



LYNNE ABRAHAM
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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NEWS RELEASE

Date: August 4, 2004
Contact: Cathie Abookire / 215-686-8711
Director of Communications

District Attorney Lynne Abraham Sells Former Drug House For \$1.00 to West Philadelphia Youth Organization

The Panther Youth Development Corporation Provides Leadership, Mentoring, Educational and Sports Activities to Young People With an Emphasis on Personal Responsibility

WHAT: News Conference
WHEN: Wednesday August 4, 2004
11 AM
WHERE: 42 N. 57 St., West Philadelphia

Reverend Vincent Coles will begin the news conference by blessing the house and leading the participants in prayer. Rev. Coles is the pastor of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, 5732 Race St., and is also a former president of The Panther Youth Development Corporation.

A house that once served as a drug dealer's cocaine-and-gun headquarters begins a new life today as an educational and mentoring center for more than 300 young people in West Philadelphia.

District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham is 'selling' the forfeited drug house for \$1.00 to the Panther Youth Development Corporation, whose plan is to provide a "Career Center for Youth" through educational and athletic activities for young people, who range in age from 5 to 15 years old.

"The Panthers are committed to providing the right role models, the right activities and the right way of thinking for our young people," said District Attorney Lynne Abraham. "I am delighted that The Panthers will turn this former drug house--a scourge on this neighborhood--into a center for positive activities that will benefit everybody who lives here."

This is the tenth former drug house that District Attorney Abraham has sold for \$1.00 to a non-profit organization in her continuing mission to prevent crime and improve the quality of life for Philadelphians.

The Panthers' commitment to helping young people dates back to 1990 when three West Philadelphia men saw a group of kids crying because they wanted to play football but there were no teams. Victor Spragin, Kevin Phillips and Ronald Gary decided then and there to scrape together their own money to organize a group to help the kids. Even though a few bills went unpaid that month, the men pooled \$700.00 to form teams for forty-two kids, ages 7 and 8. They only had eleven uniforms, so they had to use the same uniforms for all the kids. As one team finished, they took off the uniforms and passed them on to the next team, much to the concern of some of the parents! As more people became involved, The Panthers Youth Development Corporation was formed as more people became involved, and now the Panthers provide leadership and mentoring, with an emphasis on personal responsibility, to approximately 300 young people, ages 6 to 15, in West Philadelphia.

The Panther Youth Development Corporation is a volunteer organization. Activities include youth football, cheerleading, winter and summer basketball and tutorial programs. Interested volunteers may contact Ray Fitzgerald at fitz2099@aol.com. Volunteer tutors need to be available one day per week (Monday - Thursday) beginning in September 2004. The Panthers are also recruiting volunteers for our football and cheerleading programs, which begins August 1, 2004.

Participants:

1. **Nate Reed**, President, Panthers Youth Development Corp. and Deputy Commissioner of the Liberty Youth Athletic Association.
2. Wade Brockington, Commisioner, Liberty Youth Athletic Association.
3. Rev. Vincent Coles, Pastor, Mt. Carmel Baptist Church and past president of the Panther Youth Development Corporation.
4. Donna Griffin, Weed-and-Seed
5. Victor Spragin, Kevin Phillips and Ronald Gary, who in 1991 founded the Panther Youth Development Corporation
6. Council member Jannie Blackwell
7. Union leader Tommy Blackwell
8. Joseph Whitehead, Deputy D.A. Narcotics
9. Michael Erdos, Chief, D.A.'s Public Nuisance Task Force
10. Mary-Ellen Walter, Chief, D.A.'s Forfeiture Unit

11. Jacqueline Harris, Assistant District Attorney, Weed-N-Seed Liaison

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