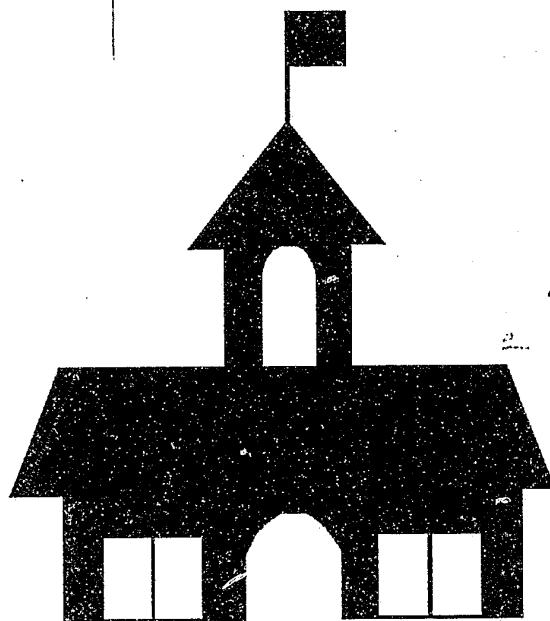


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SCHOOL VIOLENCE.
LET'S GET IT OUT OF OUR SYSTEM.

North Carolina Center for the Prevention of School Violence
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Scholastic Crime Stoppers

An Introduction

Violence and the presence of weapons in our schools pose serious threats to the well-being of our young people and their ability to learn. According to a survey conducted by the Department of Public Instruction during the 1992-93 school year, 27 percent of the state's high school students had carried a weapon to school during the past 30 days; 11 percent had carried a gun on campus.

Despite the bleak picture painted of our middle and high school campuses, however, most students remain law-abiding citizens. A small group of offenders has robbed them of the right to learn in a safe environment. Most students want to reclaim their schools, but the fear of ridicule or retribution for speaking out serve as stumbling blocks to accomplishing that goal.

Scholastic Crime Stoppers can help!

Scholastic Crime Stoppers is based on the Crime Stoppers concept of providing a confidential avenue for reporting information about crime and offering cash rewards as incentives. By so doing, Scholastic Crime Stoppers seeks to alleviate the fear and apathy that sometimes leads students to withhold information from school and law enforcement officials.

Dollar for dollar, Crime Stoppers has proven to be one of the most highly effective and cost-efficient, community-based programs in the fight against crime. In 1993, an investment of \$171,144 in rewards by North Carolina's 62 local programs resulted in the recovery of stolen property and drugs worth over \$14 million - a return of \$82.00 for every reward dollar spent.

Crime Stoppers and state officials feel strongly that the impact that Crime Stoppers has had on local law enforcement can also be realized on middle and high school campuses by adapting this program to the school environment.

The first introduction of the Crime Stoppers concept in a North Carolina school occurred five years ago at Winston-Salem's Parkland High School. The school's alcohol and drug abuse prevention club (I.D.A.C.) began "Drugbusters," a cash reward program for confidential information regarding drugs and other campus crime. Operated independently of Crime Stoppers, but under the auspices of the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department and with the guidance of Parkland's School Resource Officer, this forerunner of Scholastic Crime Stoppers has had a dramatic impact on campus crime.

The success of the Parkland High School program, and that of similar programs in other states, led the **North Carolina Crime Stoppers Association** and the **Crime Prevention Division** (Department of Crime Control and Public Safety) to embark on a concerted effort to introduce this concept in North Carolina.

In January 1994, the Crime Prevention Division and the **North Carolina Center for the Prevention of School Violence** joined with the North Carolina Crime Stoppers Association in launching a statewide campaign to encourage the adoption of Scholastic Crime Stoppers programs in the schools of North Carolina. To date, Scholastic Crime Stoppers programs have been started or are in the planning process in 25 communities in our state. Local Crime Stoppers officials and School Resource Officers are working with school personnel and students in implementing programs that fit the needs of each school and its community.

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The Benefits of Scholastic Crime Stoppers

Scholastic Crime Stoppers is a crime reduction and prevention program aimed at middle and high school students. Scholastic Crime Stoppers helps to:

- eliminate the fear involved in coming forward with information about crime by providing a confidential avenue for students, parents and teachers to work in partnership with law enforcement authorities.
- provide a safer environment for students while they are at school and save tax dollars by decreasing acts of vandalism to school property.
- create a student body that is aware, interested and involved in the well-being of their school and community. By providing early exposure to Crime Stoppers, it is hoped that young people will also support and share knowledge of the program as adults.

The Three Scholastic Crime Stoppers Models

The first step in establishing a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program is gaining the support and commitment of law enforcement officials, school administrators, parents and students. Each individual community and school must determine for itself the type or model of Scholastic Crime Stoppers program that best fits its particular needs. Aside from the basic Crime Stoppers concept, those wishing to establish a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program are encouraged to use their own ingenuity and imagination in adapting the program to their needs.

The Crime Prevention Division works with local school, law enforcement and Crime Stoppers personnel in evaluating these needs and providing technical assistance in establishing Scholastic Crime Stoppers programs. While the active involvement of local Crime Stoppers programs is sought and encouraged, Scholastic Crime Stoppers is also an option for communities where no Crime Stoppers program exists.

Three basic Scholastic Crime Stoppers models are being utilized in North Carolina schools:

- **Student Active/County Advisory** - This model focuses on active student involvement, highlighted by the creation of a Student Advisory Board that markets the program, raises funds and determines the amounts of rewards to be paid. This student board acts under the guidance of a faculty or law enforcement advisor. The local Crime Stoppers program may be involved on an advisory basis or when the offense exceeds the jurisdiction of school officials. Tips and reward payments are handled "in-house" by the school administration, a faculty advisor or School Resource Officer (SRO).
- **County Active/Student Advisory** - In some localities, school administrators and local Crime Stoppers officials have chosen to simply promote the existing local Crime Stoppers program within the schools. In this model, students are familiarized with Crime Stoppers' operations and are encouraged to use the established Crime Stoppers telephone number to report incidents of crime. Students are usually not involved in any formal manner; the local Crime Stoppers Board determines the amount of rewards and provides the mechanism for their payment.
- **County Active/Student Active** - This third model, encompassing the involvement of both a Student Advisory Board and the local Crime Stoppers program, is the preferred approach where feasible. The Student Advisory Board provides students with hands-on experience and a sense of ownership that is often a key to success in student-led organizations. The local Crime Stoppers program actively advises the student board

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and makes available its Crime Stoppers telephone line for Scholastic Crime Stoppers calls to ensure caller anonymity. The information gleaned from these calls is relayed to the appropriate investigating official (SRO, principal or detective). Sometimes, Scholastic Crime Stoppers are allowed to participate (officially or ex officio) on the local Crime Stoppers Board of Directors. The use of School Resource Officers is especially advantageous in this model.

This crime reduction program takes many forms, but in every case, rewards are paid for information leading to the solution of crimes and anonymity is guaranteed to the informant.

Where Do I Start?

After making the initial assessment and reaching the conclusion that Scholastic Crime Stoppers can play an effective role in reducing campus crime, faculty and school administrators, students and parents should be made aware of the school's interest in implementing the program, its purpose and what outcome is expected. Formal training sessions are suggested.

The key administrative figure in establishing a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program is usually the school principal. The principal is most intimately aware of the situation on his campus and is ultimately responsible for ensuring the safety of the students. Often with the support of the principal, the support of other school officials will follow. Work with the principal to obtain approval from the school board and superintendent, if necessary.

Sell the idea to the students. Without their support and involvement, a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program cannot be successful. An assembly of the student body should be held to announce the Scholastic Crime Stoppers program and to educate the students on its operation.

Student Advisory Boards

The role that students play in a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program must be determined by the school administration and the local Crime Stoppers coordinator. Schools are encouraged to involve students to the greatest extent possible since a sense of ownership is vital to the program's success. A Student Advisory Board should be created whose duties include:

- adoption of by-laws, name and logo
- advertisement of unsolved school crimes
- determination of reward amounts on solved cases
- fund-raising (for rewards and operational expenses)
- cooperation with the School Resource Officer (SRO), Faculty Advisor, and/or local Crime Stoppers Coordinator and Board
- meeting on a regular basis.

Whatever the level of student involvement, the parents of each student chosen should be contacted and advised of what their child's duties will entail. The object is to maximize student involvement while minimizing administrative or parental concern.

In some instances, school administrators opt to operate the Scholastic Crime Stoppers program through an already existing student organization, such as the student government, a "Students Against Violence Everywhere" chapter or a journalism or law enforcement class.

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Select the initial student board from volunteers and from all segments of the student population. The SRO, faculty advisor and/or principal should interview all applicants and choose the board from that group. Teacher input could prove valuable at this point. In the future, the Student Boards should be chosen by the students themselves.

For their own safety, students should never be involved in pay-offs of rewards.

The Role of School Resource Officers (SRO's)

In schools where School Resource Officers (SRO's) are utilized, these officers can play a vital role in a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program. In fact, they have proven to be one of the driving forces in establishing Scholastic Crime Stoppers programs in their communities. Their physical presence on campus and the bond that develops between SRO's and individual students may allow an SRO to act immediately on information to prevent potentially serious incidents from occurring. Additionally, the SRO is uniquely qualified to assist in the investigation of Crime Stoppers tips and provide guidance to the school administration and student body who have agreed to undertake this endeavor.

Funding

Initial start-up funding is often provided through the local Crime Stoppers program. Initial expenses are not great, usually involving printing of posters, handouts, etc. You may also wish to seek funding through corporate sponsorship, federal/state drug-free and violence reduction grants or the Governor's Crime Commission. The lion's share of fund raising should fall on the students themselves to give them an interest in seeing the program succeed.

Funds raised by student boards should be kept in a separate, earmarked account by the local Crime Stoppers program or in a school club account. Both provide tax exempt status for the funds raised. Some local Crime Stoppers by-laws have been altered to incorporate the student organization as a part of local Crime Stoppers organization.

The local Crime Stoppers Board is also encouraged to formally include one to two Student Advisory Board members in their membership and invite them to the monthly local Crime Stoppers Board meeting. They should present any cases for which rewards are necessary and keep the board advised of their activities.

Anonymity

Complete anonymity is the cornerstone to the Crime Stoppers concept. No member of the Student Advisory Board, the faculty or administration should ever know the identity of an informant or suspect, nor should they receive information involving the investigation of a case. The use of the existing Crime Stoppers telephone line is encouraged. The placement of a phone line in an office within the school (and answered by school personnel, etc.) can pose problems in maintaining an informant's anonymity and create confusion.

Don't Forget the Media

Don't forget to contact your local media outlets to let them know about your activities. Keep them informed as your program progresses, especially if it proves successful. The NC Crime Stoppers Association and the Crime Prevention Division will be happy to assist you!

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Conclusion

The potential for crime prevention is greatly enhanced by the presence of a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program. Once operational, those who would disrupt our schools with violence or bring criminal activity onto the school campus, will find themselves in the uncomfortable position of not knowing who around them might speak to authorities under the protection of Crime Stoppers' guarantee of anonymity.

If you wish to introduce a Scholastic Crime Stoppers program in your area, or would like to know of a program near you, please contact:

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or

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