

Violence Reduction Initiative Forum #3

December 2, 2013 | CFCC Union Station Building

The forum was a collaboration between UNC Wilmington (Chancellor Gary L. Miller), Cape Fear Community College (President Ted Spring), and the City of Wilmington / New Hanover County representatives. The evening featured a keynote speaker (Kenneth Griffin) and three panelists: Dr. Tim Markley (NHCS Superintendent), Jeff Hovis (Wilmington Housing Authority Board Chair) and Honorable Judge James H. Faison III (District Court Judge for New Hanover and Pender Counties).

The evening started off by addressing how education, housing and the judicial system can help alleviate the problems associated with violence within our communities. Panelists discussed the importance of linking our local institutions with available resources to help address this issue, as well as the need to fully develop an understanding of the underlying problems, challenges and strategies to make us safer.

Keynote speaker Kenneth Griffin mentioned that we all need to come together and take ownership of these problems because 78% of community challenges come from misunderstandings. Don't talk about how bad it is if you're not going show up to the dance. Mr. Griffin then asked members in the audience to address two items: Challenges to reducing violence and solutions to improving the situations.

Challenges:

- Family communication
- Peer pressure
- Keeping youth engaged or active in church and sports (after school activities)
- Finding out what a person's *purpose* is (per Judge Faison)
- More involvement in education
- Communication to find resources
- Everyone is trying to do the same thing so reduce redundancy of efforts
- What resources do we have and how do we deliver them
- Not enough people volunteering in public housing areas
- Too much fragmentation of services/resources
- Changing the perception of our police departments (that they are not just around to arrest people)
- WRAAP funding is needed
- Need more adult support services

- Poverty (lack of jobs)
- Conflicting school policies
- Reducing the lack of collaborations among agencies
- Prioritizing funds, collaboration for grants
- Disconnect within our school systems (black male students and white middle class teachers)
- Policy level and government disconnect?
- Process for change takes such a long time
- Recruiting enough African American males to go into the teaching fields (need to make the field more enticing for this profession)
- Getting prominent role models to return to their communities after they venture off to college.
- Gangs providing “Now” solutions for “Now” problems. We aren’t offering smart Solutions or finding ways to have positive “Rock stars” in the violent neighborhoods
- Need to identify allocation of funds

Solutions:

- Need resource coalitions to encourage buy in from residents of the housing areas. What do they want or ask them what they need
- Address the behaviors and the reason for the behaviors
- Have forums that have actual “action items” so that the forum isn’t just a gathering of citizens
- Take ownership of the problems
- Take forums into the troubled communities, to bring together a common focus
- Use all available resources and offer them to target communities. If this is done, then people will tell you who needs the resources, it will help collaborate with all interested parties and not waste time
- People hate meetings with no action afterwards.
- Have interested kids spend time in court with Judge Faison
- United Way needs to turn in process map to ensure agencies are aligned with strategies and funding (federal initiative)
- Cape Fear literacy (Youth Action Coalition being revived)
- Affordable effective programs in the schools are necessary

- Model after the Durham programs – coordinator/case workers for after jail programs for juvenile offenders go straight to the neighborhoods to help.
- Dade County – collaborative grants, stronger grant being funded for collaborative efforts (usually federal) think long term and strategic
- Emphasis on preventive programs, support programs using faith based, community based where relationships are cultivated with various agencies
- Need more after school opportunities
- Need more volunteers in our schools (more than just the one time volunteer effort) where volunteers are there on a regular basis.
- Volunteer in schools at least four times to be successful
- Partner with private industry to be sustainable
- Hire more black male teachers, and if they are not available, find funds to recruit them.
- Need to change culture, smarter about rewarding students doing well in school.
- Condition for probation can be going to literacy or youth build or get GED etc.
- Change the paradigm by involvement in vocational training
- Put vocational training back in the high schools
- Just do it, don't just talk about it

General Comments:

- We need to be Proactive rather than Reactive
- Forums should be geographically located (in the heart of where the violence occurs)
- Housing resource coalition to have collaboration of resources, maybe have QENO coordinate
- WHA wanted to start after school program – NHCS already had program in place and they didn't know it.
- Need to change the perception that violence is only a Wilmington (City) problem. Important for schools to show what's outside their neighborhoods
- Additional law enforcement in schools creates lawlessness, teachers aren't disciplining the students, officers are which creates a "school to prison" pipeline
- Remember that what works in Raleigh or Charlotte doesn't always work here
- Why is attendance dropping? – People think no one is listening
- Vocational programs need to be back in the high schools and the Board of Education needs to know this.

- Team sports provide a good model for skills and behavior. Sports, band, ROTC and other engaging activities teach leadership as well as skills needed for career and college (this is critical to what schools do)
- Wilmington has a different set of resources than other areas. We have the water (river/ocean) so why aren't there more blacks involved in sailing, boat building, involved at yacht clubs etc.?
- Pair youth with similar people to support a connection for greater success
- Judge Faison developing program to send youth into things that interest them with professionals of like interests. Communicating that resources are available b/c many people don't know they exist.
- Don't be afraid, and fond others to get involved.