

Human Dignity Program

Youth and Gang Violence Prevention, Diversity Education, Hate Crime Education and Response, Inter-Group Conflict Resolution, Community Harmony, Peace and Nonviolence



Washington Neighborhood Celebration "The Gift"

A Huge Success – Over 1,000 People in Attendance

The 2nd Annual Washington Neighborhood Celebration "The Gift" on Saturday, January 9, 2010 was a huge success with over 2,000 children and adults in attendance at the Washington Middle School playground, 1420 Cedar Avenue located in the Washington School Neighborhood Improvement Strategy (NIS) area. The families enjoyed cotton candy, ice cream, fruit baskets, arts, crafts, family activities, over 100 FREE haircuts, and free bicycle repair. The celebration was sponsored and coordinated by **New Generations**, a non-profit organization in collaboration the City of Long Beach's **Neighborhood Services Bureau**, and the **Long Beach Weed and Seed Program**. Several community partners working with the Weed and Seed program provided resources and information tables. Visitors enjoyed dozens of activity booths while participating in jalapeño eating contests and winning free prizes.



The **Long Beach Fire Association Local #372** partnered with New Generations to serve free hot dogs at the event. For the younger children, a free photo shoot was set up and free books were given away. New Generations also partnered with the **Worship Center of Long Beach** and other local groups and businesses to bring this free event to the community. According to **Alma Campos**, co-founder of New Generations and graduate of the Neighborhood Leadership Program Class of 2009, "The Gift is to help neighbors and families get to know one another.... Times are tough and we want everyone to know they always have someone looking out for them. This is also an amazing event where we teach our youth that they can achieve their dreams despite obstacles they face."

The project was an effort to mobilize local volunteers, churches, businesses, and organizations to help throw a community celebration complete with a free barbecue, music, drama, games and prizes. The project demonstrated how to love people in practical ways like giving away bags of groceries, providing haircuts, repairing children's bicycles, and taking family photos.

The success of the event was due to the support of youth and teens and mobilizing **over 100 volunteers**. The community was greatly surprised by the activities and free services offered including children's books, and face painting, playing in bounce houses and many other children's activities. Organizers hope to have this and annual event continue with the support and involvement of more local community residents and local businesses at future events.

For more information about the Washington School Neighborhood Improvement Strategy (NIS) area, please contact **Teresa Gomez** at **(562) 570-6730** or **teresa.gomez@longbeach.gov**.