



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

W. Curtis

Thomas

WINTER 2011

181ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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THOMAS BRINGS NEW SECURITY SYSTEMS TO SENIORS

Seniors living in the Guild House East senior development in the Spring Garden community, Guild House West senior development in the West Poplar community and Casa Carmen Aponte senior development in the Norris Square community can breathe a little easier thanks to the new state-of-the-art electronic surveillance systems installed and supported by Rep. Thomas' 181st Senior Electronic Surveillance Program.

Before this, the developments had older cameras that didn't work or provide adequate surveillance. All three developments were surrounded by drug-dealing and other crime. The first of its kind at senior developments in the city, the new systems will allow seniors to see what's going on outside before leaving the building. Since the installation of the cameras, criminals have been put on notice that they are being observed at all times.

The program was funded through the Philadelphia Prevention Partnership. The systems were designed and installed by Logistics Management Consultants, Inc. (LMC) in partnership with LinkTech, Inc., both seasoned minority technology firms.

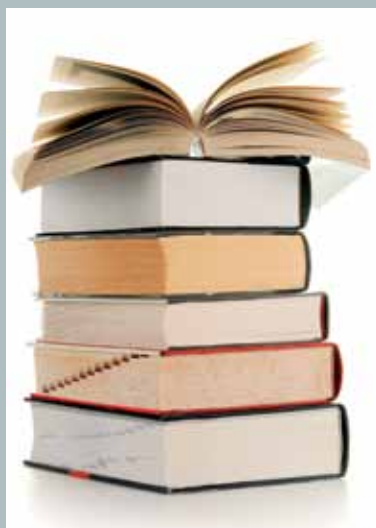


Rep. Thomas reviews the new state-of-the-art security system at Guild House East with Dr. Jamil Assaf Baustista of LMC, Inc. (center) and Phil Murray, a member of Rep. Thomas' staff.

EDUCATION

WANAMAKER TO BE DEMOLISHED

The Wanamaker school, located at 11th Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue, will soon be demolished to make way for a new development thanks to \$6 million in state capital assistance funding. Bridge of Hope, the community development corporation of Bright Hope Baptist Church, will build a housing and education development on that site. Rep. Thomas and others would like to see mixed-income housing for the community included in the project. Some area residents are currently employed on the project. Thomas said residents can contact Bright Hope Baptist Church for more information on how they can get involved.



WILLIAM PENN UPDATE

Now that the new members of the School Reform Commission are seated, Rep. Thomas will re-establish communication with the School District of Philadelphia regarding the reopening of William Penn High School. The William Penn Coalition, led by Priscilla Woods and Robert Nelson, has been working with Thomas to re-establish William Penn as a career-technical school. Thomas and the coalition will continue lobbying to bring this plan to fruition for the benefit of the community.

SAVE OUR FAMILIES DAY

Residents of the Richard Allen, Harrison and Spring Garden housing developments were treated to a day of free family fun thanks to the "Save Our Families Day" events supported by Rep. Thomas. Held at the East Poplar Recreation Center, Harrison Recreation Center and the Spring Garden Apartments, the events included children's activities, music, a talent show, spoken word, guest speakers and workshops on parenting, nutrition, job training and coping. Thomas and his staff also distributed approximately 100 book bags and school supplies to children at each site. Sept. 10, 2011 was declared as Save Our Families Day by Thomas.

THOMAS ESTABLISHES SAFE CIRCLE BREAST CANCER CLUB

Rep. Thomas recently celebrated the establishment of the Linda Creed Breast Cancer Foundation's "Safe Circle Club" at St. Phillip's Baptist Church as part of the October Breast Cancer Month observance. The Safe Circle Club at St. Phillip's, one of five Thomas is establishing in North Philadelphia, will serve as a clearinghouse for information, resources and support for African-American women dealing with breast cancer.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, in 2008 (last reported data) there were over 1,500 cases of breast cancer in the Commonwealth with over 50 percent of those cases being women of color. Safe Circle is an outreach program that is culturally relevant to the African-American community. Through church and community-based organizations, educational facilities, work sites and small groups, Safe Circle aims to provide information, screening and support services to African-American women.

The club at St. Phillip's was opened with a celebratory breakfast. Volunteers from the Linda Creed Foundation gave testimony on their journey to wellness and gave information to the women in attendance. The volunteer group was led by Jean Chavis, manager of patient care services at Temple Cancer Center, who was part of the planning committee that established the Safe Circle Program for the foundation.

She explained that there are four stages of breast cancer. In her work at Temple, Chavis noticed that most African-American women were coming in at the 3rd and 4th stages. They were dying more than other women because they didn't get mammograms at the early stages.

"They don't have to be afraid anymore," she explained. "Now, we're working with Curtis Thomas to see if he can help us raise money and get the information out to more African-American women. God gave him the vision to start these clubs at these churches so women will have a safe place to get information, encouragement and a hug."

The club at St. Phillip's is named after Joanna Brown, a member of the church who is a 19-year survivor of breast cancer. Brown was just 27 years old when she found a lump in her breast during self-examination. Brown received a radical mastectomy, went

through six months of chemotherapy and has been in remission for 19 years. She is now an advocate, reaching out to other women.

"I am honored and excited about the Safe Circle Club being named after me and helping and supporting other women. Early detection is the key. They need to know that it's a journey. It's a fight. You have to fight for your life."

A special room at St. Phillip's will be renovated for the **Joanna Brown Safe Circle Club** that will establish a **24-hour hotline**.

"There is an explosion of breast cancer cases among African-American women," explained Thomas, who has helped constituents with the disease access resources. "Lack of information, treatment and support results in death for many of our women. African-American women are often diagnosed with more advanced breast cancer and are more likely to die from the disease than any other group of women. I am glad to be joining the mission to provide outreach and resources to these women."

The foundation, which receives no government funding, was the first free-standing breast cancer organization in Pennsylvania and is the first local organization to address breast cancer as a serious and widespread disease threatening the lives of women living in the Delaware Valley.



Rep. Thomas celebrates the opening of the Joanna Brown Safe Circle Club at St. Phillip's Baptist Church with volunteers from the Linda Creed Foundation. Pictured with Thomas is (l-r) Joanna Brown (black t-shirt) Sallie Harris (pink sweater) and Jean Chavis, Temple Cancer Center (far right).

Job Fair



More than 400 jobseekers attended a private sector job fair sponsored by Rep. Thomas at the William H. Gray Youth Center. The fair included workshops on resume writing, how to perfect interview skills and proper business attire.

"Unemployment statistics in Philadelphia are at a record high, especially in the 181st," said Thomas. "That's why it's imperative that we partner to bring unemployed constituents together with opportunities for employment. This job fair is one of two I sponsor annually."

The fair attracted 40 employers representing the banking, casino, health care and food service industries, to name a few, among others.

Welcome!

Community Learning Center

REP. THOMAS WELCOMES COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTER TO THE 181ST!

Located at 2701 N. Lehigh, CLC provides free classes and student support services to low-income adults seeking to change their lives through literacy. The organization offers classes in adult literacy, GED, math and life skills using a supportive and holistic approach so people can realize their fullest potential. CLC's goal is to help students learn the skills they need to go to college, enter job training programs and obtain sustainable employment. They also offer citizenship and English-as-a-second language classes for refugees. For more information on CLC programs call **215-426-7940**.

THOMAS PUSHES FOR RE-ENTRY SUPPORT

According to the U. S. Attorney General, approximately 700,000 ex-offenders will be reintegrated back into the community this year. Many of them will return to Philadelphia. Always a supporter of re-entry initiatives, Rep. Thomas will soon introduce legislation that would establish the Pennsylvania Inter-Council on Re-entry. This legislation would require all state departments and agencies to develop a holistic approach for helping ex-offenders access jobs, health care and education. Thomas will also ask the Speaker of the House to establish a Bipartisan Taskforce on Re-entry. The Thomas bill is inspired by a federal initiative put forth by the Obama Administration.

HELP FOR RENTERS

Are you a tenant who is having a dispute with your landlord? If so, help is a phone call away. The **Tenant Union Representative Network** offers workshops that provide an overview of Pennsylvania tenant/landlord law. TURN also provides counselors to assist individuals with navigating the system to get housing justice. For help or information, call TURN at **215-940-3900**.



Legal Help For Seniors

Been scammed, facing foreclosure or have other pressing legal issues? Have no fear, PA Senior LAW is here to help you! The **PA Senior LAW Helpline** will provide seniors with information, legal advice and representation when needed. Call **1-877-727-7529** for help.



Legislative Update

House Bill 1957 – Rep. Thomas introduced legislation that would amend the PA Insurance Act to restrict insurance companies from categorizing pregnancy as a pre-existing condition. It would also require insurance providers to provide coverage for maternity (pre-natal, childbirth and post-delivery) care. The bill has been referred to the House Insurance Committee for review.

House Bill 1982 – This measure, introduced by Rep. Thomas, would amend the PA Housing Authorities Law to increase from five to nine the number of members on the board of the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA). Under this bill, five members would be appointed by the mayor, two members appointed by city council and two members would be public housing residents nominated by a public housing resident advocacy organization. This bill would clarify the role of PHA with respect to the PA Ethics Law. Mayor Nutter is on board with this bill which is being reviewed by the House Urban Affairs Committee.

KEEP YOUR EYE ON...

- City Council's approval of Temple University's construction of three buildings on Broad Street between Cecil B. Moore Avenue and Oxford Street. The plan for one 27-story building, one 10-story building and one 3-story building does not include space for parking.
- Transformation of the historic Blue Horizon, located on Broad Street near Thompson, into a luxury hotel.
- The purchase of the lot at 9th Street and Girard Avenue by Bart Blatstein of Tower Investments.
- Weeds, trash and debris on three lots on 13th Street between Fairmount and Wallace. Suburban Development Corporation and the School District of Philadelphia, owners of the property, need to clean them up.
- A package of bills that would protect residents by giving the city the authority to stop the growth of gentrification and the construction of \$200,000/\$300,000 homes in low-income communities.



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THOMAS ADDRESSES VIOLENCE IN THE 181ST

Several months ago, Rep. Thomas sponsored a series of meetings to organize a coalition of community organizations, law enforcement, churches, educators and concerned citizens to examine the causes of the escalating violence in parts of the district and come up with suggestions.

Representatives from Councilman Darrell Clarke's office, state Sen. Shirley Kitchen's office, Philadelphia Housing Authority, Deputy Mayor for public safety Everett Gillison and representatives from the 6th, 26th, 22nd, 25th, 35th and 39th Police Districts participated along with representatives from community organizations, schools and churches in the area. Additionally, representatives from the District Attorney's Office, the School District and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives also attended.

The meetings revealed that a lot of the violence is perpetrated by young people and is taking place in areas surrounding the schools. Thomas supported a public awareness initiative, the "It Takes a Village" violence prevention campaign, funded through the Urban Affairs Coalition, that engaged the youth through a coalition of community partners and law enforcement.

Vernon Price of the District Attorney's Office implemented a

special violence prevention outreach program for the campaign in several summer youth programs in the affected area east of Broad Street. The outreach was targeted to the R. W. Brown Boys/Girls Club, Hunting Park Recreation Center, Feltonville Recreation Center and West Poplar NAC Day Camp. The D.A.'s "Bridge to the Future" violence prevention/mentor program will continue targeting at-risk youth at several schools in the district in the coming months.

Thomas also sponsored a "March for Peace" rally in July. The motorcade/march targeted the Spring Garden Apartments, Richard Allen Homes and Harrison Plaza where a lot of violence was taking place. Thomas' office also participated in Yorktown Day and Community Days in the Spring Garden, Harrison and Cambridge communities.

"There were three to four shootings every week in the Harrison and Richard Allen communities this summer," explained Thomas. "As a result of the community meetings and our collective efforts with the violence prevention activities, the violence in those communities has been reduced. Thanks to the involvement of concerned residents, the D.A.'s Office, block captains and the 22nd and 26th Police Districts, the campaign was a success."



Students from schools within the 181st Legislative District had the opportunity to visit Washington, D.C., thanks to a trip sponsored by Rep. Thomas in September. The 40 students, accompanied by 12 parents and teachers, spent the day visiting members of Congress, touring the Library of Congress and visiting the new Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. A great time was had by all.



The students also visited the new Martin Luther King Jr. Monument.



Students from schools in the 181st District visited Capitol Hill.