

CeaseFire NEWS

The Campaign to STOP the Shooting

An initiative of the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention

Gary Slutkin, M.D., Executive Director

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Faith-Based Leadership and CeaseFire

CeaseFire board chairman sees vital role for churches

As executive director of the Chicago-based Community Renewal Society, and with a strong background in civil rights, the Rev. Calvin Morris, Ph.D., is uniquely suited for his role as chairman of the CeaseFire Board of Directors.

CRS is a faith-based justice advocacy organization that focuses on issues of race and poverty. The group works with individuals, churches, and community organizations, primarily on the city's South and West sides, and provides leadership and training to empower communities to bring about change.

Morris also taught at the Howard University School of Divinity in Washington, D.C., for 16 years, spent six years at a Quaker School in Philadelphia, and worked with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Martin Luther King Center, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr.

"I come out of an experience professionally that sees the unique value of non-violence and conflict resolution," Morris said. "I certainly bring an awareness and commitment to violence prevention."

One of the ways CRS seeks to renew and empower communities is by providing training for community-based organizations. The training ranges from topics such as how to interview residents of the community to find out what issues they want addressed, to how to work with political leaders to implement change.

"It's a training that provides communities with the wherewithal to make the changes they want. The primary power

is with the people themselves," Morris said.

While the heart of CeaseFire is youth outreach and violence intervention, CRS and CeaseFire are similar in that they work with local churches and community organizations to empower



Rev. Calvin Morris, Ph.D., Chairman of the CeaseFire Board of Directors

communities. Another component of CeaseFire is community mobilization, which attempts to strengthen communities and allow them to respond to issues that affect them.

Sometimes the CRS and CeaseFire initiatives overlap

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The Rev. Robbie Jacquette scores big with "Holy Hoops" safe haven on the West Side

He calls it "Holy Hoops," and says "it's been a beautiful thing." That's the Rev. Robbie Jacquette talking about Friday nights at the Bethel Lutheran Church gym, which for nearly two years has been a CeaseFire safe haven on the West Side where young men can play basketball and maybe get some help.

Jacquette, a minister with Bethel Lutheran Church, has been volunteering his

time and working with CeaseFire outreach workers and volunteers in West Garfield Park to provide the safe haven. Some 50 to 60 young men typically show up for the session, which runs from 6-10 p.m. on Fridays.

"We try and have a good time with them, and at the same time try and find out their concerns, which are many," Jacquette said.

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About CeaseFire

CeaseFire, an initiative of the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention, partners with community-based organizations to develop and implement strategies to reduce and prevent violence, particularly shootings. CeaseFire uses outreach workers, clergy, and other community leaders to intervene in conflicts or potential conflicts and promote alternatives to violence.

CeaseFire Illinois is operating in 15 neighborhoods in Chicago and five sites in other Illinois communities.

Recent Highlights

In 2005:

- 42 outreach workers and 26 violence interrupters mediated 283 potentially violent conflicts in Chicago and 57 conflicts in other Illinois communities
- A 25% reduction in the number of killings throughout Chicago in 2004 was maintained during 2005

CeaseFire begins 2006 with:

- 58 outreach workers in 15 neighborhoods in Chicago
- 16 violence interrupters in Chicago
- 14 outreach workers in four Illinois communities outside Chicago
- 4 violence interrupters working outside Chicago

Rev. Morris continued from page 1

in communities. Target Area Development Corp. in the Auburn-Gresham neighborhood on the South Side is a CeaseFire community partner and an organization that CRS has worked closely with over the years and continues to mentor. "Target is our poster child," Morris said.

Violence prevention is an integral part of strengthening and empowering communities, Morris said. Economic development, education, and other opportunities in a community are stymied by violence. By working to end the shootings and killings, CeaseFire is playing an important role in bringing positive changes to communities, he said.

"I don't think any of those good things are going to happen until the killing stops," he said. "Businesses won't come in. You can't draw people to the community if the community is under siege. CeaseFire is a significant step in that direction, recognizing that communities can't thrive if those communities are racked by violence."

Morris said he sees violence as more than just a public health issue. He also sees it as a moral issue. And it is as a moral issue that he thinks faith-based leaders stand

out and have a role in helping to reduce violence in their communities.

"Our faith teaches us that God created us all for meaning and purpose in life. Everyone is an individual of value and worth. What religious institutions do at their best is affirm the wholeness that is a part of our human condition," he said.

In communities that are oppressed, or where broader society has communicated a message that they are not as valued as others, "there is less of a milieu that values the life of others," Morris said.

CeaseFire, by working in these communities, is affirming the worth of individual life and saying there are other ways of dealing with conflict, Morris said, adding that churches and faith-based leaders also have a role to play in that effort.

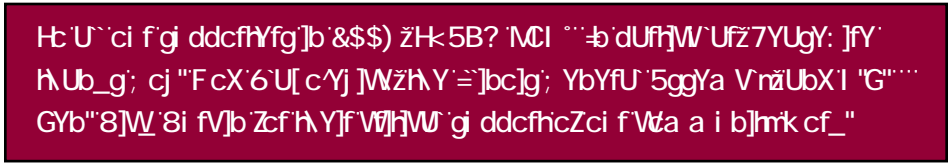
"In many CeaseFire communities," Morris said, "churches stand forth as the most stable and stabilizing institution in that community. They hold some level of respect."

CeaseFire has had success in getting clergy support, particularly for events such as marches and rallies, but more could be done, Morris said. "I think the challenge is to develop ongoing efforts that invite participation, not only of clergy themselves, but also of congregations and those the clergy and congregations serve."

He suggested that it would be beneficial to bring outreach workers and clergy together through such things as workshops or retreats so they could get to know each other better. By building closer personal relationships they could find better ways to work together for the common purpose of helping people in the neighborhood.

Calling them the "heart of CeaseFire," Morris praised the work of the outreach workers in reducing shootings and killings. He said there was far more demand for outreach workers in communities than CeaseFire has the resources to provide.

"I think the reduction in homicides and in the shootings could be enormously greater if we had more resources." >



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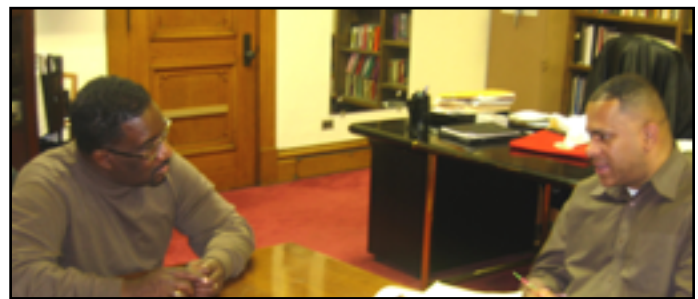
The Rev. Marshall Hatch, pastor of the New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church in West Garfield Park, will host a West Side clergy for CeaseFire event Feb. 23 at his church at 22 N. Kildare. Tio Hardiman, Director of Mediation Services for CeaseFire, said the gathering of faith-based leaders will focus on updating clergy on CeaseFire work and accomplishments and encourage them to lead responses to shootings in their neighborhoods and participate in other events.

Rev. Hatch was among 170 ministers to join the CeaseFire effort by signing the Covenant for Peace in Action in 1999, and he has worked with CeaseFire since it came to his community in 2000. Over the years Hatch has led community walks for peace, attended shooting responses and helped with outreach efforts.

Hatch also has his own church volunteers who do outreach and intervention

in an effort to reach people on the streets who are in the most need of help. His outreach naturally has more of an evangelical element to it than that of the CeaseFire workers, but he supports the CeaseFire efforts in the community, he said.

Hatch said it would be good for outreach workers to be connected in some way with churches and clergy in the community. Clergy could offer pastoral care and support for outreach workers who might be dealing with stress or other issues. Hatch posed the questions: "Do the workers ever get burned out doing what they do? Do they need spiritual support?"



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He suggested finding ways of bringing clergy and outreach workers together so they could establish relationships that would encourage outreach workers to seek out counseling and pastoral support for themselves and their clients. >

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