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November 20, 2006

Violence-Free Zone Initiative FACT SHEET

THE 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. East Capitol Center for Change implements the sites at Bladensburg and Largo High Schools in Prince George's County, and Kelly Miller Middle School in Washington, DC.

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. Because they have faced and overcome the same challenges, they receive the students' trust and confidences. Schools implementing the VFZ have been able to reduce security staff as a result.

HOW IT WORKS:

The Youth Advisors act as hall and cafeteria monitors, mentors, counselors, and role models, and establish trust relationships with the students. In many schools, 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 are employed, trained, and supervised onsite by the East Capitol Center for Change. However, the Youth Advisors report to and support the school administration and teachers and assist them in every way they can. East Capitol Center for Change also offers after-school, weekend, and summer programs, creating 24-7 relationships with young people.

HOW MANY:

There are five (5) Youth Advisors assigned to each school, including a Supervisor.

OTHER SITES:

In addition to the Prince George's County schools, Violence-Free Zones are successfully reducing youth violence in Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Milwaukee, and Washington, DC, for a total of 21 schools.

CENTER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD ENTERPRISE:

The Center was founded in 1981 by Robert L. Woodson, Sr., to assist residents of low-income neighborhoods address the problems of their communities. CNE has provided training and technical assistance to more than 2000 leaders of community-based organizations throughout the nation.

EAST CAPITOL CENTER FOR CHANGE:

Founded in 1996 by Curtis Watkins, a former resident of East Capitol Dwellings who also attended Bladensburg High School, East Capitol Center for Change provides multiple programs for children, youth, and families. In addition to Bladensburg and Largo High Schools, ECC also is implementing the Violence-Free Zone initiative in Kelly Miller Middle School in Washington, DC.

FUNDING:

The Prince George's County Public Schools system has contracted with the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise and East Capitol Center for Change for the Violence-Free Zone initiative in the two schools. Other supplementary after-school and summer programs are supported by private sector donations.