

MEDIA CONTACT: LIZ SMITH
PHONE: 299-8333

**ROBERTO CLEMENTE PARK WINS
PHOENIX AWARD FOR COMMUNITY IMPACT**

LANCASTER COUNTY, PA (NOV.10, 2009) – Revitalized Roberto Clemente Park in the City of Lancaster has won the *Phoenix Award for Community Impact*.

The award winning park was the result of public and private collaboration by the South Duke Street Neighborhood Task Force, the Inner City Group, the Lancaster County Planning Commission, High Companies, Weed & Seed, U.S. EPA Region III, and Environmental Standards Inc.

Roberto Clemente Park, once an underutilized and neglected site in the South Duke Street neighborhood, today is considered to be an asset to the community. This public recreational space features an attractive and well maintained park and a new playground for children.

For the first time, awards are being presented for two years because the national brownfields conference is now on an 18-month cycle with award winners being named for 2008 and 2009. The Phoenix Award winners represent outstanding revitalization projects from each of the 10 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regions as well as projects having a special community impact. The winning projects were specially selected by a panel of environmental professionals and business and government leaders based on a set of five criteria: magnitude of the project, innovative techniques, solutions to regulatory issues, solutions to social issues, and impact upon the community.

Roberto Clemente Park was announced as the 2008 winner of the Community Impact Award. The park was completed in 2005.

The 2008 and 2009 project participants will be honored at an awards ceremony during *Brownfields 2009* in New Orleans, La., November 16-18, 2009. During the environmental conference with an expected crowd of 5,000 participants, these Phoenix Award winners will showcase their projects with case study presentations and exhibit information.

“Without the community involvement process, the project would not have been successful,” said Jane Pugliese, director of Housing and Economic Development Planning for the Lancaster County Planning Commission (LCPC) and former executive director of the Inner City Group. “There’s no substitute for having a good community process for deciding what needs to happen at a site. If we had gone ahead and just improved Roberto Clemente Park without input from the neighborhood, by now, the park would have deteriorated back to a blighted condition because the neighborhood would not have had any sense of ownership of the park. Because the neighborhood was a decisive force in deciding what improvements were to be made and how it was going to be managed, the park has continued to be a well maintained recreational area and neighborhood asset used by all.”

MORE

With plans already underway for the park, neighbors and groups complained about not being involved in the planning process. Not wanting to repeat the mistakes of the urban renewal programs of the past where citizens were excluded from decisions affecting their neighborhoods, the Inner City Group decided to start from scratch and asked the community to guide how the park would be transformed. “The South Duke Street Neighborhood Task Force was formed, and we encouraged as many people as were interested to become involved,” said Pugliese. The task force guided engineering and design consultants in creating a new design for the park.

South Duke Street neighbor and community organizer Derrick Burch concurred, “The community planning and participation process that was implemented by the Inner City Group and Lancaster Weed & Seed to engage residents in the design, building and maintaining of the Park has been nothing short of amazing and is being recognized as a model on forming and sustaining community collaboratives in 15 Weed & Seed sites throughout the State of Pennsylvania.” By being inclusive from the beginning of the process, the residents have taken ownership of the project and they continue to work on revitalizing their neighborhood. Today Burch is involved with the ongoing upkeep, maintenance and organizing of community events, along with community stakeholders, that take place at Roberto Clemente Park.

This extensive, inclusive public participation process was critically important for developing the park successfully and repairing the neighborhood’s social fabric. Twenty public meetings were held over the course of the year.

The Inner City Group was started by a partnership of four neighborhood based organizations: Urban League of Lancaster, Crispus Attucks Community Center, Neighborhood Services, and the Spanish American Civic Association.

“The project got more complicated after construction was underway and the crew discovered that the site was contaminated,” said James R. Cowhey, executive director of the LCPC. After the park was declared a brownfield site, LCPC was able to use its U.S. EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant to assist. Mary Gattis-Schell, LCPC Senior Environmental Planner, served as the brownfield project manager.

The High Companies of Lancaster contributed \$80,000 toward the renovation of Roberto Clemente Park, a significant contribution and one of the catalysts in leveraging other funds needed to complete the project. The High Companies’ contribution was the largest private sector contribution received and the third highest overall for the park. In addition to supporting vital community revitalization efforts like this one because it’s simply the right thing to do, corporate citizens can apply for state tax credits when providing funds to community projects such as this one.

“It is truly a privilege for the High Companies to have been part of an effort such as this – one that revitalizes a recreational asset in a way that is so well integrated into the fabric of its neighborhood,” said Nevin Cooley, president and CEO of High Real Estate Group LLC. “Congratulations to Inner City Group and members of the neighborhood for their leadership and successful work to create Roberto Clemente Park,” he said.

MORE

The Phoenix Awards™ are affiliated with the Phoenix Awards Institute, Inc., an environmental and community service foundation, located in Mechanicsburg, PA. Created in 1997, this prestigious award honors individuals and groups who are working to solve the critical environmental issue of transforming abandoned industrial areas into productive new uses. The Phoenix Awards are widely recognized as the premier award of excellence in Brownfield redevelopment and revitalization. The competition is open to any individual, group, company, organization, government body or agency.

For a list of all the award winners, see www.phoenixawards.org

###

Affiliation/Sponsors

The Phoenix Awards were created and are coordinated by Denise K. Chamberlain, a brownfields expert, and are affiliated with the Phoenix Awards Institute, Inc., an environmental and community service non-profit, located in Mechanicsburg, PA (Harrisburg area). The Executive Committee members include: Denise K. Chamberlain, ARCADIS, Phoenix Executive Committee Chair; Dennis Alvord, U.S. EDA; Charlie Bartsch, ICF International; Linda Garczynski, Brownfields expert; Don Green, U.S. HUD; Ken Komoroski, K&L Gates; David Lloyd, U.S. EPA; Terri Smith, Environmental Liability Management, Inc.; and James P. Snyder, ARCADIS.

Public and private sector sponsors support the program, including ALCOA, ARCADIS, K&L Gates, Koppers, Inc., and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.