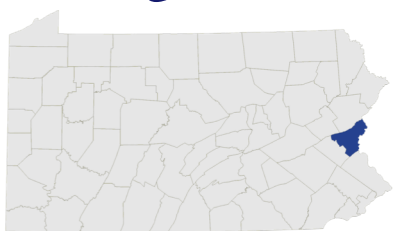


# My Story

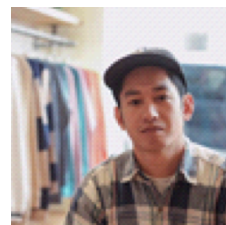


## Breaking Down Barriers

### Bethlehem Skateplaza

By Andrew Po, Owner of Homebase610 Skateshop

*"The classes are designed to help kids learn the basics of skateboarding...which helps keep them active instead of just sitting inside playing video games"*



Moving to the Bethlehem in 1997 forced me to spend my late teens and twenties running from security guards and debating with police officers about why I had to be treated like a criminal for skateboarding when there was no legal place to skateboard provided by the city. In San Diego, California, where I came from, public skateparks were plentiful and skateboarding was considered a positive physical outlet when done in the right places. After opening up Homebase610 Skateshop in 2002, I made it a personal mission to open Bethlehem's first public skatepark.

After the more than 10-year process of advocating, petitioning, designing, and working with the City of Bethlehem, Phase 1 of the Bethlehem Skateplaza opened to the public in 2010. Phase 2 was added in 2012 with a large grant from the Keystone Fund, making the park one of the largest public skate facilities in the



**Keystone Fund Investment:** \$185,000

**Total Public/Private Investment:** \$1.5 million

northeast. We will be starting community fundraising for Phase 3 in 2017 in hopes of completing our vision.

For me personally, having the "ZA" means my friends and I longer have to run from the authorities just for doing what we

love. And that's probably for the best, as I approach my late thirties. It's been great seeing people who stopped skating after they started their careers and families and couldn't afford to get arrested for skating now back on their boards at the Skateplaza. Some even come with their kids who are just beginning to skate as well. I'm very thankful that the City of Bethlehem finally saw that it was better to encourage the act of skateboarding properly instead of blindly treating a whole demographic of individuals as criminals.

**Learn more at [KeystoneFund.org](http://KeystoneFund.org).**

Now that the community's eyes have been opened to the positive impact of the Bethlehem Skateplaza, we have been able to start after-school skate programs with elementary and middle schools in the area. The classes are designed to help kids learn the basics of skateboarding in a less intimidating environment so they can fully enjoy the Skateplaza, which helps keeps them active instead just sitting inside playing video games.

If you ever have a chance to visit the Bethlehem Skateplaza, you will witness the definition of a diverse community. Even though skateboarding naturally is something you do on your own, it has a communal aspect that breaks down barriers of race, socio-economic status, and age. There's an unspoken camaraderie for anyone out there pushing themselves, falling down and getting back up to try again. You know that respect is there because when someone finally rolls away from the trick they've been battling for, everyone cheers.

I will be eternally thankful to the City of Bethlehem and all the supporters for believing in the Bethlehem Skateplaza.

**[Learn more at KeystoneFund.org.](https://www.KeystoneFund.org)**