



Gateway Community Action Partnership

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Agency Mission and CAP Promise

The agency's mission is to provide services that improve the quality of life and promote self-sufficiency.

CAP Promise: Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

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Dear Gene,

The name Gateway Community Action Partnership reflects our expanded coverage area, but more importantly, it signifies what we are all about. We are a gateway to success for individuals and families in our community and we achieve those results through actions done in partnership within that very community we serve. So please take a minute to read our newsletter and learn more about our successes and struggles as we serve a Gateway to Community Action in Partnership with others for everyone's benefit!

Edward Bethea, Gateway Sr. VP and COO, Receives Hero Award From New Jersey Main Street New Coalition



From left, Albert B. Kelly, Gateway President and CEO and Mayor of Bridgeton, Edward Bethea, Gateway Sr. VP and COO, and Bridgeton Main Street Executive Director Carola Hartley.

When Bridgeton Main Street asked Edward Bethea to help reorganize and energize the association six years ago, his decision came easily. Always community-minded, Bethea agreed to join the Board of Directors. Shortly afterward, Bethea became President of Bridgeton Main Street, the oldest Main Street association in New Jersey.

Bridgeton Main Street, under Bethea's leadership, is responsible for several positive community development projects in the city. The Farmer's Market, Fall Festival, the Cinco de Mayo festival, Karaoke Benefit, Holiday House Tour, the Crabfest and the revitalization of the historic downtown are just some Bridgeton Main Street's projects.

For his work with Bridgeton Main Street, Bethea received the "Hero Award" from the New Jersey Main Street coalition on Feb. 2. Bethea, Gateway Community Action Partnership's Senior Vice President and COO, received the award at the downtown pocket park. Gateway President and CEO Albert B. Kelly, who is also Mayor of Bridgeton, and many Gateway staff were in attendance.

"I got tired of standing on the curb and complaining about what could be done and what should be done and I decided to step off the curb and get involved," Bethea said. "I wanted to see if I could make a difference and get involved and encourage other folks to get involved. It's easy to be critical. It's easy to sit back and say what could be or should be. It becomes more difficult when you try to make a difference, and that's what we try to do."

Carola Hartley, Bridgeton Main Street's Executive Director, said if it wasn't for Bethea and others who followed his leadership in revitalizing the organization, there wouldn't be a Main Street association in Bridgeton.

In accepting the award, Bethea shared the credit with others who have worked hard in the planning and implementing of projects that have elevated the city. Among those Bethea mentioned were Mr. Kelly, Gateway's Board of Directors Secretary Curtis Edwards, and Amy Loder, Bethea's assistant at Gateway. Kelly thanked Bethea and Bridgeton Main Street for their dedication to the City of Bridgeton.

"The renaissance and resurgence of Bridgeton is on its way," Kelly said. "Let's continue to move upward and forward so that we can be a model community not for just South Jersey or New Jersey, but for the entire country. I tell people that I don't want to just be the best mayor in Cumberland County. I want to be the best mayor in the country, and I cannot do that without people like you. So thank you Ed for what you do."

Gateway Celebrates Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



The Honorable Jason Witcher, the first African-American Municipal Court Judge appointed in Salem County, was a featured speaker.

BRIDGETON - Jason Witcher talked about how a single apple seed has the potential to turn into a tree with many apples, and how those many apples can in turn become an orchard, in illustrating the impact one person can have upon a community and the potential of those "seeds" being lost to violence.

Witcher is like that apple seed. He worked hard to obtain an undergrad degree from Kean University, earned a law degree from Rutgers University School of Law and became the first African-American Municipal Court Judge in Salem County. And now he is a successful, high-profile role model, spreading his positive influence among youth as a minister, coach and volunteer in community activities.

Witcher, a featured speaker at "A Commemorative Breakfast Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." on Jan. 16 at the Marino Ballroom, could have been the seed that never sprouted. A native of Willingboro, he said he grew up around drugs, gangs, domestic violence and broken homes and witnessed others succumbing to negative behaviors and saw potential wasted.

"I wasn't outside of that environment; I was smack in the

middle of it," said Witcher, at the breakfast hosted by Gateway Community Action Partnership in collaboration with Shiloh Baptist Church. "Many people around me fell victim to those things. I should have fallen victim to those things. I was no different from them, but for the grace of God."

The theme of the breakfast, packed with people there to honor and remember Dr. King, was "Raise Your Voice Against Violence." Witcher did that, and more. He offered hope, pointing to the positive role models and caring people at the Marino Ballroom.

"This atmosphere here today is an environment for seeds," Witcher said. "Everyone who is here has come here with a belief that we can do better. That creates an environment for those seeds to develop."

Witcher also called upon the youth to emulate Dr. King and trust God.

"It takes some courage to stand up for what is right," Witcher said. "It takes strength to stand up in the midst of adversity, in the midst of trials, in the midst of difficulties. Dr. King taught us something about courage. He not only had a dream - many people have dreams - but he had the passion to fight to exceed that dream. Young people here today, know that God has put you here for a purpose. God loves you and cares about you and he has placed destiny in your spirit. No matter how bad things get, remember that you have a purpose."

Albert B. Kelly, Gateway's President and CEO and founder, continued the fight against violence in his remarks, reminding everyone of Bridgeton's entry into the Guinness World Records in October by hosting the world's largest gospel choir that raised awareness of violence.

"We are going to continue that theme on and on and on until violence is no more in our community," Kelly said.

Robert Balicki, the Cumberland County Department of Corrections warden, had some hopeful news in his remarks as a featured speaker. Balicki said the prison population at the county jail has decreased from a high of 655 to about 400 today. Balicki pointed to the Last Chance reentry program operated by Gateway Community Action Partnership, Cumberland County Department of Corrections and other community partners and the efforts of Gateway's program director Carole Green. The program includes life skills training and job readiness for ex-offenders aiming to turn their lives around.

"People are contributing to society, they are not cycling in and out of the jail, they are paying taxes and being parents to their children," Balicki said. "That's the most important thing." Kelly and Bridgeton School District Superintendent Dr. Thomasina Jones recognized the student winners of a poster and essay contest on the theme of ending violence. Winners received backpacks and gift cards.

The award recipients were: Grades K-2: Isabel Cruz, Indian Avenue School, first place; Tyler Dayton, Buckshutem Road School, second place; Allison Sutton, Indian Avenue School, third place. Grades 3-5: Shakira Ramos, Indian Avenue School, first place, Genesis Perez, Indian Avenue School, second place; Andrea Santiago, Indian Avenue School, third place. Grades 6-8: Deja McNear, Excel School, first place; Joshua Stalsworth, Excel School, second place; Moises Angel, Indian Avenue School, third place.

There were also performances by the Percussion Discussion Drum Group of Bethany Seventh Day Adventist Church, the

South Jersey Community Men's Gospel Choir (with Kelly and Gateway Senior Vice President and COO Edward Bethea as members), the Shiloh Baptist Church Praise Team and the Shiloh Baptist Church Praise Dancers. Pastor James A. Dunkins of Shiloh Baptist Church was the master of ceremonies. The Rev. T. Andre Jones, from Union Baptist Temple and the Network Administrator at Gateway, delivered the invocation and table blessing.

Arthur & Friends Growing at Gateway



Wendie Blanchard, Arthur & Friends program director, demonstrates hydroponics planting process.

The Mill Creek Urban Farm started in 2009 by growing produce in container gardening EarthBoxes. Next were plantings in raised beds and local soil. Now the Mill Creek Urban Farm is planting in water.

The next phase of the ever-evolving Mill Creek Urban Farm began in January with its first training in hydroponics at Gateway Community Action Partnership's new hydroponics facility and planting of hydroponics crops by volunteers.

Gateway's hydroponics program, Arthur & Friends, is partially funded by a grant from the Kessler Foundation and operated by Gateway in conjunction with NORWESCAP, a Community Action Agency in northwestern New Jersey. The Kessler Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of adults with physical disabilities.

Volunteers from NJ Youth Corps, Gateway's Alzheimer's/Senior Adult Day Care Center and the community received training on hydroponics from Arthur & Friends program director Wendie Blanchard and her husband Brian. Gateway's hydroponics program will start with various salad greens in the first phase before moving on to other vegetables.

The addition of hydroponics to Gateway's Mill Creek Urban Farm will supplement the production of food grown in 1,300 EarthBoxes, raised beds and in the soil for community distribution and sale to local businesses. But the Arthur & Friends program is designed to do more. Gateway and Blanchard

are encouraging residents with disabilities to become involved in the training as a way to develop or improve upon transferable employment readiness and life skills and for the social aspect that is evident in Arthur & Friends three other hydroponics facilities in New Jersey.

"There are so many benefits to this that go beyond just learning about hydroponics," Blanchard said. "There are leadership experiences that include mentoring others coming into the program and being part of a team. Meeting deadlines, setting and achieving goals. Arriving on time. Taking responsibility for your actions. Maintaining a positive attitude. Taking pride in what you do. Things that are an underlying part of the success of any business that sometimes are overlooked in the traditional educational process. This program allows for that to develop.

"I see the benefits day-in and day-out. The people in the program play Trivial Pursuit at lunch. They go out to the movies together. They are forming friendships. They have created a work family, which I think is critical to a sense of well-being. When you feel committed at that level, your quality of work increases. There are very few people who have gone through our program that I wouldn't recommend as a quality employee."

Blanchard was inspired by her nephew Arthur who a few years ago encouraged Blanchard to go forward with the project. The program is named after Arthur, who has Down Syndrome. Blanchard said there are 47 active participants in the program. She said Arthur & Friends has trained about 200 ex-offenders and another 130 people "who have transitioned into another employment environment or continue to work on a volunteer basis."

For additional information on Arthur & Friends at Gateway, call 856-497-6751.

Around Gateway Community Action Partnership ... News and Notes

Congratulations to **Vineland III Head Start** and the kitchen staff for receiving another Five Star Award from the Vineland Health Department as a food establishment that went beyond standards for food handling safety requirements. It's the seventh time Vineland III Head Start has received the award. ... Winter may be mild thus far and the holidays may be over, but the problems facing area families are anything but easy or over. Gateway's **Holly City Family Success Center**, 511 Columbia Ave., Millville, **needs your help with clothing and household donations** to help these families.

Clothing, coat and shoe donations for children, men and women of all ages and sizes are much needed and can be dropped off at the center Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. In addition to new or gently used clothing donations, the Holly City Family Success Center is collecting household items such as dishes, silverware, pots, pans, etc. For additional information or to coordinate clothing donations, call 856-765-0205 during business hours. ... Gateway operates the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC) in Camden, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties**. The program provides supplemental foods, nutrition education, lactation support, immunization education and health care referrals to income-eligible pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children up to age 5.

Gateway WIC serves more than 23,000 clients annually through flexible hours through its eight (8) offices and a full-service, health screening mobile office. WIC is an equal opportunity program. If you believe you have been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap, write immediately to: USDA, Director-Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC, 20250 - 9410. For additional information on the Gateway WIC program or nearest office location and hours of operation, call the Gateway WIC program at 856-451-5600 or 856-225-5050. ... Gateway's **Alzheimer's and Senior Adult Day Care program** continues to provide quality, affordable care for Cumberland County residents at its Spring Gardens Senior Housing facility, 1781 S. Spring Rd., Vineland. The program operates from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday to provide a meaningful adult day care



Children from the Cheryl Chadwick Early Learning Center entertained Gateway administrative office staff with the annual Kazoo Day Parade on January 27.

program as well as provide respite care for families of Alzheimer's patients. Meals and snacks are provided and daily activities include arts, crafts, low-impact, guided exercise sessions and socialization. The program also includes monthly parties for participants. A suggested daily donation of \$20 is requested, but no one will be denied services due to inability or unwillingness to pay. The program is funded, in part, by the Cumberland County Office on Aging and the United Way of Greater Cumberland County. For additional information or to register for the program, contact Sandra Collins at 856-690-0411. ... The **Gateway Loan Program**, which is a helping hand fund to assist low-income clients in Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties facing short-term financial difficulties, is seeking participants. Gateway Loan arranges small loans for income-eligible families who may be unable to obtain a traditional bank loan. Loans range from \$250 to \$500 and are repayable within six months. ... Gateway's Head Start program is once again sponsoring the **Child Care Food Program**. This program is designed to provide meals to children receiving services in Head Start centers located throughout Mercer, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties. Meals are available at no separate charge to all children 12 and under enrolled in the Child Care Food Program and are served without regard to race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex.



[Gateway Community Action Partnership Website](#)

Sincerely,

Michael Cudemo
Gateway Community Action Partnership

[Forward email](#)



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