

September 24, 2025

Mr. Michael P. Hanlon
City Clerk
City of Allentown, PA 18101

Re: Jerry Christian Recognition Request

Mike,

On behalf of the Allentown Community which has a long history of thriving in the historically minority neighborhoods south of Center City, we are requesting that special recognition be given to Mr. Jerry Christian who impacted the lives of many youth and their families. We are suggesting that the 500 Block of Hickory Street be renamed "Jerry Christian Way".

In the late '70s and early '80s, Mr. Christian collaborated with a number of local Allentonians to form a Youth Concerns Coalition Group. The group's main focus was to coach youth and mentor them to help identify what they needed for long term success in their lives. In a direct quote from Mr. Christian during this time, he stated, "Basically, what we did is we started working with kids at basketball and we saw it as an opportunity to also shape their lives."

To advance the basketball skill level of local Allentown youth, Mr. Christian would take a van load of young players to New York City to compete "in an atmosphere outside of Allentown." However, Mr. Christian and the other members of the coalition wanted to reach out to the youth beyond the basketball court. Tutoring programs were established and young men and women were taught how to conduct themselves in a Christian manner which reflected Mr. Christian's personal values. Youth were also taken on field trips to museums in Philadelphia to expand their life experiences.

Mr. Christian organized summer tournaments which were held at Fountain Park and the former Valania Park. These events were more than just basketball competition, they were festive affairs with churches providing music, modeling, and karate exhibitions. These tournaments drew teams from Long Island, Brooklyn, and Queens in addition to the local Allentown teams. Noteworthy players who graced these basketball courts included Mark Jackson (former Indiana Pacers guard, NBA basketball coach, and sports commentator) and Pearl Washington (former Syracuse University star). These events were well received by the community as the parks were always packed with youth, their families, and spectators. Mr. Christian reflected at the time "I thought it was best to open it up to the entire community and not a particular segment, and I think that all the people, regardless of who they were enjoyed themselves."

Some of the lives Mr. Christian touched included former Allen High Head Basketball coach Tyrone Wright; former Dieruff Head Boys Basketball coach the late Foo Belfield; the former Bethlehem Catholic Boys Basketball coach Al Blount and basketball mentor Kirk Baker. In Mr. Christian's honor, Baker, Blount, and Wright organized the "Jerry Christian Basketball Classic" for both boys and girls ages 13 and under and 15 and under.

Mr. Christian grew up in East Liverpool, Ohio. He played college basketball at West Texas State and played professionally for 10 years including one year in Belgium. In 1992, he opened his own business as a Nationwide Agency and provided a variety of insurance products to many families and businesses in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Christian retired in 2019 and still lives in the Lehigh Valley.

Submitted by,


Dan Bosket