

Showcasing Guns that “Make, Don’t Take”

By Paula Martinac and Carolyn Ristau
The Bulletin

Garfield – In support of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation’s upcoming gun buyback initiative, a group of volunteers decided to try to get neighborhood people talking creatively about gun violence and how to eradicate it.

In August, Garfield Community Action Team (GCAT), a volunteer-run group that plans community beautification projects and clean-ups in the neighborhood, launched a “Make, Don’t Take” campaign to boost contributions to the BGC’s gun buyback initiative – with the blessing of Aggie Brose, the BGC’s deputy director, who has been chairing the buyback effort.

“One of the problems is, people want to pretend gun violence doesn’t happen,” Gary Cirrincione, an active GCAT member, told *The Bulletin*. “Anything crime-oriented, they want to tune it out. So we thought, let’s have a social media campaign that will generate some buzz for the gun buyback.”

The GCAT volunteers started brainstorming, and the idea arose to publicize other uses for “guns” besides as weapons that harm people. “Don Orkoskey told us the story of a friend whose young son was obsessed with guns, until a contractor who was working on their house got him turned on to caulking guns,” explained Cirrincione. “Then Nina Barbuto [of Assemble] said, ‘My favorite gun’s a soldering gun.’ And it took off from there.”

The group held a three-hour photo shoot where they brought about a dozen of their favorite “guns” – staple guns, glue guns, salad shooters and more – and Orkoskey, a professional photographer, “shot” photos to illustrate the many uses of bullet-free guns. The guns they chose to highlight could be used to create energy-efficient windows, build robots, re-upholster chairs and do many other useful, fun jobs. The photos were then shared on Facebook, Twitter and blogs.



“These are good guns,” Brose said. “The gun buyback is targeting the bad guns: the guns that may be used in a crime, the guns that are loaded and insecure in the homes of our neighborhood children.”

The gun buyback fundraising drive came to an official end on Aug. 31, and, with the funds raised, the BGC and its partners – Lawrenceville United, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, City Councilman Ricky Burgess, State Representative Dom Costa, State Representative Edward Gainey, State Representative Adam Ravenstahl, and the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Police – began finalizing plans for the buyback, to be held this fall.

Cirrincione said GCAT wants to “network out so the effort to get guns off the streets continues...These little steps help improve the livability of neighborhoods like Garfield.” ♦

New Employment Program Goes Hyperlocal

By Ashley Brandolph
Goodwill of Southwestern Pa.

Lawrenceville – Area residents seeking employment services and education resources need look no further than their own neighborhood.

Lawrenceville WORKS!, a new neighborhood workforce development program fostered through a partnership between Lawrenceville United, Lawrenceville Corporation and Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania, provides assistance to residents seeking to find work, finish their education, learn transferable skills or even pursue career advancement.

“An educated and skilled workforce is the foundation of every community and remains a crucial element as we plan for the future,” said Lauren Byrne, Executive Director of Lawrenceville United. “Through Lawrenceville WORKS!, residents can be connected to resources they need to enter employment and to transition into new careers and fields. Most importantly, they will find a reliable and centralized support system in Goodwill as they navigate the process.”

“We’re very excited to partner with Lawrenceville United and Lawrenceville Corporation to make more of our services increasingly accessible to neighborhood residents,” said Raeann Olander, Director of Employer Relations for Goodwill SWPA. “So far, we’ve had great interest and participation from the community.”

The initiative, funded by a grant from UPMC Health Plan and the Pa. Department of Community and Economic Development, held a special kick-off event on June 20, with the program officially starting on July 1.

Participants receive individualized service and support from a full-time Goodwill Community Employment and Resource Specialist. Whether it is help

getting their GED®, targeting an appropriate job industry or writing a successful resume, residents develop a plan personalized to their unique situations and goals. Additionally, a Goodwill staff-person helps individuals overcome personal barriers to employment by connecting them to support services and community resources.

The program has reached out to thousands of residents through community festivals and has registered dozens for services during neighborhood celebrations and the Lawrenceville Farmers’ Market. Lawrenceville WORKS! continues to capture referrals via community outreach, grassroots marketing, walk-in traffic and advocacy from neighborhood organizations. Participants have also been referred by civic leaders, neighbors, family members and friends.

During this difficult economic climate, the program will also provide an additional layer of support to local businesses by cultivating a mutually beneficial relationship between employers and the local workforce.

“The initial response from Lawrenceville’s businesses has been very positive,” said Maya Henry, Director of Special Initiatives for Lawrenceville Corporation. “Lawrenceville’s businesses are locally grown, and Lawrenceville WORKS! continues to support the local neighborhood economy.”

Residents can register for the program by attending a group orientation; registering for PA CareerLink enrollment workshops; or through one-on-one orientation meetings with the Community Employment and Resource Specialist. For more information, call 412-632-1797 or email ashley.brandolph@goodwillswpa.org. ♦

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