

## NeighborWorks® Achieving Excellence in Community Development

### Story of Us - Cathy Williams

When I first arrived at Cambridge last year I knew one thing. I did not have time for this. I had applied for the program the cycle before and did not make it. I was surprised to make it this time. I was in the middle of a difficult campaign for public office at home and I did not have time for this.

Entering Achieving Excellence I was immediately challenged with having to develop relationships and get out of my comfort zone, and I did not have time for this.

Slowly I began to trust “these people”, not as strangers but as the Red Color Group.

We began the hard work of helping each other define and then expand our challenges finding strength and courage in the process.

Seila went global when she took staff to her home country of Ecuador to teach and learn community development with different tools and then bring her counterparts here to see how she does it in New Haven.

Karen experienced the discovery of a world of possibilities that is leading to a changing of the landscape of the CDC Community in Dallas.

Terry put together the courage to expand much needed services into the underserved community of the HoChunk nation.

In Chicago we got our t-shirts and became the Red Rocks Group. In New Jersey we learned each others stories of loss, joy and success, and I began to realize that this was bigger than I realized. These challenges were making dramatic differences in the lives of the people we serve.

I know tomorrow I can still trust each of my Red Rockers and have committed to each other to continue to meet at least once a year, beginning in Ecuador in August of 2008.

Let this serve as a call to action to the entire Achieving Excellence Community to make the same commitment to each other. As we come together in Atlanta with all the past participants of AE let us recognize that this is special and that if we continue to stay together we will continue to make lives better.

Today I promise to each of you, I commit to each of you that I will always have time for this.