

Paulina de Haan
Community Coordinator
Near South side of Milwaukee

Mid-Year Report

The following report summarizes the Community Coordinator's activities in Milwaukee Police District Two with respect to the Safe Streets Initiative.

Since the start of 2008, 128 contacts have been made with a variety of resource providers, community leaders and faith-based organizations for the purpose of building relationships with those in the community. These connections facilitate better resource coordination for recently released offenders returning to the near South side of Milwaukee, which is a major portion of the Safe Streets Initiative. Now that the project has been active for almost one year, the total number of new contacts continues to drop because of strengthening relationships being developed with contacts already made.

Since 2008, 15 events have been sponsored by the Safe Streets Initiative in the near South side of Milwaukee that includes participation of over 100 students, families, and resource providers. The objective of these events is to educate community residents, providers, parents, and children about gang violence affecting their neighborhoods, as well as facilitate more effective relationships with law enforcement and the communities they serve. All events are made possible through extensive collaboration with the Milwaukee Police Department, Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, Milwaukee County Supervisor's Office, Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department, and a variety of community-based organizations. These events can include presentations on gang activity to parents and resource providers, circles with at-risk youth and law enforcement, and field trips to the county jail and courthouse for elementary students.

The Community Coordinator participated in another 13 events that occurred throughout the City, either as a representative of the Safe Streets Initiative or as a presenter on gangs and crime specific to the South side of Milwaukee.

To date there have been six notification sessions conducted in District Two that included a total of 23 offenders and 74 community and resource providers. Targeting gang-affiliated offenders living on the South side with extensive violent criminal records, notification sessions offer an opportunity for law enforcement and the community to send the same message that violent crime cannot be tolerated, and provide support for the offenders' success in reintegrating back into the community. Implemented using the philosophy of talking circles, notification sessions offer a safe and respectful place for dialogue about the impact of violence in order to begin the initial steps in repairing the harm inflicted by these offenders to neighborhoods on the South side of the City of Milwaukee.

At one such session, a police officer told a story about how he encountered an aggressive young man during a routine call. This young man proceeded to berate the officer with profanity and accusations of harassment. The officer responded, asking this young man, "Don't you remember me?" The young man shrugged off his comment and continued to antagonize the officer. The officer said, "I saved your life a few months back. You were shot in the leg and bleeding profusely. I risked my life when I stuck my hand inside your flesh to stop the bleeding. I used my shirt to tie your leg." The young man stood there

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and did not respond. The officer asked in frustration, “Am I not going to get at least a thank you?” The young man’s friends were all shocked and pressed him to thank the officer, but he still refused. The officer, addressing the offenders at the notification session, then said, “Even though you don’t like me or in fact hate me, I will always come to your aid because I took an oath to protect all people.” While the officer told his story, some of the offenders in the circle shook their heads in disbelief. Having a safe place to share impactful stories allowed for two inherently adverse groups to share a common understanding of human compassion.

Another notification session involving an offender, who was released from prison for armed robbery, included three victims of armed robbery. The victims attended so they could share their personal stories of how they were affected as a result of the crime they experienced. One of the victims told his story of how, when he was robbed, the worst part of the traumatic event was after the perpetrators left, when he had to pick up his wife’s picture from the ground of a dirty alley. He said at that moment he felt as though he had been raped. Along with the three other victims, other participants shared their stories of violence as well as motivation to the offender to succeed in finding employment and becoming an active member of the community.

Working to develop better relationship with resource providers, law enforcement and community, the role of Community Coordinator is to build trust and communication between a variety of agencies in order to better serve communities in need.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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