,” where Mt. Moriah reentry counselors accompany Massachusetts State Parole officers on visits to ex-offenders.

Currently, the church can serve ten ex-offenders and their families. Mt. Moriah has successfully leveraged its Weed and Seed and PSN support to secure the donation of 30 video conferencing units from Polycom Corporation and the support of ten community volunteers. Reverend Neville and the Plymouth County District Attorney’s Office are planning on expanding the program by inviting the collaboration of other community, faith-based organizations.

God's Gym

1802 Buford

Corpus Christi, Texas 78404

Pastor Mike Lohman

(361) 882-4746

Grant Programs and Funding Amount

Weed and Seed: FY2002 \$19,000 (sub award)
 FY2003 \$28,000 (sub award)
 FY2004 \$20,000 (sub award)

Each Weed and Seed site is encouraged to maintain a Safe Haven, which serves as a community resource center. Recognizing the need for a positive change in the neighborhood, Pastor Mike Lohman of the Calvary Tabernacle Church and a member of the Mayor's Faith-Based Initiative, partnered with Weed and Seed and others to create "God's Gym," one of the Safe Havens for the Corpus Christi Weed and Seed community. Its mission is "to help individuals and families find a new vision – one of hope and success by bringing the body, mind and soul together to work as one."

The services provided at God's Gym address the various risk factors identified in the community, including early academic failure, and the overall lack of commitment in school. God's Gym has expanded existing services to include structured after school activities that promote education, fine arts, athletic programs and a Kid's Cafe for at-risk youth and low-income families. The Corpus Christi Independent School District and Texas A&M University of Corpus Christi provide parenting classes to encourage family communication and improve parenting skills. The education programs include tutoring and homework assistance. God's Gym also provides a place for residents to lift weights, attend basketball clinics, and participate in self-help classes. The result has been "a place where people can feel safe, develop a positive attitude, and have their dreams encouraged."

Partners for God's Gym include the Calvary Tabernacle Church, the U.S. Attorney's Office, Corpus Christi Weed and Seed, National Urban Technology, Salvation Army, Corpus Christi ISD, Parks and Recreation, Christian Credit Counseling, Workforce Network, Fighting to Rid Gangs, Corpus Christi Police Department, Corpus Christi Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, and the Nueces County Sheriff's Office. This collaboration is an excellent example of how faith-based organizations and government can work together to improve local communities.