



## Engaged Colleges Are Central to Strong Communities

### Public Safety Initiatives Affect Many Aspects of Community Life

Creating safe neighborhoods involves more than simply arresting criminals. COPCs around the country are learning this concept as they help local residents reduce crime and make their streets more secure. Through a variety of COPC-supported programs, communities are reducing crime rates not only by stepping up enforcement activities when crimes occur but also by taking long-term approaches to crime prevention.

The most successful of these new programs fight crime indirectly. For example, some COPCs are helping young people learn basic confidence-building skills so they will choose to participate in positive, productive endeavors rather than gang- or drug-related activities. Other community-based initiatives are redesigning the physical environment of neighborhoods to reduce both the opportunity for and fear of crime. A growing number of locales are encouraging local police to get to know the people they serve and to play positive, community-building roles in their neighborhoods.

Initiatives such as these are having wide-reaching effects. A 3-year partnership between the Virginia Commonwealth University police department and Richmond's Carver neighborhood (featured in this issue of *COPC Central*) has significantly reduced the incidence of major crimes in the university's backyard. COPC-supported youth programs are helping a growing number of young participants improve their academic standing and engage in solving community problems. Community revitalization efforts are receiving a boost from COPC-supported initiatives that help residents

*Communities are reducing crime rates not only by stepping up enforcement activities...but also by taking long-term approaches to crime prevention.*

feel safe enough to participate in community life and also give business

owners the confidence they need to justify local investments. Like those business owners, colleges and universities are finding that successful public safety efforts are "good for business" because they help current and prospective faculty, staff, and students feel safer on and off campus.

COPC activities in the public safety arena are only one component of HUD's

*Continued on page 4*

### COPC ACTIVITIES PROMOTE PUBLIC SAFETY

COPC grantees perform a wide variety of activities to promote public safety and prevent violence in their communities. In particular, the University of West Florida, Barry University, the State University of New York at Cortland, Butler University, and the Medical College of Wisconsin are teaming up with community groups and university students to address issues such as youth-related crimes, domestic violence, and crime prevention.

- In an effort to decrease the incidence of crime in four Pensacola neighborhoods, the COPC at the **University of West Florida** is using a GIS-based database of reported crime and victimization to develop a prevention plan for the Belmont-Devilliers, Brownsville, Eastside, and Morris Court neighborhoods. Official crime statistics are entered into the database along with the residents' perception of crime and quality-of-life information obtained from a survey administered in the four neighborhoods. Based on this information, the COPC and its community partners will develop and deliver neighborhood-based workshops on crime prevention that will be coordinated with neighborhood watches and local enforcement and community policing efforts. For additional information, contact Dr. C.E. Wynn Teasley at (850) 434-5657, [cteasley@uwf.edu](mailto:cteasley@uwf.edu).
- **Barry University's** COPC will offer a series of violence-prevention seminars to the residents of the Gratigny neighborhood, which surrounds the university's Miami Shores, Florida, campus. The area, with an 82-percent Haitian population, has some of the most problematic family violence statistics in the country. Seminar participants will learn how to identify symptoms of family violence, what assistance is available to those who become victims of violence, and strategies to avoid and end violent encounters. The COPC will hold at least four seminars a year in both English and Haitian Creole and expects to serve more than 540 participants during the 3-year grant period. For additional information, contact Dr. Jacqueline B. Mondros at (305) 899-3908, [jmondros@mail.barry.edu](mailto:jmondros@mail.barry.edu).

*Continued on page 4*

## Making Cities Brighter Places To Live

COPC grantees and their community partners are implementing diverse and creative approaches to crime and violence prevention that combine the talents of diverse academic areas, including urban planning, criminology, social work, and architecture. One technique, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), uses proper design of the built environment to reduce the opportunity for, as well as the fear of, crime. The University of Memphis (UM) and Indiana University Northwest (Gary) are among COPC grantees putting this concept into action.

Strategies that exemplify CPTED involve minimizing the number of entry and exit points on a block, designing roadways to discourage through traffic, and maximizing residents' sight lines vis-à-vis public spaces by reducing the height of hedges and walls. CPTED efforts also include encouraging residents to use public spaces so there are more "eyes on the street" so there is a greater feeling of territorial ownership; providing appropriate lighting for streets, paths, alleys, and parks; and encouraging residents to watch out for one another. Both UM and Indiana University Northwest are implementing these approaches through strategic planning processes that integrate the universities' expertise and resources with the communities' self-identified needs.

With 118 homicides, 722 rapes, 4,048 aggravated assaults, and 4,172 robberies in 1998, crime is a serious problem in Memphis. The Greenlaw neighborhood, the focus of the UM COPC, handles the greatest number of police calls in the city each month.

As part of a larger effort to revitalize the Greenlaw neighborhood, government, developers, and residents have

agreed that physical features that are conducive to crime must be removed. According to UM COPC Director David Cox, the area suffers from abandoned homes, narrow pitted streets, isolated playgrounds, and highrise public housing complexes "with all of the familiar density problems." Using its COPC grant, UM and its community partners have developed a Suitable Living Environment initiative.

Faculty members with expertise in urban design will work with the community to examine alternative street designs, modifications to building structures, and different park configurations. "What we want to do," says Cox, "is treat crime as residents experience it and know it at the community level and then turn that into actual physical changes for the neighborhood." To begin the redesign, UM staff and community residents will collect data on locations of vacant and untended lots, abandoned properties, inoperable streetlights, and other instances of decay and disrepair. "This will be a community mapping exercise with Greenlaw residents," says Cox.

Coordination with other disciplines is CPTED's strength, and UM's organizational structure facilitates this type of coordination. The School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy houses the university's division of city and regional planning as well as other critical academic units for CPTED including social work, public administration, health administration, and criminology/criminal justice. Memphis' Weed and Seed program, administered by UM's department of criminology and criminal justice, will augment UM COPC's crime prevention effort. The "Seed" portion of this grant will supply funding for neighborhood cleanups and repairs. In combination, the two programs hope to

decrease the number of unmowed vacant lots by 40 percent and decrease the number of inoperable streetlights by 30 percent.

For CPTED to work, city governments must follow through after the design choices have been made. In Gary, Indiana, the COPC program is working to create case management teams that will methodically work to implement CPTED solutions once they have been identified.

Indiana University Northwest COPC Director Daniel Lowery explains how the city wants to address its crime and safety problems. The COPC will help them "focus a little bit more strategically on problems such as abandoned buildings, graffiti, and poor lighting." There will be bimonthly meetings at which city departments such as public works, code enforcement, parks, and police can come together with the local community development corporation and resident groups to brainstorm solutions to particular safety issues. A staff member from the COPC will serve as the group's secretary. The group will focus on three or four problems at a time, with COPC staff tracking the issues to ensure that they are addressed. "The point is to get city services to think of themselves collectively," says Lowery, "instead of as individual departments. I believe that the case management approach has some potential, and we're really excited about this."

For additional information, contact David Cox, Director, Center for Urban Research and Extension, University of Memphis, (901) 678-3365; or Daniel Lowery, Professor, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University Northwest, (219) 980-6847. ■

*COPC Central* is a free quarterly publication prepared by the University Partnerships Clearinghouse, the information service sponsored by HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP). *COPC Central* highlights the contributions of universities and colleges to local community revitalization efforts. You may contact the University Partnerships Clearinghouse at P.O. Box 6091, Rockville, MD 20849, (800) 245-2691, (fax) (301) 519-5767. See the Office of University Partnerships on the World Wide Web at <http://www.oup.org>.

## COPC Programs Help Keep Young People on the Right Track

The dozen adolescents who arrive at East Tennessee State University's (ETSU's) DIGILab each Thursday afternoon have no idea that Lab Director Susan Lachmann is primarily concerned with keeping them from taking drugs. They think it's "cool" to use the digital cameras Lachmann has purchased with funds from the Johnson City Housing Authority and the computers that are on loan from the university's COPC. They enjoy exploring the Johnson City community while photographing subjects and events that capture their imaginations. Likewise, they are thrilled by the attention they receive when those photographs are exhibited at the public library, featured in the media, or posted on their Web sites.



As an artist, Lachmann is having as much fun as her young charges. As an educator whose salary is paid jointly by the COPC and the Johnson City Housing Authority, she also takes seriously her lab's DIGI acronym, which stands for *Drug Intervention Gives Independence*. That is why she tries to instill in her young photographers a sense of personal responsibility, an appreciation of their own value,

and a commitment to their community. She hopes that these personal characteristics will help them make responsible choices throughout their lives.

"We're less likely to destroy the things that we value or to hurt the people who value us," she explains.

DIGILab is only one of many COPC-supported initiatives that attempts to give low-income, at-risk young people positive alternatives to negative behavior. Star Kids, a program sponsored by the COPC at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro (UNCG), combines community volunteer activities, multi-level mentoring, and leadership training to help address the social and emotional issues of at-risk young people living in the city of High Point.



Even-It-Up, another ETSU program for 12- to 18-year-olds, uses funds from Tennessee's Department of Human Services to help at-risk teenagers learn technology skills and develop self-confidence. Each student who completes the computer class assembles—and gets to keep—a computer that features the most up-to-date hardware available. Twenty-two teens have taken computers home since the

program began in March 2000; another 15 are currently enrolled in the class.

The COPC-supported Youth Empowerment Services program at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., is paying young people in two COPC target neighborhoods between \$5 and \$7 an hour to learn research techniques and conduct community-based studies. Guided by COPC community partners, eight high school students in the program's Youth Action Research Group (YARG) are working to fight gentrification in the city's Mt. Pleasant neighborhood. Another group of 10 middle school students has created a database of safe spaces where youth in the North Capital neighborhood can find recreation and relaxation.

"We're trying to reach young people where they are and provide them with the skills, support, and mentoring they need to become assets to the community," says Dr. Sam Marullo, a Georgetown sociology professor who helps supervise the groups.

For the most part, program directors are pleased with the results of their efforts. Lachmann says that her students have become more communicative and less combative since they arrived at DIGILab last June. Followup studies have shown that Even-It-Up participants have improved their grades and become involved in volunteer activities. All six graduating members of YARG received full scholarships that enabled them to go to college last fall, a feat that Marullo says is relatively unheard of in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood.

Why are these programs so successful? Lachmann believes that DIGILab fulfills youngsters' strong desire to "belong to something bigger than they are." Even-It-Up Director Anthony Adams theorizes that troubled teenagers receive a boost of life-transforming self-confidence when they accomplish goals, such as building a computer, that they thought were out of their

*Continued on page 4*



Continued from page 3

## COPC Programs Help Keep Young People on the Right Track

reach. More definitive answers as to what causes young people to choose or avoid negative behaviors should be forthcoming in 2 years when the Center for the Study of Social Issues (CSSI) at UNCG completes an action-research project funded by the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission. The project builds on COPC partnerships in High Point that CSSI has been developing since 1998.

CSSI-trained community residents will interview approximately 60 young people between the ages of 6 and 22 who have been involved in criminal activity or are at risk for such involve-

ment. Researchers will then analyze the data to identify issues related to family, school, peers, and the neighborhood that appear to play an influential role in either fostering or inhibiting violent behavior. At the same time, a case manager will work with each study participant to design an individualized intervention plan to help the young person make positive changes in his or her life. Prescribed interventions will involve the young person's family and informal support system as well as community agencies.

"I hope we can identify the factors that will get these young people back on

the right track," says CSSI Director Dr. Carol MacKinnon-Lewis. "Then we can work with High Point's Youth Violence Initiative to develop a relevant prevention strategy for young people throughout the community."

For additional information, contact DIGILab Coordinator Susan Lachmann at (423) 232-5743, lachmann@preferred.com; Even-It-Up Coordinator Anthony Adams at (423) 232-5758, youthtec@etsu.edu; Dr. Sam Marullo of Georgetown University at (202) 543-3179, marullos@gunet.georgetown.edu; and Dr. Carol MacKinnon-Lewis of UNCG at (336) 334-4423, cemackin@uncg.edu. ■

Continued from page 1

- The COPC at **State University of New York at Cortland** helps agencies learn more about crime patterns by placing student interns in various local government agencies responsible for crime prevention and public safety, including the probation and police departments. The students compile crime data from a series of hard-copy report formats and transfer the data into electronic form. They also develop a series of comprehensive and integrated reports describing local crime incidence, law enforcement strategies, and criminal justice activities. For additional information, contact Dr. Craig Little at (607) 753-2470, LITTLECS@snycorva.Cortland.edu.
- A one-time survey to gather information about people's perceptions of crime and safety will be carried out through the joint efforts of the Indianapolis Police Department (IPD) and the COPC at **Butler University** in Indiana. As many as six neighborhood volunteers will receive training in the use of survey techniques and software; then a trained research team, including IPD employees and local residents, will conduct the survey through telephone interviews and home visits. Police will use the results to bolster their relationships with the citizens they protect; they believe that a heightened awareness of where crimes take place will help individuals and groups create safer living environments. In addition, information concerning people's perceptions versus the reality of crime in a given neighborhood can be useful to property developers who shy away from areas reputed to be dangerous. For additional information, contact Dr. Margaret Brabant at (317) 940-9683, mbrabant@butler.edu.
- The **Medical College of Wisconsin's** Partners for Progress COPC will implement a Safe Communities program. The program's purpose is to bring public housing residents together to develop strategies to increase safety in their buildings and immediate neighborhoods. Through focus groups and resident organization meetings and discussions, residents from a majority of 14 public housing highrise buildings identified security and safety as a concern in their buildings. The Safe Communities program will provide a forum for residents to examine security and safety issues in their respective buildings and develop and implement resident-organized programs to address their needs. For additional information, contact Cheryl A. Maurana at (414) 456-8291, maurana@mcw.edu. ■

Continued from page 1

## Public Safety Initiatives Affect Community Life

ongoing commitment to reducing inner-city crime. Over the past decade, HUD-supported Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities have successfully used community policing, neighborhood/block watch groups, gang-prevention programs, counseling, job training, and increased security measures to achieve safer communities in which businesses want to invest. Since 1994 HUD has given public housing authorities the funds, technical assistance, legal authority, and local support they need to reduce drug use, increase police presence, and enhance the security of their buildings. As a result of these efforts, rates for violent and drug-related crime in public housing have decreased sharply in the past 5 years. For example, the overall crime rate in housing developments operated by the Greensboro, North Carolina, Housing Authority dropped 54 percent between 1995 and 1996. Chattanooga's public housing communities report an 88.9-percent drop in homicides and a 56.9-percent drop in robberies over the past 2 years. ■

## COPCs Help Neighbors Fight Crime, Spur Revitalization

Two COPC grantees are providing campus resources to help their neighbors combat crime. Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Mercer University have expanded the jurisdictions of their campus police and implemented programs with their community partners to prevent crime and encourage revitalization in the neighborhoods that surround their campuses.

When representatives of VCU met with the university's neighbors in the Carver community, residents indicated their priority was how to address crime. The community, which serves as the northern border of VCU's academic campus in Richmond, ranked highest in violent crime and second highest in property crimes in the city's third precinct. With high crime rates as well as the highest housing vacancy rate in the city, many Carver residents did not feel safe enough to sit on their front porches.

Community residents asked the 70-member VCU Police Department (VCUPD) to help them address crime issues. Residents felt that because of its proximity, VCUPD would be able to respond more quickly than the city's police department. After 18 months, VCU received judicial permission in September 1998 to obtain police jurisdiction over the Carver community. Using COPC funds and a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, VCUPD assigned four officers to the community and initiated regular bike and beat patrols in Carver.

VCUPD officers also have initiated other crime-prevention activities in the community. They have abandoned cars towed, notify the city's public works department about broken streetlights, and enforce laws against trespassing in abandoned buildings. VCUPD maintains regular communication with residents by having an officer attend monthly meetings of the Carver Area Civic Improvement League. In addition to their professional activities to improve the Carver community, the officers volunteer their time to organize

donations of school supplies in the fall and food and toys during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

VCUPD has initiated a partnership with the community's elementary school, developing relationships with students and teachers. Officers provide support to the school's crossing guards and patrol the school grounds. VCUPD also is improving the lives of Carver's senior citizens through its Adopt-a-Senior program. Officers check on senior residents on a weekly basis. To better serve the seniors, the officers received training from the university's gerontology department on identifying needs and connecting residents with social service resources. Officers also have collected fans and air conditioners for seniors' homes.

The partnership between VCUPD and the Carver neighborhood is succeeding. Since acquiring jurisdiction over Carver, the VCU community police and bike units have closed 8 open-air drug markets and made more than 50 drug- and weapons-related arrests in the community. From 1996 to 1999, incidence of major crime, including both violent and property crime, was down from 148 to 77. The 700 students and teachers at the community's elementary school report feeling safer since the inception of the partnership. Carver residents have indicated that the officers have improved the quality of life in their community. "The residents now feel comfortable sitting on their porches," says Catherine Howard, director of the Office of Community Programs, VCU's COPC. This reduction in crime and increasingly safe feelings by residents have led to an interest in revitalizing the community, exemplified by new construction of single-family homes and apartments.



Whereas VCU's goal was crime reduction, leading to neighborhood revitalization, Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, had a different approach. Part of the COPC program at Mercer is a comprehensive revitalization of the Central South neighborhood, located between the Mercer campus and downtown Macon. Central South residents and the Mercer COPC identified safety as a high priority for the community and as a prerequisite for redevelopment in the area.

In fall 1999, the COPC developed a strategic approach toward decreasing crime in the area that includes increased police visibility. The COPC also intends to expand the city's community policing initiative by encouraging communication between residents and the Mercer Police Department (MPD). The goal of Mercer's safety component is to change the perception and reality of crime for residents, according to Peter Brown, director of the Mercer Center for Community Development.

MPD officers used to pass by Central South to patrol the university's satellite buildings downtown. In fall 2000 they changed their routes to pass through the community five times each day in marked police cars. The patrols are not

*Continued on page 6*

Continued from page 5

## COPC Help Neighbors Fight Crime, Spur Revitalization

primarily for law enforcement but to prevent criminal activity and increase residents' sense of security through enhanced police visibility, explains Brown. MPD officers alert the Macon Police Department to anything that should be addressed. MPD coordinates its patrols with the city's police and recently purchased equipment that allows them to use the same secure radio frequency.

As part of its larger commitment to the neighborhood, Mercer also offers incentives to its staff and Macon Police Department officers to live in the Central South community. The incentive provides downpayment and closing-cost assistance for purchase of a new or redeveloped property. In partnership with the city of Macon, Mercer is currently redeveloping 100 housing units in the community and hopes that this will encourage officers

to move into the community. In addition to redeveloping property, Macon has demolished dilapidated, vacant houses as part of this public safety initiative. Mercer also is collaborating with the Police Athletic League to bring AmeriCorps cadets into the community to work with youth and neighborhood groups. The officer and the cadets will perform bicycle patrols, help with neighborhood cleanups, provide recreational services, and offer leadership training to youth.

For additional information, contact Catherine Howard, Director, Office of Community Programs at Virginia Commonwealth University, (804) 828-1831, [choward@vcu.edu](mailto:choward@vcu.edu); and Peter Brown, Director, Mercer Center for Community Development, Mercer University, (478) 301-5372, [brown\\_pc@mercer.edu](mailto:brown_pc@mercer.edu). ■

## ATTENTION COPC GRANTEES AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS!

Plan to attend your annual conference April 19-21, 2001, at the Denver Marriott Southeast.

Sessions will be included on:

- Race, Class, and COPCs.
- The Effectiveness of Partnerships.
- Working With the Academy.
- Building Stronger Neighborhood Organizations.
- Best Practices for Community Development Corporations.

There will be a special session for college presidents and community partners.

Additional information is available at <http://www.oup.org>.

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
HUD  
Permit No. G-795

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
University Partnerships Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 6091  
Rockville, MD 20849-6091  
Return Service Requested  
Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300