

NEWSLETTER

Violence Prevention Council Coordinator (VPCC)

March 2024

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VPCC Program Overview

In July of 2023, Kingdom Church International was honored by the State of Illinois to be designated as the Violence Prevention Council Coordinator (VPCC) for the Chicago Heights Cluster which includes Chicago Heights, Park Forest, and Sauk Village. Our role as the VPCC under the Office of Firearm & Violence Prevention (OFVP) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is to encourage effective, collaborative working relationships across providers in areas like violence prevention, mental health, and youth development. This is an effort to build consensus around community priorities and resource needs related to reducing firearm violence and increasing public safety.

This role has allowed us the opportunity to increase our network of partnerships and serve our community in a greater capacity. We want this newsletter to serve as a place to highlight various initiatives, feature some of our accomplishments, and showcase the impact they are having on our community.

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NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

~ Community Cafe, Sept. 9, 2023

On September 9, 2023, we were excited to host the very first Community Cafe for the Park Forest & Richton Park Neighborhood Network (PRNN) at our Empowerment Center. This informative empowerment event introduced various community programs and services to the participants and included the facilitator conducting a community needs assessment.



Community Cafe



Community Cafe



Man Cave



(l to r - Randall White, Johna Stephenson, Kelly Jones, Stephanie Thompson, Mayor Joseph Woods, Cherise Williams, Kelly Evans, Pastor John, Mya Hardy, Tiffani Graham, Pastor Kisia)

Attendees included the mayor and Village trustees of Park Forest, and residents from both Villages. We were honored to have the opportunity to introduce our role as the VPCC for the Chicago Heights Cluster and collect data from those interested in receiving future collaboration and updates on our gun violence prevention program.

~ Man Cave Christmas, Dec. 15, 2023

Our Man Cave Christmas event centered around a time of empowerment and encouragement in the areas of mental health, family, and issues specific to men. Flyers were distributed throughout the community. The men not only received Christmas gifts but a load of inspiration as they were heard, helped, and honored. There was a reception and a panel discussion with anonymous and open questions from the men. The night was hosted by the M.O.D.D. (Men of Destiny & Dominion) Squad of Kingdom Church International on behalf of our men's and boys' mentoring program, *Welcome to the Hood - Fatherhood, Manhood & Boyz in the Hood*. The discussion was facilitated by Chaplain Eric Ashby and Dr. D. John Coleman.

~ Bringing Joy to the Community - Christmas Toys for Girls & Boys Giveaway



Over 600 toys, 350 Bombas™ socks, and dozens of gift bags with new household items were distributed to families from the community who signed up and came to the giveaway. We also distributed toys to some of the students at one of our local high schools. In total, approximately 183 families and 452 children and Youth were blessed with toys and gifts distributed at our Empowerment Center in Park Forest, Illinois. (Pictured above are just some of the giveaway toys.)



*(Bringing Joy to the Community
Christmas Gift Recipients)*

~ Community Stakeholders Holiday Breakfast- Honoring Those Who Serve, Sacrifice & Help the Southland Soar, Dec. 19, 2023

This event was hosted on December 19, 2023 by Kingdom Church International at our Empowerment Center on behalf of our VPCC program. We were honored to have *Congresswoman Robin Kelly* as our keynote speaker on gun violence prevention and legislation.



(l to r - Police Chief D. Cook, Pastors Kisia & John, Deputy Police Chief R. Owens)



Congresswoman Robin Kelly received an *Empowered Person Empowerment Award* as a result of her efforts to rally national action to help prevent violent crime in cities and towns across the country especially as it relates to gun violence. Her Gun Violence Prevention Progress includes: The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act which is her first significant gun violence prevention progress in the past 30 years. This legislation includes her work to prevent gun trafficking. This law will help keep illegal guns off our streets and make our communities safer by prohibiting interstate gun trafficking and straw purchasing. More than 60 percent of guns used in crimes in Chicago are trafficked from out of state. Additionally, gun violence is a threat to our public health, and communities across America. This bill makes investments of \$250 million in community violence intervention programs and expands mental health and supportive services in schools.

Other Gun Violence Prevention legislation Congresswoman Robin Kelly is working on that was highlighted at the Community Stakeholders Breakfast includes:

- **Creating Pathways for Youth Employment Act**
 - This bill directs the Department of Labor to award grants, on a competitive basis, to assist states, local governments, and Indian tribes or community-based organizations in providing subsidized summer and year-round employment opportunities to certain at-risk youth who are no younger than 14 or older than 24, and unemployed.



(Congresswoman Robin Kelly, Pastor Kisia Coleman, VPCC Program Coordinator)



(Attendees enjoying our Stakeholders Breakfast)

Kelly Gun Violence Prevention legislation continued...

- **Helping to Encourage Real Opportunities (HERO) for Youth Act**
 - This bill modifies the work opportunity tax credit to:
 - Expand the credit for summer youth employees who will be employed 20 hours per week (or less) during any period between September 16th and April 30 in which the youth employee is attending any secondary school.
 - Increases the amount of the credit for youth employees, and
 - Expands the credit to include disconnected youth.

- **H.R. 6225 The Federal Firearm Licensee Act**

- This bill would strengthen language and modernize the way gun dealers obtain a federal firearm license. This legislation also requires firearm dealers to report any lost or stolen merchandise and gives the ATF the ability to conduct annual inventory audits.

- **H.R. 882 Keeping Guns from High-Risk Individuals Act**

- This bill expands the categories of persons who are prohibited from shipping, transporting, receiving, or possessing firearms or ammunition. Specifically, this bill adds the following parameters for prohibited persons:
 - Individuals convicted of a crime of violence in the most recent 10-year period
 - Individuals under age who have been adjudicated as having committed an offense that would have been a crime of violence if committed by an adult
 - Individuals convicted during a consecutive 3-year period in the most recent 10-year period, of two separate offenses involving drug or alcohol possession or distribution or
 - Individuals convicted of stalking

- **H.R.881 - To require the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service to submit to Congress an annual report on the effects of gun violence on public health**

- This bill requires the Surgeon General to report annually to Congress on the public health effects of gun violence and the status of actions taken to address those effects.

- **H.R. 880 Firearm Safety Act of 2021**

- This bill allows the Consumer Product Safety Commission to issue safety standards for firearms and firearm components.

Congresswoman Kelly sponsored H.R.6639, the Protect Children Through Safe Gun Ownership Act. This act requires adequate supervision before a juvenile can possess a firearm, to require the safe storage of firearms, and for other purposes. She is requesting support from her constituents as she has submitted funding requests for important community projects to the House Committee on Appropriations that would invest in gun violence prevention. She has also requested a \$750 million investment in community violence intervention funding (robinkelly.house.gov).

In addition to Congresswoman Kelly, other attendees as well as awardees represented community residents, a myriad of businesses, non-profits, and social and government entities. Various officials including detectives and sergeants from the Park Forest Police Department, the Chief and Deputy Chief of Richton Park Police Department, Nickolas Allen (Senator Patrick Joyce's Chief of Staff), Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller, Mayor Joseph Woods, Rich Township Supervisor Calvin Jordan, Cook County Director for Community Engagement with United Way of Metro Chicago Monique Shelton, Village Clerk of Sauk Village Marva Campbell-Pruitt, representatives from Rich Township School Districts 227 and 167, Big Brothers Big Sisters Regional Director Brenda Boyd, Jaclin Davis, Executive Director of Southland Juvenile Justice Council, and other Chicago Heights VPCC cluster organizations.

~ Big Brothers Big Sisters Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, Jan. 11, 2024



(caption explained below)

Pastor Kisia was honored to be one of the speakers at the *Big Brothers Big Sisters Southland Ribbon Cutting Ceremony* where attendees included NBC Five Chicago, (l to r) Pastor Kisia, Mia Carter, Senator Napoleon B Harris III, Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller, Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck the Chief Operating Officer of the Cook County Department of Public Health, Director Brenda Boyd, CEO Jeremy Foster, State Representative Debbie Meyers-Martin, and Lynwood Police Chief Gregory Thomas.

Congratulations to Southland Regional Director, Brenda Boyd (pictured below far-right) for her tireless work in getting this wonderful program to our communities so that we can match more children with caring mentors!

Joliet Township Ribbon Cutting Ceremony,

Jan. 17, 2024

Congratulations to Joliet Township on their Ribbon Cutting Ceremony (below and lower left) for their new Violence Prevention location, *The Ozzie & Peggy Mitchell Center*.

The Joliet Township's Violence Prevention Team has set a precedence in the city of Joliet, Will County, and the state of Illinois using exemplary strategies, programming, and outreach that has never been done in that city before. Their team assists victims of the most egregious firearm violence incidents. They assist with funeral arrangements, bereavement care, food, shelter, victim compensation, and all direct wrap-around services.

Some of Kingdom Church International's Violence Prevention team members along with our Technical Assistants and VPCC associates from around the State were present and excited to be a part of such a momentous occasion.

Thanks to LeShae Hudson, the Violence Prevention Council Coordinator for all the hard work she is doing and for inviting us to be a part of this momentous occasion.



(Pastor Kisia Coleman & Brenda Boyd, Big Brothers Big Sisters Southland Regional Director)



(l to r - Kari Branham, IDHS/OFVP, Gigi Moore, Prevention First TTA, Pastor Kisia, LeShae Hudson, Joliet Township VPCC, Angel Contreras, Joliet Township Supervisor, Rachel Jacoby, Lake County State's Attorney VP Specialist)

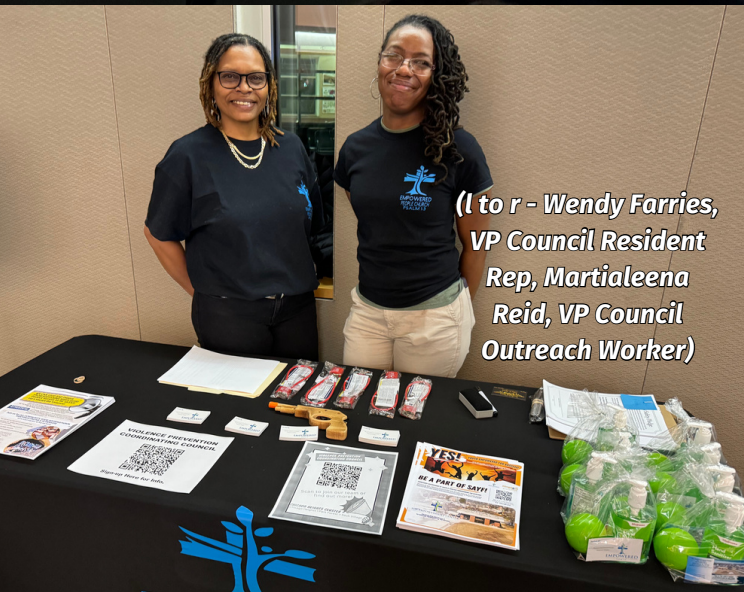
~ Restorative Justice Forum - Sauk Village, Jan. 30, 2024

On January 30th, our Violence Prevention team sponsored a table complete with surveys, gun violence-related information, and our *Gun Violence Prevention Spin the Wheel* game at the Sauk Village Town Hall meeting. The meeting was hosted by Mayor Derrick Burgess, Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller, and Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County Timothy Evans to present information and answer questions from the community about the proposed Restorative Justice Community Court. Pastor Kisia was on the agenda to speak and inform attendees of our Violence Prevention Coordinating Council and the efforts being made to mitigate gun violence through our programs and services. A few weeks later, the Sauk Village Board of Trustees approved the court at their February meeting. It will be the only Restorative Justice Community Court outside of Chicago in our region.



The purpose of the court is to empower our communities by creating solutions for young adults between the ages of 18 and 26 who have committed nonviolent crimes. This process keeps them from getting a criminal record but instead takes them through the restorative process where ultimately they can be exonerated of their crimes.

They will be required to make atonement to those impacted by their behavior, whether it is another person or the community. Candidates for the Court cannot have a violent criminal history; they have to be willing to accept responsibility for the harm that they have caused; and they must participate in restorative activities like group peace circles.



~ Hands Only CPR Training, Feb. 7, 2024



To better serve our community, on Wednesday, February 7th, some of our staff and volunteers had an opportunity to slip away from our regular work day for a few hours to brush up on our “life-saving” skills with free Hands Only CPR Training from the Sauk Village Fire Department hosted by Commissioner Donna Miller. Thanks to Fire Chief Stephen Barrett who did an excellent job in keeping us engaged and informed.



(l to r back - Fire Chief Barrett, Sadie Fells & Martialeena Reid, VPCC Staff, Pastor John Coleman, Community Organizer, l to r front - Commissioner Miller, Pastor Kisia)

~ Man Cave & a Movie Event, Feb. 9, 2024



Pastor John along with the M.O.D.D. (Men of Destiny & Dominion) Squad hosted a “Man Cave and a Movie” night featuring “Man Cave Conversations” afterward. A couple dozen men joined in the fellowship including representatives from In Tandem Workforce Inc. and Integrity & Fidelity Inc. violence prevention organizations. These men are the “boots on the ground” outreach workers who mainly serve the Chicago Heights area. The event was focused on “Manhood, Fatherhood and Identity.” They wrapped the evening up by sharing encouraging words with each other and then closing out in a circle with positive declarations.



Representatives from In Tandem Workforce and I & F, Inc. Violence Prevention Programs, and Kingdom Church's M.O.D.D. Squad.

**SIGN UP TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT OUR VPCC:**

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Call 708-252-DOIT
info@trykci.org**

