

My name is John George, from the City of Detroit. I'm the founder and director of the *Detroit Blight Busters*. I was born in Brightmoor, which is just a couple blocks South of where we are today in old Redford. My dad is, or was Lebanese. My mom was Italian. My dad was the Pied Piper I guess, of the neighborhood. Everybody would come to our home. So our house was kind of the center of that community, of that neighborhood and I couldn't have been blessed with two better parents, loving, caring, in touch with the community.

Well, 35 years ago, we purchased a home five blocks North of here, actually a two family flat. When my son was two, there was an abandoned house that turned into a crack house, and we had called the police and the city and the mayor. I personally believe allowing children to grow up in and around that negative energy is child abuse, and I didn't want to move, but at the same time, I don't want my kids growing up in and around that nonsense. So one Friday night, it got out of hand. I got together with Albert Mack and Felix Wright, they were a couple of young fathers who lived in the community. We all had the same problem. We worked a total of eight hours that Saturday. We boarded up the house, we cut the grass, we trimmed the bushes, we put the debris to the curb, and when the drug dealers came back, they couldn't get in. They got in their jeep and they left and I looked at the guys. I said, well, that was simple enough and I said, what are you doing next Saturday? and we've been at it ever since and that's how the *Blight Busters* started.

So we've taken all of these neighborhood liabilities and have created community assets and ownership, and when you do that, you create opportunity and hope. I think if you go around the city and you continue to talk to people, you'll feel that Detroit love. It's a genuine love of brothers and sisters.