



South End
Neighborhood
Revitalization
Zone Initiative

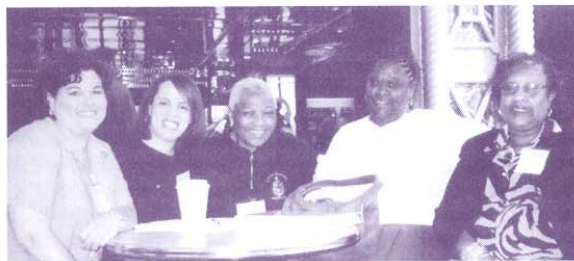


South End Rising

Newsletter (Official Publication of the South End NRZ/Weed & Seed, Stamford, CT) *Lorell Guydon, Editor* Summer 2004

SOUTH END RESIDENTS ATTEND MAJOR CONFERENCE IN BUFFALO, NY by Sheila Barney

Dorothy Wills, South End resident and member of the NRZ, attended the national Weed and Seed Conference in May of this year. Also attending was Lorell Guydon, resident and coordinator of our W&S Program. All toll, they attended nine sessions and obtained materials on how communities such as ours can help themselves with W&S funds.



Guydon (center) and Wills (far right) chat with "Weeders & Seeders" from Indiana and Georgia.

Inspired by what she learned at the conference, Mrs. Wills gave an enthusiastic report at the June NRZ meeting. Citing some needs we have in our community such as job training and re-entry help for ex-offenders, "We need to help the ex-offenders returning to our communities. In some cases, even if the ex-offender gets training, employers are reluctant to hire them. This is a problem for people who want to do better in their lives. Our community needs to address this problem."

Dr. Guydon reported on the session about "Sustainability" as it relates to how communities can keep programs and activities going long after W&S funding is ended. (The South End W&S funding will end this September.) Here are the features we want to hold on to:

- A vision for change
- Public & private engagement
- Staffing (coordination & programming)
- Program & operational funding
- Social capital (community people)

Guydon & Wills were reluctant to leave beautiful Buffalo and the lively mix of 11,000 conferees when the conference was over. They brought back plenty of ideas about sustaining and amplifying our reports, and hardcover books covering mental health issues, drug addiction, community policing, gangs & other topics. These materials are on file in our W&S office by all who are interested - 441 Canal Street, 2nd Floor Phone 977-1610. Come visit, it's your community office!!

COMING EVENTS

- Aug. 2-7** DEFY Camping (includes South End youngsters among 16 to go to Camp Rowland)
- Sept. 14** 1st fall meeting of NRZ / W&S
- Sept. 25** Auditions for Children's Chorus (a new program)
- Sept. 27** Kick-off date for exciting fundraiser with Lord & Taylor
- Oct. 23** Used Books Fair in South End
- Nov. 17** Lord & Taylor Benefit Bash
- Dec. 9** Tree Lighting Event
- Dec. 14** NRZ Meeting / Holiday Party

COMMUNITY GARDEN FEATURED IN THE ADVOCATE



The Advocate called it an "Urban Oasis" referring to our lush community garden on Henry Street just west of Atlantic. About 18 gardeners are growing a variety of veggies. And strategically placed are

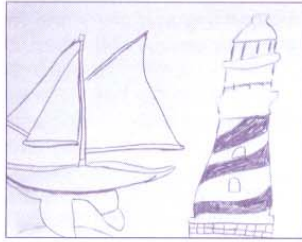
some tall, welcoming sunflowers. It's all a pleasant sight to see.

Dorothy Wills, garden coordinator told The Advocate, "Working in soil is good therapy." That's what the garden is for - the community.

LOCAL MERCHANT HELP PROVIDE ART & DELIGHT FOR SOUTH END KIDS

by Barbara Joseph Burton

Ever see a group of kids really happy and enthusiastic about going to class? That was the case with 8 - 11 year olds who attended Fran Gerety's art class for 10 weeks this spring. They met at Lathon Wider Center. They worked in charcoal and in oil & water colors. They learned art history and much about form and use of color.



A child composes a waterfront scene.

In the last week of class, Ms. Gerety had each child choose his/her favorite piece from among the many pieces each had produced. She asked each child to write a sentence or two about his/her favorite. Then they went on a field trip, paintings in hand, to Pacific Street Framing, a local shop. At the shop, "Gardner," the framer, gingerly taught the children how to mat & frame their paintings.

The children's work is on display at Lathon Wider Center.

Hooray! to Ms. Frances Gerety, artist & volunteer teacher; to Lee Milazzo, owner of Pacific Street Framing, and "Gardner" the framer for their part; and to the children who got untold learning in art, creativity, camaraderie, and writing. The South End is proud of you all!!!

HISTORIC SKETCH OF NRZ AND W&S

by Bob Owens

South End residents & businesses took a queue from former Gov. Rowland's directive to people who wanted to have a voice in what happened to their communities in light of urban renewal. So the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) initiative was begun in the South End in 1996. Community needs were discussed, training sessions were held, visits were made to other NRZs. Bylaws were drawn up and other groundwork was done. The Strategic Plan was written and adopted in 1999. For the past five years we have continued to meet monthly, to address our issues and to work on the 16 challenges spelled out in the Strategic Plan.

The federal W&S program ("weeding" out crime & illegal activity and "seeding" the community with crime-prevention programs aimed at community youth) has been implemented in the South End for nearly five years. It operates under the auspices of the NRZ. The grant for W&S was written by the Mayors' Grants Officer and the funds are used to fight crime in our area and to offer academic, recreational and social development programs for South End children, in an effort to lead youth on a positive path.

We have seen some good results of the W&S program in action over time: 1) drug activity and other crimes have been significantly lowered and 2) truancy among youth has been reduced; children have gotten academic enrichment, tutoring, creative expression through music & art; and recreational activity. And there are fewer abandoned cars & less illegal dumping.

EDITORIAL

City Scan Tells the Whole Truth

"A picture is worth a thousand words" was never truer than in the case of how pictures have shown the glaring ugliness of abandoned cars, littered sidewalks, weedy vacant lots, and illegal dumping in the South End. No amount of words spoken or written could quite convey the mess these photographs by "CityScan" show.

"City Scan" is a grant-funded program of the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council – a noble effort to help citizens document violations in their communities. Laurel Anderson, a "go-getter" from Trumbull was assigned to lower Fairfield County. She teamed up with our NRZ president, Sheila Barney. Almost any time, one can catch these two tooling around the South End in Laurel's SUV, looking for and finding many violations to photograph. Rain, shine, sleet or snow, they're out there with

camera, clipboard and hand-held computer recording facts, in pictures, of the ugliness often created by outsiders. But, there's a finger to point also at some South end storekeepers and businesses who fail to sweep and clean up trash in front of their establishments. Shame on them for disrespecting the neighborhood where they work and where we live!

Laurel and Sheila send their color photos with all relevant information to the Stamford Office of Operations for action.

The City acts pretty swiftly and with consistency and the problems are getting resolved. THE SOUTH END IS LOOKING BETTER! Our thanks to Mr. Frank Fedeli for his resolution of many of these cases and to Sheila & Laurel for their tireless efforts.

WE NEED IT, WE'VE GOT IT!

by *Linda Cannady*

The South End is rising because of some important resources right here at our fingertips. We have a wealth of resources in these broad categories: Service Organizations, Services Networks, Businesses, and Planning Efforts.

Just take a look at a few from a list of 26 Service Organizations right here in our community;

- The South End Police substation – a fresh newly renovated space on Market Street with an active community policing initiative that is working with residents & businesses to address crime and quality of life issues.
- CTE, housed in a well kept building on Henry Street is a beehive of activity. It is the regional anti-poverty agency at Lathon Wider Community Center. CTE provides job training, Computer skill development, youth educational & recreational programs.
- The Stamford Community Health Center, which provides a comprehensive array of medical & dental services including screening and preventative primary care.
- Alternatives to Incarceration (ACI), which utilizes community services and counseling as an effective alternative to imprisonment.
- St. Luke's LifeWorks, housed in the beautiful historic old St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Woodland Place, provides residential & supportive services to homeless women and families.
- The Shelter for the Homeless or "Pacific House" housed in a renovated factory building on Pacific Street caters to men residents only providing shelter & supportive services.
- The Ferguson Library South End Branch housed in Lathon Wider Community Center, provides an extensive collection of books, videos & music for all ages, as well as afterschool, school vacation and summer programs.
- The Loft Artists Association - a group of talented individuals with studios in the Yale & Town Building on Canal Street who often offer their talent and input in South End projects.
- The Child Care Center / Head Start program housed at the Lathon Wider Center, which provides preschool education and parental involvement programs for low-income families.

Those listed & described in this article are just a few of the organizations that serve the South End. There are many others and there is much more available to us in the categories of Service Networks, Businesses and Planning Efforts. For a complete list and contacts, visit the NRZ / Weed & Seed Office, 441 Canal Street, 2nd floor, or call Lorell at 977-1610.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH HANDS & WATERING CANS

by *Frances Gerety*

Franco Gardens, our neighborhood "Plants & Things" supplied three sites in the South End with watering cans sponsored by the city agency, Keep Stamford Beautiful.



The watering cans are useful for residents and others who water the planters from Stone Street to Woodland, Pacific, Henry and Ludlow. These overflowing planters help to maintain and beautify these lower South End areas.

Also, cheers to "Dave," a St. Luke's LifeWorks maintenance worker, who has been vigilant about keeping the corner of Woodland Place & Pacific Street cleaned up. His example seems to be rubbing off on B&S Carting (directly across the street) that cuts the grass and cleans up the sidewalk trash more often.

Hands that handle watering cans, rakes and brooms can make a difference in the cleanliness & beauty of the South End.

HATS OFF!



Our great appreciation to area businesses, corporations & individuals;

PITNEY BOWES – "for all you do"

HEYMAN PROPERTIES – for office space & much more

MR. FRITZ BLAU AT HARLEY DAVIDSON – for many favors

CAPT. WUENNEMANN, SGT. WHITE & SGT. NIVAKOFF – for an expert job of "weeding" out criminal elements

LAUREL ANDERSON – for your great scans & indomitable spirit

MINI-MART (NE corner of Henry & Atlantic Streets) – for keeping area around your store clean at all times

MR. FRANCO AT PLANTS 'N THINGS – for donations of plants & planters for the neighborhood and for your cooperative spirit

REV. SCHUSTER AT ST. LUKE'S LIFEWORKS – for many favors received

KIDS AND PRISONERS GO TOGETHER

Wait, it's not what you think! Read on...

The language was salty (not vulgar words) but with power and conviction. The sharp angular expressions in the face and hands of the speakers told the stories of regret and hope.

In a tame version of "Scared Straight," three young inmates, dressed in crispy khaki pants, snowy white sneakers and smooth white t-shirts spoke one by one to 21 neighborhood teens and pre-teens in CTE's Summer Program which is co-sponsored by Weed & Seed.

The first speaker, almost tearful, talked in rapid fire about how he got sucked into selling drugs to get big money for clothes, jewelry, and stuff he thought he needed. He started in his early teens, got caught, served short sentences and finally landed in prison with a longer term – missing seeing his two kids grow up and losing the love of the children's mother to someone else. "It's hard," he said in a quaking voice.

The second speaker started out with a strong directive to the kids in the audience, "Sit up straight – girls close your legs – all of you, pay attention – this is serious." (You could hear shuffling and shifting in the seats.) He went on, "My name is Adrian Brown but I am just a number to the state." He rattled off his inmate number and continued, "I belong to the state, they own me." Adrian went

on articulating an unbelievable account of getting into trouble as early as nine years old for taking a gun to school. That was the start of a young life of constantly fighting, doing poorly in school, "hating reading," taking things from others. "If I wanted it, I didn't ask, I took it." He challenged any and every one to fight. His oldest brother (25 years his senior) asked him, "Why do you fight so much? If you want to fight, fight with that math book... that social studies book." Adrian took no heed and got into trouble again by taking a gun to school when he was 15. In prison now on a long sentence, he can reflect on the folly of his "bad" behavior. "I lied, stold, and cheated because I was unhappy in my life."

All three speakers talked about how you give up your rights and privileges when you go to prison – how you can't "see through the madness when you use drugs" – and how you can be "infected" by bad people that you hang out with.

These three young men are part of a program called Project Outreach sponsored by the CT Department of Corrections. They go across the state talking to youngsters, sharing their stories with the hope of steering other young people away from a life of crime.

The lessons were obvious. Next issue, we will bring our readers some responses from the youngsters who made up the audience so as to assess how this experience impacted them.

Neighborhood Revitalization Zone/Weed & Seed

South End NRZ • 441 Canal Street • Stamford, CT 06902

Lorell C. Guydon, W&S Coordinator, Sheila Barney, NRZ President

Stop by for a visit or call us at 977-1610 (fax 977-1611). Office hours: Mon - Thurs., 9am - 1pm

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