

YMCA, MN Safe Streets partnership announced

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Al Flowers

The YMCA is partnering with Minnesota Safe Streets, a community-based organization focused on providing boots on the ground and coordinating efforts with local law enforcement agencies, to reduce violence and create safe, thriving neighborhoods.

The new partnership was announced Thursday morning at a press conference at the Northside YMCA facility on West Broadway.

The Y and Minnesota Safe Streets partnership focuses on four key strategies to create a safer Twin Cities:

- Collaborate with law enforcement
- Build partnerships with cross section of neighborhoods
- Improve job and economic opportunities
- Elevate and illuminate clear community standards that protect and respect all in the community

Minnesota Safe Streets is a Collective Impact Network that mobilizes community assets to overcome the violence that threatens to upend lives and destroy neighborhoods, said YMCA of the North president Glen Gunderson. “We believe that the best solutions to the problems we face are those that are imagined, developed, and implemented by those who are closest to the situation. We also believe that most of the solutions needed to solve most of the community’s problems have already been conceptualized, and that the real challenge we face is finding an effective way to coordinate and resource these efforts.”

The network will focus its efforts on young African American men and women who live in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Most of the young people served will be between the ages of 15 and 35. In addition, the program will work with the families and close acquaintances of program participants ensuring that the whole community has the chance to heal and be made whole, organizers

said at the press conference.

The initiative will pay particular interest to challenges emerging out of the Derek Chauvin trial for the murder of George Floyd.

Network partners said the press conference formalized introducing the collective impact network, around a common agenda, shared outcomes and expectations, and a clear process of accountability.

They announced that the network will recruit and train 30 Navigators and supervisory staff for deployment at strategically important locations in the metro area.

The initiative will feature a community-based communications strategy to highlight the broad range of stakeholders from law enforcement, to businesses, to local government, and neighborhood organizations.

Specific activities related to the Chauvin trial include:

- Creation of Critical Incident Response Teams for rapid deployment following the eruption of violence in the metro area.
- Establishing a visible and continuous presence in the community through the deployment of 30 Navigators.
- Maintaining a process for delivering accurate information to the community related to the trial and how it is impacting the community.

The YMCA of the North said its partnership with Minnesota Safe Streets, provides for boots on the ground and coordinating efforts with local law enforcement agencies will seek to reduce violence and create safe, thriving neighborhoods.

"Minnesota Safe Streets is committed to the development of a collective impact network that will deploy the power of our community-based organizations in a collaborative effort to overcome the violence that continues to threaten our people," said Al Flowers of Minnesota Safe Streets.

"The best solutions are always those that are developed and delivered as close to the community as possible, by people who have already established trust and respect with those they will serve. We are confident that with sufficient support and resources, Minnesota Safe Streets will impact neighborhoods, transform lives, and create the kind of community we all want and deserve for ourselves and our children; a community devoid of violence and full of opportunity," Flowers said.

"The YMCA is committed to making our communities safe for everyone," said Gunderson, "With Minnesota Safe Streets, we believe positive outcomes of reducing violence, providing access to resources and restoring hope are possible."

Flowers maintains that violence can only be discouraged when people are encouraged to want more for themselves and their families. The Minnesota Safe Streets initiative will develop a strong network of service providers that can help clients improve their lives and make a stronger future for themselves. He said Safe Streets will help identify the resources that are available to support the people and walk with them as they continue their education, learn new job skills, receive the counseling and therapy they need to be healthy, find affordable housing, and stabilize their lives. Any organization or program in the community that provides support and services that our people will need are welcome to join the network, Flowers said.

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Flowers said Minnesota Safe Streets is also committed to developing a repository of accurate information related to community violence, policing, community-engagement, racial justice, and other critical issues of the day. “We recognize that there is so much inaccurate and misleading information circulating in the community, and we want to become recognized as a place where people can go to get a balanced and coherent perspective on what is happening in the community, he said.

In addition, Flowers said, Minnesota Safe Streets will be intentional about providing opportunities for the community to express its concerns and opinions in constructive ways, and for their voice to be heard by those in positions of power and influence.

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About the YMCA of the North

The YMCA of the North is a leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Established 165 years ago, the Ys provide life-strengthening services across the greater Twin Cities metro region, southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin communities. The 29 Y locations and program sites, eight overnight camps, 10 day camps, and more than 90 child care sites engage more than 370,000 men, women and children of all ages, incomes and backgrounds. To learn more about the Y’s mission and work, visit www.ymcanorth.org.

About Minnesota Safe Streets

Minnesota Safe Streets is a Collective Impact Network that mobilizes community assets to overcome the violence that threatens to upend lives and destroy neighborhoods. Minnesota Safe Streets maintains that community originated solutions require effective coordination and resourcing.