

RICHMOND ROTARY PEACE PROJECT
Meeting notes, 7/9/08 (rev.)

Project objective is simply to help reduce gun violence. (MH)

Individual statements of interest/concern

- Many Rotary members want to contribute more than money or their money-raising ability. They have their skills, opportunities drawn from their businesses, their intellects. (MH)
- Education about gun safety should be presented in the primary schools. Programs that teach anger management can also be very effective long-term. These problems start early in childhood. There are many illegal guns on the street and RPD seizes 600-700 yearly. (EJ)
- Whatever we do should have a measurable effect, not be merely symbolic. Partner with organizations that already have experience. Don't need to reinvent the wheel. (ND)
- We should contribute to greater dialog among organizations that are all involved in violence reductions in the city. Our project can also initiate a dialogue about the persistent problems of race relations. (JB)
- Elementary school education programs like the ones we discussed should involve Rotary members in the classroom, not just as funders. (MM)
- We need to distinguish between projects aimed at "the quick fix" (e.g., for helping parolees) and those that tackle the long-term, big picture issues (e.g., work in the primary schools). (RM)
- Roots of problem are lack of economic opportunity. Summer jobs programs effective, and some families live off this meager income. Other sources of income are welfare, prostitution, and sale of drugs. (CM)
- We need to develop a project that the Rotary is able and willing to sustain long-term. (TW)

OPTIONS

1. After looking closer at research that confirmed initial impressions, and after an interview with Glenn Daggs, many of us concluded that GBB programs are not effective in reducing gun violence. Unless someone in our group lobbies for it, that option is now off the table.

2. Programs based on conflict mediation and street-level outreach have been effective; measurable, dramatic reductions in number of shootings. They depend on

- trained interveners (aka change-agents, interrupters, peace-keepers) for street-level outreach
- coordination with agencies for delivery of services (e.g., jobs training, education, counseling)
- public education, mobilization (Tent City?)
- faith leader involvement
- police participation

The Chicago and Boston CeaseFire programs are models. To learn more about how the programs work, see www.ceasefirechicago.org

3. Richmond's Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS) is developing a violence prevention program based on the CeaseFire model. The City has made a 5-year commitment to this program, and has funded the first year. Devone Boggan, its director, is raising money to expand its capacity, and feels confident that funding will continue.

WHAT CAN THE RICHMOND ROTARY DO?

Although the Rotary is comprised of business people, some of whom can employ or train at-risk youth, Devone says the people his program works with are not ready for the level of commitment that business placements would require. Not yet.

Cheryl suggests that the Rotary consider funding the expansion of an existing program that is either under-funded or could easily accommodate more clients. Three examples:

Parole and Community Together (PAC)

About 100 parolees return to Richmond every month. The PAC program works with these people to help them avoid returning to jail (with jobs, training, counseling) . The program is now failing because, as currently funded, it can help only a small fraction of those who could use this help.

Summer Jobs for Youth Program

Very important source of revenue for families of these youths, as for the youth themselves. Employers can handle only 1 or 2 at a time because in larger groups they are tough to keep on track.

Positive Minds Group

A preparation program. Teaches what we call “middle class values” that help young people develop motivation for schools, to get education, job training, etc. Uses trained facilitators. This program works but Opportunity West could host another weekly session for another group, at a cost of \$25k.

Mark suggested that another option is **job shadowing**. This gives middle school kids a close-up view of different workplaces. (Rotary members are principals in many different kinds of workplace environments.)

Cheryl outlined another approach that could be effective: write an RFP, narrowly targeted to objectives linked to violence prevention; fund it to the level the Rotary can manage. Review proposals from qualified agencies with good track record, choose one, monitor results.

NOT DISCUSSED

Should we organize an event to coincide with the Pt Richmond Business Association FunRun on October 25th? Margaret suggested a picnic to acknowledge the support of contributors to the Richmond Rotary Peace Project. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, July 23rd. 8-9AM, Opportunity West (Nevin Community Center)

Comments after meeting adjourned

Nick notes contrast between a project that essentially funded experts to do the work (like Cheryl's suggestions) and one in which Rotarians take a more hands-on role (like job shadowing, or programs at Peres School). Margaret felt we could do both.

Rafael's distinction between a long-term and a quick-fix approach—should also make us ask whether we *can* do both, or whether we're more likely to be successful by choosing one or the other.

