



## Community Development Welcomes Mayor Robert W. Levy, Sr.

Atlantic City started 2006 with the inauguration of a new mayor, Robert W. Levy, Sr.

Mayor Levy was born in Atlantic City on May 16, 1947, grew up here and attended the local public schools. He followed a long family tradition and became an Atlantic City lifeguard in 1960.

In 1964, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He served as a Sergeant in the Special Forces and served multiple tours of duty in Vietnam. A combat veteran, Mayor Levy was awarded two Bronze Stars. Later in his military career he headed the U.S. Army Recruiting in Atlantic City and was the Professional Development Officer for all Army Recruitment in New Jersey from Newark to Manahawkin. He retired from the U.S. Army in 1984 and held the rank of First Sergeant (TOP).

Mayor Levy returned to the Atlantic City Beach Patrol as Lieutenant Instructor of the Beach Patrol Lifeguard Academy. He was promoted to Captain with administrative duties at Headquarters. In 1986, he became the Superintendent and Chief of the Atlantic City Beach Patrol.

The mayor also served as the City's Emergency Management Coordinator from 1990 to 2003. From 1998 to 2006, Mayor

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## CDBG's Contribution to Main Street - AC Now at \$620,000

With \$25,000 in assistance from the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), among other funding sources, Main Street

Atlantic City has launched a major planning initiative for Atlantic City's downtown district and the surrounding neighborhood.



Mayor Robert W. Levy, Sr. expresses his support of Main Street -Atlantic City at the launching of its "Downtown Planning" held recently at Absecon Lighthouse.

The area is comprised of 15-blocks along Atlantic Avenue between Michigan and Massachusetts avenues. The result of the planning will be the creation of the Visioning and Downtown Revitalization Plan, a 5 – 10 year plan mapping the future of the area.

The \$25,000 for planning brings the CDBG total contribution to Main Street - Atlantic City to \$620,000, according to Seana Grady, Main Street - Atlantic City's Executive Director. CDBG had already provided a \$500,000 grant that combined with a previous

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# CDBG's Contribution to Main Street - AC

## Efforts Now Totals \$620,000 with Planning \$

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\$50,000 in CDBG funds all devoted to housing. That money will help create 25 apartments for low to moderate income persons in the 4M Clothing Building in the 1500 block of Atlantic Avenue. Such apartments are considered a critical part of bringing resident population and business into the Main Street area. Another \$45,000 in CDBG money approved by the City and awaiting federal approval will be used for Downtown Beautification including street

scaping, Grady said.

"What makes this project (the Downtown Planning) unique is that it departs from the traditional notion of community development, which focuses solely on building physical structures," Grady said, "In addition to improving the area's physical structures, this project will also invest in the residents who live and work in the area. Residents will be a key role in shaping the vision for the plan."



*Main Street - Atlantic City Executive Director Seana E. Grady expounds on Main Street's 12-month planning strategy.*

The initiative has attracted over \$270,000 in grants from foundation and government funders including CDBG. As the initial support of this initiative, the Wachovia Regional Foundation awarded a challenge grant of \$70,000 to support the planning process.

"We are pleased that Wachovia Regional Foundation could provide seed money for this initiative to develop a resident-driven neighborhood plan for Atlantic City's downtown district," said Susanne Svizeny, Wachovia Regional Foundation Board Member and Wachovia South/Central Jersey President. "We believe that this planning process will help to ensure that the future of the district

will include the voices and needs of the residents who live and work there."

"This is just the beginning," said Mayor Robert W. Levy, Sr. noting that "I look at The Walk (Michigan Ave. outlets) and I see The Walk spreading down Atlantic Avenue." The mayor recalled having grown up in this area of town when the downtown shopping area was alive with activity, and he said that the Main Street collaborative effort would bring back that vitality.

Other supporters include: Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, State of New Jersey's Office of Smart Growth, the Atlantic City Special Improvement District, PNC Bank Foundation, and the Carnegie Library Center of the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

Main Street Atlantic City (MSAC) is the leading nonprofit organization guiding and managing the revitalization and development of Atlantic City's downtown core—a 15-block area along Atlantic Avenue, between Michigan and Massachusetts Avenues. Guided by the "Main Street Four Point Approach", MSAC coordinates stakeholders to improve quality of life for all, celebrate the city's rich cultural diversity, preserve historically significant architecture, and increase the value of the district's properties and businesses. Officially designated a Main Street community in 2002, Downtown Atlantic City enjoys membership in a national network of over 1,200 communities and 26 designated Main Street communities throughout the State of New Jersey

Wachovia Regional Foundation, established in 1998, is a grantmaking body with the primary mission to support the revitalization of communities located in New Jersey, Delaware, and eastern Pennsylvania. Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded over \$37 million in grants to more than 100 nonprofit organizations. For additional information on the Foundation, please visit the website at [www.wachovia/regionalfoundation](http://www.wachovia/regionalfoundation) or call (215) 670-4300.

# CDBG-Funded Rites of Passage Program Celebrates 10 Years of Guiding Youth

It's primary goal is to help prepare adolescents "spiritually, socially, emotionally, intellectually, and culturally for passage to manhood/womanhood," and now in it's tenth year, The Rights of Passage Program has chalked up a proud record of youth development.

According to program director Shermaine Gunter-Gary, 776 youth have completed the program consisting of 13 two-hour sessions dealing with a range of topics including personal well-being, self-awareness, the environment, community and family values, health and body, African and African-American history and culture, spirituality and cooperative economics. Each session is attended by about 30 youth. Educational field trips are also in the program mix. The result? Well, the statistics speak for themselves:

- 87.2% of these youth remained baby free by the age of 18
- 85.9% remained drug free by the age of 18
- 87.9% remained arrest free by the age of 18
- 79.2% went to work at age 14



*Photo provided by Rites of Passage*

Youth participants in the Rites of Passage Program pose for a photo in Baltimore in April 2005. During this field trip the group visited the Blacks In Wax Museum as part of their instruction in African and African-American history and culture, one of the program's components designed to build well-rounded and responsible adults with an appreciation of self and community. Pride in one's heritage is one of the important goals of this endeavor.

As each group completes the 13-week program a Crossover Ceremony is held with the "initiates" displaying their talents and what they've learned.

A key component of the program's success, according to Gunter-Gary, is the core of volunteer elders who "preside over the workshops each week and give our youth a sense of being, a sense of



*Photo provided by Rites of Passage*

*Rites of Passage Inductees don traditional African dress during the December 2005 Crossover Ceremony held at the end of each 13 week session during which elders mentor adolescents on a range of topics intended to help them enter adulthood as a responsible, self-aware and proud person.*

love and a sense of 'I am Somebody'. We know we could not have achieved the success we have experienced without them."

And the program also owes a debt of gratitude to a young person as well, to Deborah Dansby, who, in 1996, while serving as a college intern with the City of Atlantic City, developed the concept which became Rites of Passage. "She took the format of the national program facilitated by Atlantic City native Emily Gunter and came up with a formula that has positively affected the lives of our youth over the last ten years," Gunter-Gary says.

Starting in 1996 with just a female class, Rites of Passage added a male class in 1998. "Last year we merged the two classes and we now provide a co-ed class twice a year," Gunter-Gary says.

As Rights of Passage prepares for its 10 Anniversary celebration in May, all 776 youth who

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# Rites of Passage

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completed the program are being contacted to attend a "weekend of action packed, fun-filled, and informational activities."

Sponsors are being sought for concerts, workshops, the 10th Year Anniversary Crossover Ceremony and a Sunday Morning Prayer Breakfast, all part of the May 12-14, 2006 festivities.

For those interested in volunteering, sponsoring a youth or donating to the program, please contact Shermaine Gunter-Gary at 609-345-3079.

## CDBG DOORS TAKE 1st PLACE IN ANNUAL CITY HALL HOLIDAY DECORATION CONTEST



Mayor Robert W. Levy, Sr. hands 1st Place Prize Blue Ribbon to Lois Braithwaite as the Community Development Office beat out fierce competition. From left front row: Special Events Coordinator Sheila Harvey, Mayor Levy, Lois Braithwaite, Latisha Williams, Norma Williams and Lola Spivey-Wright. From left rear: Austin Clark and CDBG Director Michael P. Toland.

# Mayor Levy

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Levy headed the new Department of Emergency Services which incorporated the Office of Emergency Management, the Communications Dispatch 911 Center and the Beach Patrol.

He was elected Mayor of the City of Atlantic City on November 8, 2005.

Mayor Levy and his wife Hazel have two children; a son, Bob, Jr., who is an Atlantic City Firefighter; and a daughter Wendi, a teacher, who resides in California. Mayor and Mrs. Levy are the proud grandparents of Victoria, the daughter of Bob Jr. and his wife Janine.

The Community Development Office staff welcomes Mayor Levy to his new post and looks forward to a constructive working relationship on behalf of the citizens of Atlantic City.



Above: Chimney with all the trimmings and one of the CDBG doors.

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