



## **Huntington Weed and Seed Program & HPD Field Office**

**1524 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Huntington, WV 25701**

**304-751-6251**

October 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

In October 2008, the city of Huntington, WV was awarded a "Weed and Seed" grant from the Department of Justice to help increase law enforcement efforts in the highest crime area of our community. The grant also helps to facilitate the creation of programming which will help educate and empower our citizens and build strong, healthy communities. As the coordinator of our Weed and Seed program, I have worked in partnership with the Huntington Community Gardens (HCG) project since its inception in February 2009.

The Barnett Center, which houses our Weed and Seed Office and the Huntington Police Field Office for our K-9 Unit and Special Emphasis Unit, is a fully operational community center complete with a recreation room, meeting facilities, computer lab and a dance studio. In our back lot, the Huntington Community Gardens team has created a "Learning Garden" for the community. They have built beautiful flower gardens and raised vegetable beds for the community along with community volunteers. This has been completely outfitted through donations by local businesses like Home Depot, Wal-Mart, various local nurseries and individual contributors.

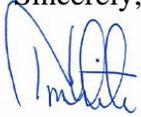
In an effort to sustain and expand the gardens, we have supported the gardens project by donating space for their educational programming with WVSU and the Junior Master Gardeners program. We have also given HCG the use of our land, supplied utilities, gardening tools and supplies, a storage shed and a large tiller to be used to transform empty lots in our low-income neighborhoods into green spaces. I intend for our partnership to continue because I see this project as a powerful way to reach out to every member of our community in order to educate and to empower them to improve their lives and their neighborhood.

I have been deeply impressed with the level of passion, dedication and effort that HCG's volunteer staff has shown in the development of this project in such a short time. With no up-front capital, they have created gardens not only at the Barnett Center, but at three public housing facilities and in two empty lots on one of the most notoriously crime-ridden streets in the city of Huntington. I have seen firsthand the positive impact this program has had on our at-risk youth

working together with community volunteers to learn and to build community through the HCG efforts and I completely support them in their efforts to expand this important project.

Our most important resource in a community is our youth and any effort to teach them skills which will encourage them to be economically independent and empower them to take ownership of their neighborhoods will greatly increase the chances that these kids will grow to become responsible, healthy adults for the future of Huntington.

Sincerely,



Tim White

Weed and Seed Program Coordinator