



Violence-Free Zone Initiative MILWAUKEE FACT SHEET

THE VFZ PROGRAM:

The Violence-Free Zone initiative was created by the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) to address youth violence in schools and communities. The VFZ is directed by CNE, and is implemented by community-based organizations at each location. CNE's Milwaukee community partners are the Latino Community Center (LCC) and the Running Rebels Community Organization (RRCO).

THE SCHOOLS:

In Milwaukee, the Latino Community Center leads the VFZ at South Division High School. Running Rebels Community Organization leads the VFZ at Marshall High School. The two organizations work together to implement the VFZ program at Bay View, Custer, and Washington High Schools.

WHY IT IS UNIQUE:

The Violence-Free Zone approach is unique in that it utilizes young adults from the same neighborhoods and backgrounds as students in the schools. Called Youth Advisors, they are able to prevent violence, resolve conflicts, and motivate students to responsible behavior. Because they have faced and overcome the same challenges, they receive the students' trust and confidences. They serve as role models that individuals can overcome their environments, and confiding in them is not regarded as snitching.

HOW IT WORKS:

The Center for Neighborhood Enterprise provides overall direction and management of the VFZ initiative. The community-based organizations (Latino Community Center and Running Rebels Community Organization in Milwaukee) hire, screen, train, and supervise the Youth Advisors at each school. The Youth Advisors act as hall and cafeteria monitors, mentors, counselors, and role models, and establish trust relationships with the students. In addition, teachers assign groups of high risk students to the Youth Advisors, who meet with them at lunch or other times to discuss and work out the issues that trouble them. The Youth Advisors report to and support the school administration and teachers and assist them in every way they can. Both Milwaukee community-based organizations also offer after-school, weekend, and summer programs, creating 24-7 relationships with young people.

HOW MANY:

There are up to seven (7) Youth Advisors assigned to each school, including a Supervisor.

OTHER SITES:

In addition to the Milwaukee Public Schools, Violence-Free Zones are successfully reducing youth violence in Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Milwaukee, and Washington, DC, in a total of 22 schools.

FUNDING:

The total budget for five schools is \$1,572,000. Milwaukee Public Schools system has awarded \$900,000 to Center for Neighborhood Enterprise to implement the Violence-Free Zone initiative in five schools. Milwaukee foundations have donated \$420,000. They include the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, Jane Bradley Petit Foundation, Argosy Foundation, Elizabeth Brinn Foundation, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation, and the Marshall and Ilsley Foundation. Other grant requests are pending. Other supplementary after-school and summer programs are supported by private sector donations.

THE ORGANIZATIONS:

Center For Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE):

The Center for Neighborhood Enterprise is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1981 by Robert L. Woodson, Sr. CNE's mission is to transform individuals, schools, and troubled communities from the inside out. To achieve its goals CNE employs a four-pronged approach: 1) Identify effective leaders of neighborhood organizations who have existing programs that are compatible with CNE's mission and who have the trust of community residents; 2) Provide training and technical assistance to help those organizations build capacity, by strengthening their organizational infrastructure; 3) Link them to outside resources, and 4) Measure their impact and recommend public policies to facilitate their efforts and remove unnecessary regulatory barriers. CNE has provided training and technical assistance to more than 2,000 leaders of faith-based and community organizations and has affiliates in 39 states. Over the 26 years of its existence, the organization has expended about \$30 million and leveraged more than \$300 million for grassroots organizations in its network. The Center has a major focus on reducing youth violence with its Violence-Free Zone initiative, currently underway in 22 schools in Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Milwaukee, Washington, DC, and Prince George's County, MD.

CNE's Milwaukee VFZ Community Partners

Latino Community Center (LCC):

Since its founding in 1999, the Latino Community Center has grown from one small after-school program to ten fully-developed programs serving more than 500 community members of all ages. Unique in the city of Milwaukee, Violence-Free Zone street outreach and gang prevention workers go out on the streets where the kids are in the afternoon and evening when activity is greatest. LCC also uses hip-hop and other culturally specific references to draw youth into its building, where they are then connected to fun and safe academic, recreational, social, and cultural activities. Director Ramon Candelaria and other staff members come from the same neighborhood LCC serves. LCC has substantially reduced suspensions and increased safety in South Division High School, where LCC has been implementing the VFZ for the past two years, supported by private funding raised by the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. For the school year 2007-2008, LCC will implement the VFZ in South Division High School, and partner with Running Rebels Community Organization in Bay View, Custer, and Washington High Schools.

Running Rebels Community Organization (RRCO):

Running Rebels was founded in 1980 by Victor Barnett, who serves as Executive Director. Located in the central city, it is a nonprofit committed to helping youth develop mentally, physically, and spiritually. The agency serves more than 1,000 children from the ages of 10-18, most of whom live in the central city and range in age from 10-15. Most are referred through the court system and have had serious problems in family, school, and community. Most of the 60 paid staff (part and full-time) members are minority members, as are the volunteer Board of Directors. Programs include mentoring, basketball, entrepreneurship, and music. The Running Rebels Community Organization has been implementing the VFZ approach in Marshall High School for the past year, supported by private funding raised by CNE. RRCO will continue to implement the VFZ in Marshall High School in 2007-2008, and partner with the Latino Community Center in Bay View, Custer, and Washington High Schools.