

## **What We Won at the 2012 Nehemiah Action:**

On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 FAST leaders gathered 2,500 people at the First Baptist Church of Indian Rocks Beach to discuss the issues of unemployment, poor reading, and a high recidivism rate.

After a three-year battle, we won the opportunity to bring families together and offer tools to help our inmates successfully re-enter society by getting the Sheriff to commit to reinstating a comprehensive in-jail rehabilitation program. Our power in numbers made a difference as Sheriff Gualtieri made a strong commitment to include this program as a line item in the budget when he had refused this request just a week before.

The jobs committee also celebrated a victory by getting 5 city council members (one of whom gave his answer in a written letter) to agree to work to get a Priority Hiring Ordinance to be put into St. Petersburg. This ordinance increased the number of positions available in the county for the qualified workers who are currently struggling to find local work. This ordinance also includes a stipulation for hiring hard-to-hire workers, such as non-violent ex-offenders.

The education committee got two school board members to agree to put a pilot program for Direct Instruction in one of our 20 lowest performing schools. This is not enough backing to have the pilot program happen, but we have gained important ground in the issue of demanding improvements for our struggling schools. We will not give up on this issue and allow the percent of students at Gibbs High School reading at grade level to remain at 9% - a failure that stems from students who are also failing in elementary school.