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2013 NATIONAL SUMMIT

Third Annual Summit on Preventing Youth Violence a Huge Success

Perhaps Virginia Congressman Bobby Scott best captured the spirit of the Third Annual Summit on Preventing Youth Violence on September 26–27, 2013, in Arlington, Va., with his reading of the poem "The Fence or the Ambulance," by Joseph Malines. This ode to the need for prevention asks the simple question, "Is it not better to stop people from falling off the cliff rather than rushing them to the hospital after they are injured?" Its significance was echoed in many of the presentations made by speakers at the Summit.

The theme of the conference, "Building Towards a Safe and Healthy Tomorrow," was captured by Robert L. Listenbee, Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, who said "The common framework that we have worked so hard to develop was very well-received. Participants now understand the importance of also promoting child and youth well-being and using this framework across multiple systems to produce positive outcomes for children, youth, and families."

Gretchen Musicant, Health Department Commissioner of Minneapolis, Minn., was moved by Congressman Scott's reading of the poem, saying "It related to the work we do with the Forum." She appreciated the different cities' youth-oriented ways of describing their work, including, "The more you know, the more you owe."

The Summit brought together 375 people from the 10 Forum cities, 13 Defending Childhood Initiative grantees, 15 Community-Based Violence Prevention Program grantees, and three Striving To Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE) grantees, as well as many other interested state, local, and federal participants.

If prevention was the theme of the conference, collaboration and partnerships were the background music. Wanda Moore, a member of the Camden, N.J., Forum team and Director of the New Jersey Office of Community Justice, valued the convening of grantees for the "prevention focus it brought to the Summit."

HOW ART HEALS: A PORTRAIT OF BROTHERLY LOVE



We Rise! © 2013 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program
Josh Sarantitis; Photo by Steve Weinik

"Art heals, art unites, and art changes minds in a convincing fashion. Art drives the agenda. Great art is never silent, can't be ignored, and serves poorly the status quo." —City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program

In Philadelphia, murals are more than works of art. They are bold exhibits of the truth and

resilience that result when creativity goes beyond inspiration and self-expression to truly heal people and communities.

On October 21, 2013, Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason and Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter visited the Mural Arts Program's Guild, which supports former inmates reentering society and at-risk youth by teaching job attainment and retention skills. Mayor Nutter praised the Guild while Assistant Attorney General Mason noted Philadelphia's participation in the National Forum effort. "Mayor Nutter and civic and neighborhood leaders here have been wonderful partners in this work," she said, which was documented in an OJP [Facebook post](#). "They are showing what a difference strong local leadership, supported at the federal level, can make. And they're demonstrating the benefits of bringing together all groups with a stake in the safety of our youth—law enforcement, educators, community and faith-based organizations, health professionals, businesses and philanthropies, citizens, and, of course, young people themselves."

Nearly 30 years ago, a young artist from New Jersey led the 6-week anti-graffiti project that eventually became the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program—one of the most well-known and successful public art projects in the country. Jane Golden was the visionary who saw Philadelphia's artistic potential. Under her direction, the Mural Arts Program has created more than 3,600 public works of art, collaborating with agencies and organizations of all kinds to restore city neighborhoods while giving young people a chance to break the cycle of crime and violence.

Through award-winning art education programs and a partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services, Mural Arts serves 1,800 youth every year. Mural making is the artistic means through which young people learn life and job skills and build connections to their communities. The initiative also extends to local prisons and rehabilitation centers and offers opportunities for those recently released from prison.

Three programs in particular, Art Education, Porch Light, and Restorative Justice, share a goal to promote the well-being and positive outcomes of young people.

Art Education's efforts, including Foundations+Innovations, Emerging Muralists, and Restorative Justice Youth, are geared toward at-risk youth. Participants ages 10 to 22 are taught practical skills through conceptualization, design, and creation of large-scale murals and public art projects. The young people involved in the program are benefitting in many ways, especially with improved self-esteem, confidence,

The act of bringing together invested groups that have similar goals is a constructive way to enhance cooperation and partnership. San Jose Forum Site Coordinator Mario Maciel said it was "great seeing the new cities in comparison to the old ... no matter where the city is, large or small, we all have the same issues."

Chris Gunther, Forum Coordinator from New Orleans, La., echoed Mario's comments: "It's always surprising, although intuitive, that we are all dealing with the same issues and challenges even though we are different cities. At the end of the day, the challenges we all face are very similar."

It's clear our cities and problems are not as unique as we think they are. Although the politics or processes in strategic planning may vary, Forum sites have clearly developed the confidence to apply data-driven, best-practice solutions to prevention, intervention, law enforcement, and reentry. We may take different approaches, but the principles applied to these solutions are getting more consistent as we share experiences and information. Julie Wertheimer, Forum Coordinator for Philadelphia, Pa., discussed the difficulties Philadelphia successfully navigated in its strategic planning process and how reinvigorated the team was as a result of the Summit. "We found out we were already doing some things other Forum sites were just starting to do, and it made us feel good as we were on the same path as others." But the Philadelphia team was also exposed to new information, such as the presentation on Purpose Built Communities, a program that resonated with the city because it simply had not yet surfaced in their strategic planning process and made such good sense. Michelle Fowlkes, Executive Director of the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission, and Julie Wertheimer also expressed a desire to visit other Forum cities to learn how they are dealing with prevention and explore the potential for collaboration and effective partnerships.

Overall, Summit participants found the event inspiring and many said they were moved by Equal Justice Initiative Executive Director Bryan Stevenson's presentation at the end of day one. He stressed the need to change the narrative of youth who get involved in the juvenile justice system. "They have an expectation that they will be incarcerated or dead by age 21. They should be seen as 'super-victims' rather than 'super-predators.'" He said working in prevention is difficult, but essential. "You will have bruises and cuts when you're trying to make a difference. It is an exhausting and challenging undertaking, but it is a worthy one." Stevenson's closing remarks were a motivational highlight for all attendees.

While most participants were eager to replace the ambulance with prevention strategies, data-driven best practices, and stronger partnerships, there was the understanding that such a transition would take time, effort, and careful consideration. Becoming solely proactive—as opposed to reactive—in the fight against youth violence may soon be a reality. At any rate, after 2 days at the Summit, it was clear we know more today about dealing with violence than ever before.

Note: A special edition of the Forum newsletter will review Summit presentations and reinforce their valuable lessons.

and stronger relationships as they become connected to a broader community of citizens and artists.

The Porch Light Program engages 10- to 18-year-olds who are involved in social or behavioral health programs and services, and strives to improve health outcomes, reduce stigma, and increase the use of behavioral health services. To enhance resilience and recovery, youth practice social skills, self-expression, and abstract thinking. Participants have gained greater self-esteem, self-confidence, and hope for the future as they take pride in giving back to the community. While it does not focus specifically on crime reduction, Porch Light is working closely with the Yale School of Medicine to assess the health-related impact of its programs on people and communities.

According to a 15-state study, 66 percent of ex-offenders return to prison within 3 years of their release (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994; 2002). Through 2011, only 10 percent of reentry workers employed by Mural Arts reoffended within a year of their release. Michael Whittington, a program participant who spent 5 years in prison for a crime he committed as a teenager, now mentors at-risk youth and other former inmates involved with the Guild. His story was told by [Philly.com](#) in October.

Restorative Justice emphasizes "healing" and involves the victim, offender, and community in the process. Through weekly programs and opportunities for involvement, Mural Arts provides art instruction to more than 300 inmates and 200 juveniles every year. Participants learn new skills and make positive contributions with murals and community service work.

There is a growing body of evidence on the practice and efficacy of art therapy. Outcome studies show positive changes in trauma reduction, self-esteem, self-control, ability to function in a social environment, and recidivism. *Art Making as a Component and Facilitator of Resiliency with Homeless Youth* (2008) used quantitative (n = 212) and qualitative (n = 3) measures to examine creativity and art production with respect to resiliency among homeless youth at a drop-in art center. Quantitative methods identified a strong correlation between individuals' engagement in creative activity and achievement. In a [study](#) conducted among urban African American female adolescents, group members took part in expressive activities intended to expose them to new experiences and increase their confidence and awareness of personal strengths and talents. Qualitative results revealed the group therapy helped the girls with emotional exploration, increasing self-esteem and decreasing anxiety. Initiatives like [Alternative](#)

NEWS & VIEWS

Reports

New Directions in Child Abuse and Neglect Research

The National Academies' Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2013

In a newly released [report](#), the Institute of Medicine examines research findings on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect and the effectiveness of intervention programs.

Child Welfare Outcomes 2008–2011: Report to Congress

Children's Bureau, 2013

Outcome measures used in this [report](#) on child protection and child welfare program performance focus on seven categories, including children's safety and care, overall well-being, and the permanency of family and living situations.

News

'Smart on Crime' Initiative

[Ceasefire Detroit](#), a new effort announced by Attorney General Eric Holder, will focus on violent crime prevention. Ceasefire will cover the Detroit Police Department's Eastern District and work to reduce gang violence. What makes the program unique is the street group members, who describe the consequences of neighborhood violence and help end violent crime.

Menino's Investment in Summer Jobs

Mayor Thomas Menino has long championed [summer jobs for youth](#). Every year, Boston reserves several million dollars of the city's \$2.6 billion annual budget. But Mayor Menino also allots state and federal dollars to help place teens in positions at a range of nonprofits throughout the city. Over 20 years, he has put about \$150 million into government funding and created more than 200,000 summer jobs.

Other Resources

[Changing Course: Preventing Gang Membership](#) will help practitioners and policymakers make decisions to prevent kids from joining gangs. Based on best available evidence, the book examines why youth are attracted to gangs as well as key child development issues and prevention strategies.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network has released six [online briefs](#) discussing key elements of a trauma-informed juvenile justice system. Topics include current issues and new directions for creating trauma-informed systems, assessment and interventions, family engagement, and reducing racial disparities within the system.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has updated its [Statistical Briefing Book](#) (SBB). SBB offers access to numerous juvenile justice resources, with data analysis tools for creating custom evaluations of juvenile populations, arrests, court cases, and residential placement.

Solutions for Youth and **Y.O.U.R. Community Center** also incorporate art therapy in programs for pre-adjudicated, adjudicated, and foster care youth and violence and drug use prevention.

"Art saves lives" is Jane Golden's personal mantra—a philosophy that is best reflected at 701 North Broad Street, where *We Rise! Children, Trauma, and Resilience* depicts the light and hope of youth who have faced true adversity. *We Rise!* acknowledges that young people's experience of and involvement with violence leaves a lasting impact. The art does not diminish the gravity of trauma but recognizes the resilience that propels young people forward. Participants and viewers are seen as survivors, not victims.

With art making, storytelling, and a great vision for design, *We Rise!* aims to renew the sense of hope missing from communities and change the perception of who is truly being victimized in communities. In the process, generational changes that affect society—increased gun violence, bullying, and domestic violence—are uncovered while protective factors that help people move away from adversity gain visibility.

This article was written with assistance from Amy R. Johnston, Information and Events Specialist, City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

Training Opportunities

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges has opened registration for the **Family Law Institute for Judges and Lawyers**, March 2–5, 2014, in Monterey, California. The institute will offer attendees information and tools to improve case processing and outcomes for victims, youth, and families.

Contact Us

Send questions or feedback about the newsletter to NFYVP@dsgonline.com or [subscribe](#).

In "**Stories of Change Among Justice-Involved American Indian Youth from the Cross-Site Evaluation of OJJDP's Tribal Green Reentry Program**," youth, parents, and program staff share their perspectives on what helps justice-involved American Indian youth reduce or end their involvement in the tribal juvenile justice system.

"**Highlights of the 2011 National Youth Gang Survey**" is a fact sheet with findings from the National Youth Gang Survey, which collects data from a large representative sample of local law enforcement agencies to track the size and scope of the problem.

The **Juvenile Justice Resource Hub** provides information on juvenile justice issues and trends. The Hub recently added a section on community-based alternatives for justice system-involved youth.

A recent **study** explored whether financial harm associated with intimate partner violence (IPV) begins as early as adolescence. With longitudinal data from a sample of 498 women currently or formerly receiving welfare, researchers used latent growth curve modeling to examine relationships between adolescent IPV, educational attainment, and women's earnings. They found women who had been victimized by a partner during adolescence attained less education compared with non-victimized women, with victimization indirectly influencing women's earnings via educational attainment.

For more than 10 years, the Education Development Center's National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention has worked with communities and schools to implement systemic change for children, youth, and families. The **3 Bold Steps toolkit** is a collaborative and easy-to-understand resource that offers proven strategies for creating safe schools and healthy communities.

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