Gang Reduction and Intervention Task Force (GRIT)

Village Meeting Notes

May 18, 2022

Meeting started at Noon

Self-Introductions

WAY (Walk About Yakima) update by Sarah Augustine, Executive Director DRC.

* WAY is funded by Commerce Group Violence Intervention Strategies Grant and DCYF Gun Violence Prevention Grant
* Annually serves between 15-18 people at highest risk of being hurt or killed in gun violence, providing wrap around services and WAY mentors who are a significant presence, helping participants learn discipline
* Currently serving 10 participants, 3 of whom are adults
* Referrals come from law enforcement, primarily from the YPD, though the program has the capacity to take 2 self-referrals per year.

Guest Speaker: Chief Matt Murray, Yakima Police Department

* Mission: Reduce violent crime by partnering with community members. Crime is a community responsibility.
* Yakima has low self-esteem. Yakima thinks is a bad town, that people are mean, but crime is not as bad as community members think it is.
* Yakima crime keeps going down; it’s down 32% in the past 5 years.
* Yes, there’s violent crime and gang violence is a problem, but gang violence is not Yakima’s biggest problem; it’s domestic violence. And almost all gang members have a history of domestic violence as a victim or a witness.
* Swimming pools, basketball courts, and afterschool programs don’t keep kids from gang violence; they’re already too involved in gangs.
* YPD needs community organizations to collaborate because kids in trouble won’t talk to police, but they may talk to community partners such schools, OIC, the DRC WAY program.
* To be successful, Yakima needs to follow through with deterrence programs, not swing from one program to the next.
* Intensive wrap-around services can be successful.
* Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN)
  + Each of the 94 U.S. Attorney Districts in country are tasked with creating a Project Safe Neighborhood program somewhere in their district.
  + Not all PSN programs look the same, but they each have the goal of reducing violent crime.
    - Yakima follows the focused deterrence model as used by WAY and described in the book *Don't Shoot: One Man, A Street Fellowship, and the End of Violence in Inner-City America,* by David M. Kennedy. In this model, the people committing the crimes are identified; not everyone is treated the same.
* How Chief Murray sees the role of GRIT in within Project Safe Neighborhood
  + GRIT should be the community partner to get funding
  + GRIT should drive the conversation about what needs to happen in Yakima and should message it out
* Yakima needs to stop the negative self-talk.

How can the Village support the YPD?

* The Village membership needs to do the hard work of asking themselves: “How do we do a better job of working *with* other organizations and avoid being in competition especially when it comes to funding?”
* Suggestion: Go to the domestic violence coalition meeting to see how modeling it could help GRIT become more dynamic.
* Hold him (Chief Murray) and the county prosecutor accountable.

The meeting ended at 1:02

Notes submitted by Michelle Lee, DRC