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Stop the Violence

Start Something

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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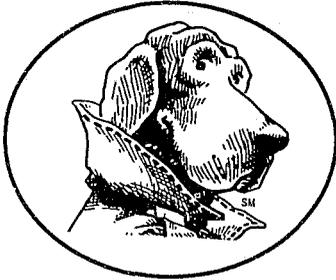
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The National Crime Prevention Council is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization whose mission is to enable people to prevent crime and build safer, more caring communities. Contributions are welcomed and are tax deductible. NCPC is located at 1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor, Washington, DC 20006-3817. Phone: 202-466-6272.

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STOP THE VIOLENCE START SOMETHING

Every 17 seconds, a violent crime — murder, rape, robbery or assault — is reported to police somewhere in this country. And fewer than half the violent crimes that take place actually get reported. Nationally, more than 5,000 children are victims of violent crime each day. Somebody's child. Maybe a child you love.

These may be the facts now, but they don't have to be the future. People in even the toughest circumstances have turned the tables on violent crime and created safer neighborhoods and schools. You can, too, by protecting yourself and your children and getting involved in your community.

We found out we could actually change things, and it felt good.

COMMUNITY RESIDENT, NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

The Escalante Neighborhood Association worked with the Tempe, Arizona, police department to retake its park from drug dealers and users who threatened kids. After intense police patrols and organized community activities, the park — now safe — is used by children and families.

The Church Hill neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia, had experienced three murders, two rapes, and 134 burglaries in one year. One resident decided enough was enough. She organized the Church Hill Crime Watch, combining Neighborhood Watch basics with a neighbor-to-neighbor telephone network and a monthly newsletter to spur action and sustain communication. The Watch flourished. Two years later: no murders, no rapes, and only 20 burglaries.

An Ypsilanti, Michigan, woman decided that she had to do something when she found out that drug dealers were hiding drugs in her bushes. By going door to door in the neighborhood, she found other families worried about the violence, school drop-out rates, and youths' low self-esteem that contributed to the drug problem. The group set out to create positive alternatives to drugs and crime that, with persistence, not only drove drug dealers away but won the enthusiastic support of youth.

In Kansas City, a coalition of 60 organizations is devoted to preventing violence. Activities of member groups range from working with school children to aiding dysfunctional families, from helping prisoners change their life paths to educating the entire community against child abuse.

MUCH VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE



Violence ruins individual lives, tears apart the fabric of our communities, and makes costs of police and emergency care soar.

Many calls to 911 can be traced back to signs of trouble, trouble that was allowed to continue: the rape that could have been prevented by better street lights; the domestic violence that could have been deterred by family counselling; a child brutally bullied who could have been protected by a block parent; a rash of burglaries that could have been prevented by an active neighborhood watch program; gang violence that could have been prevented by caring adults and by job and educational opportunities; graffiti that could have been curbed by teams of teens involved in community clean-ups.

Things change for the better when anger and outrage turn to action, when despair is replaced with determination, and when you and your neighbors realize that every step forward — no matter how small — counts. Things may not get better overnight — but they *can* get better.

Creating a community that will not tolerate violent crime means bringing together vision (a clear image of what you want your neighborhood to be), energy (people ready to roll up their sleeves), confidence (a belief in your ability to make a difference), and commitment (a willingness to work together and to keep working hard toward your goal, even if it takes a while).

They stand out there in the rain selling drugs. Are we willing to stand out in the rain to get our community back?

COMMUNITY RESIDENT, NEW YORK CITY

You need to reduce your family's risk of being crime victims. But if you stop there, you and they are trapped inside a fortress with tightly restricted activities. In order to go to work, attend school or church, or get together with friends, you need a neighborhood — not just a home — that's secure against crime. Your goal must be to build a strong community in which kids can be kids and adults feel free to participate in neighborhood activities.

LOTS OF CAUSES, LOTS OF CURES

Experts agree that there are a number of sources of violence: gangs, racism, family and personal stress, lack of opportunities, alcohol and other drug abuse, easy access to weapons, and lack of support networks of family, friends and neighbors.

Stopping violent crime can mean working on one or more of these problems, depending on the situation in your neighborhood. There is something each of us can — and must — do. Educating others about self-protection, forming community action groups, working to strengthen troubled families and helping youth in crisis, seeking to improve job and educational opportunities, preventing drug abuse — each of these chips away at violent crime.

WHAT CAN I DO?

To start off, here are specific ways to start to stop the violence. Some can be done right away. Others take time. Some don't require any help, while others require advice or help from local or national groups. Most cost little or nothing. Let's start with what you can teach kids.

The question is, after we get the drug dealers out, what kind of community do we want?

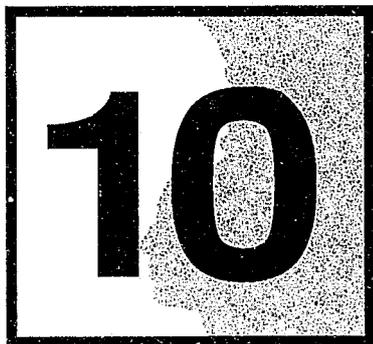
RESIDENT OF PUBLIC HOUSING, CHICAGO

Volunteers in Des Moines, Iowa, combat violence by combatting one cause — lack of employment. A group of concerned residents created The Urban Dreams program, which provides ten hours of job search and job readiness training to help young people land jobs.

In the Northwest Bronx area of New York City, residents joined together and helped organize police and other city officials to close down a full-scale drug operation that was operating out of one large apartment building. But the residents went beyond getting rid of the dealers to get funds to rehabilitate the building and turn it into safe, affordable housing.

A Detroit, Michigan, woman, after her son was shot to death in a dispute, channeled her grief into action. She created Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD), a violence prevention and grief support group that already has chapters in two other cities. SOSAD focuses attention on anti-violence education for parents and children, on positive activities for youth, and on helping those who have lost a loved one to violence cope effectively with their grief. But its aim is its name — saving the community's sons and daughters.

Citizens for Safety in Boston, Massachusetts, was launched when concerned community leaders and youth came together to reduce street violence. Now the partnership operates four task forces concerned with police and criminal justice issues, media access and awareness issues, youth and family resources, and neighborhood empowerment.



TEN THINGS TO TEACH KIDS

Settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons. Don't stand around and form an audience when others are arguing. A group makes a good target for violence.

Learn safe routes for walking in the neighborhood, and know good places to seek help. Trust feelings, and if there's a sense of danger, get away fast.

Report any crimes or suspicious actions to the police, school authorities, and parents. Be willing to testify if needed.

Don't open the door to anyone you don't know and trust.

Never go anywhere with someone you don't know and trust.

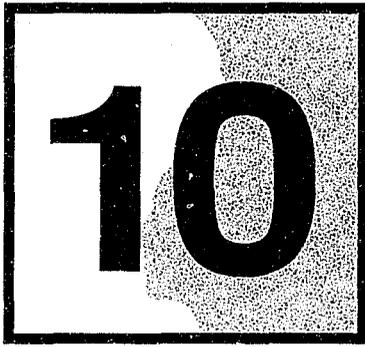
If someone tries to abuse you, say no, get away, and tell a trusted adult. Remember, it's not the victim's fault.

Don't use alcohol or other drugs, and stay away from places and people associated with them.

Stick with friends who are also against violence and drugs, and stay away from known trouble spots.

Get involved to make school safer and better — having poster contests against violence, holding anti-drug rallies, counseling peers, settling disputes peacefully. If there's no program, help start one!

Help younger children learn to avoid being crime victims. Set a good example, and volunteer to help with community efforts to stop crime.



TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO

Teach children how to reduce their risk of being victims of violent crime. Insist on knowing at all times where your kids are, what they are doing, and who they are with.

Get involved. Volunteer to help in community and neighborhood anti-crime and other community improvement efforts. Encourage groups you belong to — religious, civic, social — to help stop crime.

Use common-sense tips to reduce your risk of being a crime victim. Stay in well lighted, busy areas; travel with a friend if possible; walk in a confident, assured way. Avoid known trouble spots.

Report crimes and suspicious activities to police; agree to testify when necessary. Stand up for what you believe in if you want a safe community.

Get to know your neighbors and agree to look out for each other. Get organized; work with the police.

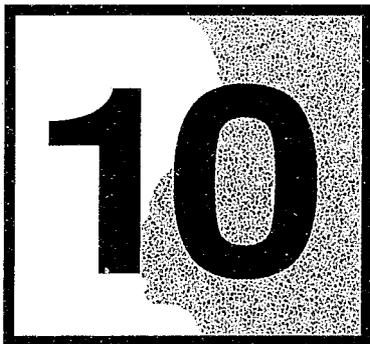
Find ways to settle arguments without violence. If you resort to violence to settle disputes, this is what you will teach your child. Be a good role model.

Use common courtesy. It helps ease tensions that can lead to violence. Teach your kids that good manners are important.

Don't carry a weapon. You lose, whether you use it or it's used on you.

Don't support illegal activities, like buying stolen property or using illegal drugs. It's the wrong message to send a child, and it involves you in criminal activity.

Volunteer your home as a reliable source of help for kids who are scared or need assistance.



TEN THINGS YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS CAN DO

Work with public agencies and other organizations — neighborhood-based or community-wide — on solving common problems. Don't be shy about letting them know what your community needs.

Make sure that all the youth in the neighborhood have positive ways to spend their spare time, through organized recreation, tutoring programs, part-time work, and volunteer opportunities.

Set up a Neighborhood Watch or a community patrol, working with police. Make sure your streets and homes are well lighted.

Build a partnership with police, focused on solving problems instead of reacting to crises. Make it possible for neighbors to report suspicious activity or crimes without fear of retaliation.

Take advantage of "safety in numbers" to hold rallies, marches, and other group activities to show you're determined to drive out crime and drugs.

Clean up the neighborhood! Involve everyone — teens, children, senior citizens. Graffiti, litter, abandoned cars, and run-down buildings tell criminals that you don't care about where you live or each other. Call the city public works department and ask for help in cleaning up.

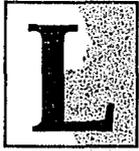
Ask local officials to use new ways to get criminals out of your building or neighborhood. These include enforcing anti-noise laws, housing codes, health and fire codes, anti-nuisance laws, and drug-free clauses in rental leases.

Form a Court Watch to help support victims and witnesses and to see that criminals get fairly punished.

Work with schools to establish drug-free, gun-free zones; work with recreation officials to do the same for parks.

Develop and share a phone list of local organizations that can provide counseling, job training, guidance, and other services that neighbors might need.

THERE'S HELP NEARBY— LOOK AROUND YOU



Locally, police and sheriffs' departments have staffs trained in ways to prevent crime. They're an excellent resource, because they know your community best. Local drug prevention groups and public health agencies have learned that preventing drug abuse also requires preventing crime and improving community well-being.

Many states have offices also working with local crime prevention efforts; there are state associations that help form networks of those working to prevent violent and other crime. Check with your state public safety department and other state resources like public health and drug abuse prevention departments for help.

OTHER GROUPS THAT CAN HELP YOU STOP THE VIOLENCE

The groups listed below are national organizations that are willing to provide helpful materials at low or no cost. Many have local offices or chapters in or near your community. These twelve groups are an excellent sample; there are many more organizations that offer help. *(listed alphabetically)*

American Association of Retired Persons, Criminal Justice Services, 601 E Street, NW, Building B, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20049. Provides educational and audio-visual programs on subjects such as residential burglary, fraud and con games, crime prevention, victim/witness issues, and mediation to help older people reduce their risks of crime victimization; works to involve older persons as volunteers in the criminal justice system. Training for law enforcement officers on process of aging, how to communicate with older persons, and volunteer augmentation of law enforcement agencies with older or retired volunteers.

Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 611 Rockville Pike, Suite 230, Rockville, MD 20852. A national, nonprofit youth organization providing support services to 1,240 Boys & Girls Club facilities that help over 1.6 million young people connect with opportunities for personal growth and achievement. The only major nationwide youth agency with a primary mission of service to girls and boys from disadvantaged circumstances.

Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1225 Eye Street, NW, Suite 1150, Washington, DC 20005. Provides educational materials and programs aimed at adults and children on preventing gun deaths and injuries. Information about children and gun violence, firearm homicide, suicide and unintentional shootings, violence in schools, black-on-black violence, and conflict resolution.

Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice, 5550 Friendship Boulevard, Suite 330, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. Assists communities to resolve conflicts relating to discriminatory practices based on race, color, or national origin. Mediates disputes and provides training and technical assistance in conflict resolution techniques. Offices in 13 locations across the country.

National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, 332 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60604. Chapters in all 50 states; 120,000 community volunteers work to stop child abuse before it happens. Write for a catalog of low-cost materials and a list of local chapters.

National Crime Prevention Council, 1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor, Washington, DC 20006-3817. Offers wide range of assistance in community crime and drug abuse prevention: training and technical assistance to policy makers, practitioners, community groups, churches, schools, and youth groups; wide variety of educational materials including reproducible materials; most comprehensive listing of local crime prevention programs in the nation; locally based demonstration programs as learning labs for effective community prevention strategies; national public education campaign featuring McGruff the Crime Dog.

National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, 31 South Greene Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. Provides research, education, training, technical assistance; collects, analyzes, publishes, and distributes materials and information on public policy, human and civil rights issues, reducing intergroup conflict, and programs on preventing and responding to ethnoviolence — violence and intimidation based on race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

National Institute for Dispute Resolution, 1901 L Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036. Works to enhance the understanding, acceptance, and development of a spectrum of tools to resolve conflict, including mediation, arbitration, and negotiation. Among current grant programs and initiatives: Mediation in Schools, Community-Based Dispute Resolution Centers, Court-Based Dispute Resolution Programs, and Statewide Offices of Mediation.

National McGruff House Network, 1879 South Main, Suite 180, Salt Lake City, UT 84115. National headquarters for McGruff House programs, which are established locally as a partnership among law enforcement, schools, and community organizations to provide reliable sources of help for children (and others) in frightening or emergency situations. The motto of McGruff House is "We'll Call for Help"; program safeguards include law enforcement records check on all adult participants.

National Organization for Victim Assistance, 1757 Park Road, NW, Washington, DC 20010. Offers information, referral, and advocacy services for crime victims and their helpers; provides training programs for victim assistance and related professionals; promotes public support for victim rights and services. Among recent initiatives: helping community groups and criminal justice agencies respond effectively to victims of drug-related crime; fielding teams of volunteer crisis counselors to help in the aftermath of a community-wide disaster. Write for membership information and a publications list.

National School Safety Center, 4165 Thousand Oaks Boulevard, Suite 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362. Sponsored by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, focuses on school crime prevention throughout the country. Special emphasis placed on efforts to rid schools of crime, violence, and drugs, and on programs to improve student discipline, attendance, achievement, and school climate. Provides technical assistance and training programs; produces training films, and publishes *School Safety* news journal.

National Urban League, Inc., Stop the Violence Clearinghouse, 500 East 62nd Street, New York, NY 10021. Collects, evaluates, and supports research, curricula, model programs, training and techniques that provide effective violence and crime prevention services to African American youth, their families, and communities. The national organization works with Urban League affiliates and other interested community-based organizations through demonstration grants, technical assistance, and training seminars.