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## Eisenhower People

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# Reginald Grant: Living a 'personal mission' at Carver Terrace



We thank our lucky stars to have Reggie Grant with the Eisenhower Foundation.

Not only does he get the job done, he understands the serious needs behind the work he does.

Reggie has a tough job, but “never has a bad day,” according to his associates. He is Site Director for the Youth Safe Haven-Police Ministration at Carver Terrace in northeast DC, and also helps run the Quantum Opportunities (QOP) Program that was added in late 2004.

Reggie serves up the goodness with Cpl. Alfred Stewart, Resource Officer at Carver Terrace and neighboring Spingarn Sr. High, and Cecily Young.

Reggie has his hands full, yet he does a remarkable job. Yes, anyone can do an excellent “job.” But it’s the little something

extra you bring to the job that will make you remarkable.

“I love my kids,” he says. “They’re not just my ‘job’ – they’re an extension of who I am. Growing up in public housing, I’ve been faced with many of the same issues my kids deal with every day. I just hope I can help them understand that they really have a friend on their side.”

Reggie worked with Eisenhower in Savannah, Ga., and was brought to DC to help run the foundation’s two Carver Terrace programs. He learned a lot as a mentor in Savannah.

“I personally know some of the areas in which my friends have struggled, growing up in the Bible Belt of Georgia – where there were things that

could have been done, and needed to be done, but no one was there to do them,” he said. “We needed good, qualified mentors actually spending time with young black men – outside of just playing football and sports.” he said.

“Those mentors stopped when the season stopped. But the problems my friends and I faced didn’t stop. That became my personal mission – to make sure every child knew there was a place, and a person, who supported them and cared for them regardless of the activities – good or bad – that were going on around them.”

## Can’t Go it Alone

For all his dedication, Reggie isn’t on a solo mission.

For one, he has Youth Safe Haven-Police Ministration coordinator **Sandy Pryor**, whom he calls a “motivated, experienced mother.” Pryor was a government employee for a number of years, but “gave it all up to work with young people,” Reggie said.

“Mrs. Pryor has an innate ability for working with young people,” he continued. “She’s been the director of her own personal youth program (Redeemed Learning Center) for more than ten years now – since 1994. Mrs. Pryor is also a very big proponent of keeping students in school – that’s a personal mission of hers. That’s a big component of mentoring, obviously – keeping kids in school. I’ve had that personal experience, and I try to pass her wisdom along.”

“Reggie is very efficient, and very structured, yet he has a very creative mind,” Pryor said. “He knows what he wants, and goes for whatever it takes for the center to be effective. He thinks a lot about how he wants things done.”

He may know exactly what he wants, but he’s not what you’d call a dictator. Reggie’s world is more like a democracy.

“He has a lot of pull in the community,” Pryor said, “yet he interacts a lot with the kids to get their opinions. He has a very active relationship with the children, with the Carver Terrace community, and with the staff.” In the office, “if he has an idea, we come together as a group – he’s very willing to share. He wants other people’s opinion on the staff.”

Does he ever have a hard day? After all, Carver Terrace has its share of challenges.

“If he does, I haven’t seen it,” Pryor said. “I have not personally seen him ever have a hard day.”

The soul of the Youth Safe Haven is in its Police Ministration, where the Carver Terrace neighborhood gets the benefit of a strong, caring, and permanent police presence – one it can depend on, day in and day out. That’s where Cpl. **Alfred Stewart** comes in.

“He’s the actual Resource Officer assigned to school (neighboring Spingarn Sr. High) and he also works with the Youth Safe Haven, of course. So the high-school kids get a double dosage,” Reggie said with a laugh. “But the kids really like him. He knows how to take the badge off and become a real person.”

Officer Stewart is very big on college, Reggie said. “HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities) are especially big with him. He has kids of his own, so he knows what it takes to keep kids motivated. But the thing the kids really like about him is that he’s a DJ – so he actually deejayed the prom at Brown Jr. High School recently.” Brown is one of three schools concentrated together in the Carver Terrace neighborhood.

“Another thing I love about him is that no matter what the budget is, he will be there,” Reggie said. “He has a really good ability to communicate with the staff here – he’s part of the team, not an outsider. Being a dad, he brings his own children to the center sometimes, so he’s really into family. He’s also big on home visits around the apartment community – even when there’s not a problem.

“He does give off a tough love-approach. He’s not afraid to get dirty. Officer Stewart has been with the neighborhood long before the Youth Safe Haven-Police Ministration program began in 2002. The strong police presence is the heart and soul of the program. Otherwise, it would be just another place to hang out,” Reggie said.

“This program could not work without strong adults.”

But do you ever have a bad day?

“Do I? No, I can honestly say that if I have a bad day, it’s never related to my kids,” he said. “Usually, my bad days come with adults – you know, the administrative work. I have faith in our kids, and youth in general. There is the occasional disappointment, if they go astray, but I have faith that they will come back.

“I find refuge in the fact that because they’re here, the program works.”