



Youth in action

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FACT SHEET

Teens, Crime, and the Community

by Monte Evans II

What Is It?

Teens, Crime, and the Community (TCC)—a partnership between the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) and Street Law, Inc., funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)—is a national program that combines education and action to reduce teen victimization. Through community service projects, TCC provides a forum for youth to take a stand against violence and become part of the solution to improving their schools and communities. With the help of dedicated teachers and other staff, TCC teaches young people like you what the effects of crime are; how to recognize and prevent crime; and how to report crime, be a good witness, and help victims.

TCC is not confined to a single issue or any one geographic area. In fact, more than half a million teenagers in 40 States

have participated in TCC since it began in 1985. TCC gives you a chance to focus your energy and talents in three different settings: schools, the juvenile justice system (e.g., courts and probation offices), or community-based organizations (such as Boys & Girls Clubs).

What Are Some TCC Activities?

TCC offers many different kinds of projects, including designing billboards on crime prevention, conducting workshops on date rape, administering surveys on violence, cleaning up neighborhoods, and organizing fundraisers for the homeless. Below are a few examples of TCC programs that have had a powerful effect on youth.

◆ **John H. Wood Middle School, San Antonio, TX,** offers TCC through a Teen Law class in which students provide community services to a local homeless shelter. Each year the class hosts a

Halloween party at the shelter. Students then collect clothing, health care products, nonperishable foods, and gifts, and return for a Christmas party. Those participating in this program have had powerful and eye-opening experiences. Eighth grader Diana Muñoz, for example, said, “Before, I wanted to do illegal things like drugs and now I don’t.” The program, she said, taught students about reality and made her understand that ending up in a homeless shelter can happen to anybody.

◆ **Carver High School, North Birmingham, AL,** includes TCC in an Alabama history course in which students discuss how to improve communities, organize crime prevention activities, and find jobs. A speaker visiting the class recently discussed the increase in crime rates and

its effect on young black males. Describing what TCC has meant to him, participant Chuck Brooks explained, "TCC taught me how to handle situations, conflicts, and fighting." It made him a better person, he said, by helping him respond to peers and adults and making him want to be a leader.

◆ **The John H. Harland Teen Center, Atlanta, GA,** TCC program offers participants a wide range of activities, including discussions on teen crime, vandalism, gangs, rape, and theft, and the chance to participate in a mock court case. For Antoine Smith, the mock court case—which involved youth acting out the full trial of a teen charged in a shooting—was especially meaningful. As a juror, Antoine had to decide whether to sentence the teen on trial to life in prison or to a rehabilitation program. The difficult decision, he said, took the jury 1½ days to reach because "[e]veryone had to agree on what was the right thing to

do." Having learned a great deal from this scenario, TCC participants decided on their own to conduct another mock trial.

How Can You Start a TCC Program?

If you're interested in starting a TCC program in your school or community, you'll need an action plan describing the areas or issues you want to tackle. You might choose one specific problem or a variety of issues. Think about the resources you will need to reach your goals. Find a dedicated teacher or advisor to help educate your group about important crime prevention issues and assist you in finding necessary materials and a place to meet and work.

For Further Information

To learn more about TCC and its national network, visit the TCC Web site at www.nationaltcc.org, where you'll find information on action projects, youth envoys, training, and much more. For additional information, please contact

the individuals at TCC or Street Law, Inc., listed below.

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Monte Evans II is a graduate student whose work as an OJJDP summer intern included participating in the workgroup for the National Youth Network (NYN). The NYN is sponsored by OJJDP and consists of diverse youth leaders, ages 14 to 21, from across the Nation who are sponsored by youth-serving organizations. To learn more about the NYN, visit its Web site at www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/getinvolved.

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