

THE READING OUTLET

THE MONTHLY PUBLIC NEWSLETTER OF THE CITY OF READING, PA

ISSUE #9

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



As we reach the end of the year, it's always a good time to look back on what we have accomplished in 2012. After my inauguration ceremony and the celebration that followed, my administration immediately got to work to make Reading a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

We held several public meetings where we laid out our strategic plan for the city. We hired 25 new police officers to start building back up our force which has been decimated by retirements, publicly addressed the rash of convenience store robberies and offered tips on how to stay safe. I met with local business owners and listened to their concerns about safety issues.

The Sustainability Committee was formed to focus on bringing green, sustainable jobs and partnered with Neil Seldman, a nationally recognized business leader to assist in attracting green businesses to Reading. We had the announcement of new major development from Think Loud, who will re-develop the vacant Reading Outlet Center building #1 and will bring a high tech company here which will provide over 100 high-paying jobs.

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A LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN THE MOTOR CITY

On Tuesday, November 13th, a group from the city including Council President Francis Acosta, Managing Director Carole Snyder, Community Development Director Lenin Agudo, and Assistant for Policy and Sustainability Eron Lloyd joined Mayor Spencer on a three-day bus trip to the City of Detroit, Michigan. The trip was sponsored and paid for by the Wyomissing Foundation and the Berks County Community Foundation. Also making the trip to the Motor City were members from both organizations and community leaders, a total of 22 participants.

"On the way to Detroit, we discussed the economic issues that the City and County are facing, and what has been done recently to address these problems, and what specific areas we could explore and inquire about once we got to the Motor City," said Mayor Spencer. "When we arrived in Detroit, we met with community leaders, neighborhood groups, foundations, and the Detroit Economic Growth Corp., and discussed what is working for them in their



AP photo

revitalization of that City, and, just as importantly, what has not worked."

The group had the opportunity to see firsthand how Detroit is overcoming its economic difficulties by unprecedented cooperation among local community organizations working together to keep their neighborhoods strong. Detroit has facilitated downtown and midtown initiatives centered on hospitals; corporations and educational institutions that have produced thriving urban centers funded by foundations and private money rather than using city money.

Detroit, a city of 140 square miles, has close to 20 square miles of vacant or blighted properties, twice the size of Reading's blight.

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www.readingpa.gov
815 Washington Street
Reading, PA 19601



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NON-PROFIT SPOTLIGHT: BERKS WOMEN IN CRISIS

The mission of Berks Women in Crisis is to provide supportive services to victims and eliminate domestic and sexual violence in Berks County.

BWIC is the leading organization in Berks County for assisting victims of domestic and sexual violence. BWIC raises awareness of domestic and sexual violence and promotes safety for women and all served by providing an immediate safe haven and on-going support system.

The goal of BWIC is to improve the quality and safety of victims' lives by providing supportive services, advocating for peace, and ultimately eliminating violence in Berks County. For the victims we are privileged to serve, we provide comprehensive services in safe and secure setting through the County.

If you are interested in donating items from our Wish Lists, please call our Safe House staff at 610-373-2053 to determine what is most needed. At time of delivery, donors will complete a donation form in order to receive an acknowledgement letter for the value of each donation.

BWIC will gladly accept in-kind donations Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For larger deliveries, please use our Chestnut Street loading dock.



**BERKS
WOMEN
IN CRISIS**

HOLIDAY WISH LIST

Folding umbrellas, Trac Phone Cards with minutes, Pillows, Towels, Sheets, Canned Goods, Cleaning supplies, Deodorant, Shampoo, Conditioner, Toothpaste, Feminine Hygiene Pads, Gloves and Hats, Coats and Jackets, Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, Lysol, Pine Sol, Mr. Clean, Dishwashing Liquid, Sponges, Spatulas, Slotted Spoons, Toasters, Flatware, Vacuum Cleaner, Double stroller, Tread Mill, Washer, Dryer

Thank you for your continued concern and desire to help the women and children who temporarily reside in our safe house.

KIDS LEARN ABOUT THE 3 R'S RECYCLING, RECYCLING, RECYCLING



On Tuesday, November 20th, Mayor Spencer visited Riverside Elementary School to read a proclamation in honor of "America Recycles Day." The Mayor recognized the entire 4th grade class for their recycling efforts and thanked them for joining the "Mayor's Kids Club For a Clean City."

Recycling Education Coordinator Mike Schorn, a retired Language Arts teacher in the Reading School District, started the Recycling Education Program six years ago to educate 4th graders on the importance of recycling and respect; not just respect for the environment, but for their teachers, family, and community. "Fourth grade is when Environmental Studies is introduced into the curriculum," said Schorn. "They are also at the right age, about nine and ten, when they are more aware of their responsibilities of being a member of a family and a community. We make it very interactive and fun, and we plan it for free periods when it doesn't interfere with any school work. I really enjoy doing it, and they seem to get a lot out of it."

Joining Schorn at Riverside was School and Commercial Recycling Liaison Bryan Twyman, and Graffiti Abatement Program Director Steve Harrity. Twyman focused on teaching the importance of respect, while Harrity encouraged the students to find more productive outlets for their art like the Olivet Boys and

Girls MAP program, rather than the visual blight of graffiti.

"These guys do a great job interacting with the kids," said Mayor Spencer. "Mayor's Kids Club For a Clean City." is such a unique program that should be a model for all school districts throughout the state. This is an important aspect of my clean and safe initiative, teaching children not to litter and to recycle at school and home."

The Mayor's Kids Club For a Clean City encourages children to be positive role models in the community by volunteering for cleanups, performing "random acts of kindness," and helping those in need, besides committing to recycling as much as possible. Schorn presents each student who signs up for the club with a personalized certificate. He tries to visit every elementary school in the city, both public and private, as well as any group who invites him.

RSO

READING SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

"The Nutcracker"

With Berks Ballet Theater

December 14 & 15

New Year's Eve concert

Plays the music of "Bond - James Bond"

Call 610-373-7557 for ticket information.

READING CHORAL SOCIETY

The Reading Choral Society joins the orchestra for a festive holiday concert, featuring Vivaldi's exuberant "Gloria," plus many carols with opportunities for audience participation! For tickets, call 610-373-7557

READING PUBLIC LIBRARY

ONGOING PROGRAMS

All children under 9 must be accompanied by an adult

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Pre-school Storytime Mondays @ 1:00 PM

Movie night Tuesday @ 5 PM

Crafty Corner Thursdays @ 4 PM

TEEN PROGRAMS

Movie Days Saturdays @ 12 PM

RSVP: The programs are free, but pre-registration is requested.

To sign up, call 610-655-6355, or visit the Main Branch at 100 South 5th Street



Floyd Final Friday (Music Shows)

December 28, 2012

Floyd Final Friday! How do YOU see your music?

Enjoy exciting, full-dome digital visuals set to the music of classic rock acts like Pink Floyd. Immerse yourself in a one-of-a-kind computer-generated musical and visual experience, which uses digital technology to illuminate the Neag Planetarium's dome with a dazzling light show.

Prices for each digital Music Show are \$5 for Members and \$7 for Non-Members. Tickets are available at The Planetarium starting at 6 p.m. the night of the Show.

THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE READING FOR THE HOLIDAYS



It's beginning to look a lot like the Holidays in Reading! On Saturday, November 17th, thousands lined Penn Street to hear the marching bands and watch the floats roll by at the 2012 "Heralding Our Winter Holidays" Parade. Later, Mayor Spencer lit the Holiday Tree and Menorah. Now, City Hall is joining in the spirit with decked halls and festive music inside the Washington Street entrance. Thanks to Johnny "Chico" Oyola of the Public Works Department for bringing holiday cheer to City Hall.

MAYOR'S MESSAGE (continued)

We established a First Source Employment Referral Service to hire local residents for positions like the new in-house recycling collection service, which brought 10 good-paying jobs to city residents.

We cracked down on illegal rentals, gave our Property Maintenance Inspectors iPads to more efficiently do their jobs, began new measures to deal with blighted properties, and are in the process of restructuring our Home Inspection Fees.

Several ribbon-cuttings for new businesses were conducted that received financial help from our micro-loan program. The instituted P.I.L.O.T. and S.I.L.O.T. programs ask non-profits to contribute their fair share to city coffers. We also started a Tax Amnesty program to allow individuals to pay what they owe without penalty. These programs have brought in additional and important revenue to the city.

We have accomplished quite a bit this past year, and I look forward to what we can accomplish next year by all of us working together and moving Reading forward. On Christmas Eve, CBS will air Christmas in Reading: A Community Celebration, a one-hour television special that focuses on the residents of Reading overcoming the economic difficulties that exist today and the hope we have to overcome the obstacles that we face. This program serves as inspiration to continue our work to make Reading a great place to live, work and raise a family.

WINTER YARD WASTE COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Loose leaf collection ended on November 30th so that Public Works Trucks can prepare for snow removal. These are leaves that had gathered along the curb. Public Works will continue to pick up bagged leaves, bagged yard waste and bundled branches. Residents that want bagged yard waste to be collected MUST CALL the Public Works Department at 610-655-6285 to be placed on the collection list. The collection schedule for yard waste is as follows:

- Monday - Northeast Reading, Hampden Heights
- Tuesday - South of Penn St., East Reading, Hessian Camp, 18th Ward
- Wednesday - Northwest Reading, Northmont, Riverdale, Glenside
- NO COLLECTIONS Thursday and Friday

The yard waste schedule is also posted on the City's web site. There has been NO CHANGE to the trash and recycling collection schedule.

LEARNING IN THE MOTOR CITY (continued)

Many of the blighted properties have been leveled and replaced with community gardens. The group saw one former drug house that had been converted into a children's play house. The local community groups approached the city with ideas and solutions, and through a real grass roots effort of residents, foundations, and corporations all working together, the city of Detroit is making a remarkable comeback, according to the city's contingent.

Even though Detroit's population has decreased from 1.8 million to 781,000 over the last few decades, the Reading group saw neighborhoods that have a positive spirit born in their resolve to help themselves, knowing the reality of the financial strife that the city is facing.

"The other aspect that impressed us is the help and cooperation of the corporate community," said Assistant to the Mayor Eron Lloyd. "Several large companies have moved their headquarters back into the downtown area to spur economic growth and to bring residents back into the city. These companies have been a valuable assets in partnering with various city entities providing much needed funding that the city can no longer supply on its own."

On the trip home, on Thursday, the group was able to discuss how they can utilize what has worked in Detroit and apply it here in the greater Reading area, identifying several key areas that are in need of improvement. "The trip was very informative and a productive experience that left all of us with the inspiration that if Detroit can rebound the way they have, so can Reading," said Council President Francis Acosta. "We look forward to working with our local foundations and corporations to help us help ourselves. I'd like to thank our hosts, the Wyomissing and Berks County Community Foundations for organizing such an educational and unique trip," added Mayor Spencer.

Season's Greetings

