



Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force Newsletter

May 2016

TASK FORCE MARKS 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

2016 marks the tenth year of the Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force. Since its creation, the Task Force, as part of the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force, has implemented a four-pronged approach to mitigate gang activities in the city: 1) prevention, 2) intervention, 3) suppression; and 4) community outreach and education. Through these efforts, and the strong commitment of local, regional and federal law enforcement partners to address gangs, Alexandria has experienced low numbers of gang-motivated crime since 2007, when there were 20 such incidents. Since 2009, there have been fewer than 10 gang motivated incidents each year and through ongoing efforts of the entire community, this number can be reduced to zero.

To commemorate the tenth anniversary, there will be a series of events, public and outreach activities, which are highlighted in this newsletter.

COMMUNITY CORNER

"I learned respect starts with me respecting myself first and that's my first step away from gangs."

- Former IPE program participant

Among the most important prevention and intervention initiatives that occurs through the Gang Prevention Community Task Force is the gang Intervention Prevention Education (IPE) program. This program is managed regionally by Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS), in conjunction with the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force. The focus of NVFS is on providing culturally competent, trauma-informed case management, psycho-education, and mentoring services for young people and their families who are gang-involved or may be at-risk for such affiliation. IPE Counselors focus on preventing and reducing gang participation, improving family functioning, and school performance, and increasing access and participation in pro-social activities.



Northern Virginia
family Service

Since 2009, IPE has received more than 800 referrals and has been a key partner in addressing foundational issues that lead youth to join gangs. IPE is a crucial prevention and intervention program that has contributed to the reduction of gang motivated incidents in the community and continues to provide support and interventions that improve the quality of life for families and children.

EVENTS

City to Host Regional Gang Prevention Soccer Tournament

On Saturday June 11, teams from Loudon, Fairfax, Prince William County, Arlington and Alexandria will compete in a tournament with the theme of “Goals, Not Gangs” to mark the tenth anniversary of the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force.

Come out to George Washington Middle School between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. to support “Goals, Not Gangs,” and cheer on Alexandria youth ages 11 to 14, who will be competing.

Learn more about the history of the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force and how soccer tournaments are used to connect youth to positive pro-social programs that support gang prevention and intervention.

- Video: [Northern Virginia Regional Taskforce Soccer Tournament](#)



The 2015 Regional Gang Prevention Soccer Tournament was held in Arlington County and was themed “Breaking Barriers One Goal at a Time.”

THE MENTORING CORNER

Alexandria Mentoring Partnership

2016 also marks the 10 year anniversary of the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership. On May 5, through the generous donation of the Potomac Riverboat Company, the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership will host a mentor recruitment boat ride. We are calling on residents and employees of the City of Alexandria who can give one hour per week to help mentor a child.

Mentoring takes many shapes and forms. Whether it was a coach, neighbor, tutor, school teacher, supervisor or seasoned co-worker, chances are that you’ve been mentored at some point during your life.

The Alexandria Mentoring Partnership offers a variety of mentoring opportunities for outstanding adults. Learn more about each of the 11 mentoring programs in the [Alexandria Mentoring Partnership](#). Learn how an average of one hour a week can make the difference in the life of a child and a mentor. Mentor One Child. Change two Lives! For more information on mentoring contact Lily.rowney@alexandriava.gov or call 703.746. 4455.



Mentoring Corner - Community Lodgings

Community Lodgings has provided holistic, supportive services to Arlandria families for 28 years. First founded in 1987 through a collaborative effort by eight local Episcopal churches, Community Lodgings has expanded into a one-stop support shop helping families in the community reach self-sufficiency.

With trusted bilingual staff, committed volunteers and quality services, more than 400 families are served each week. The Catalogue for Philanthropy recognized Community Lodgings as “one of the best small charities in the Greater Washington region.”

The boys’ mentor group provides a stable environment to support boys in the Arlandria area with school, career preparation, social skills, and community integration. This is especially important for boys in the Arlandria community who face challenges in the home, school and/or community settings. Mentors guide them on discussions of community activism, commitment to school, current events and personal development. The group mentoring model also reviews school based opportunities, goes on outings and does other activities together to provide a safe space and positive adult male role models to deter the boys in our community from joining gangs.



Kevin and Rudy take a break from city life to learn about gardening at Community Lodgings.

Hear it straight from Kevin and Rudy, both seventh graders, as they speak about their mentors, Juan Mantilla and Nick Dimos:

Kevin:

What is Juan like?

“Funny and cool and he can do a lot of jokes. He feels like a brother.”

What was your favorite thing to do with the mentoring group?

“Hiking at Great Falls National Park. I like that there were a lot of challenges and animals.”

Do you think your friends would like having a mentor too?

“People would benefit by having someone to talk to or help out, like if there’s a problem with their family or something.”

What do you like best about your mentor group?

“They take us on field trips and it’s like a family. I feel like I can succeed with school, sports, or anything.”

Rudy, another 7th grader, told us this about his mentor Nick Dimos:

What do you like the most about Nick?

“He’s nice and he understands you when you talk about things.”

What don’t you like about our mentoring program?

“That it should be more days.” (We put ourselves out there asking that question, and were happy to hear that Rudy’s “complaint” is that he wants more of our mentoring program!)

What was your favorite activity with the mentoring group?

“The Garden Tour of the White House.”

What do you like best about your mentor group?

“It’s fun and I like to hang out with my friends. It’s a good experience.”

COMMUNITY OUTREACH NEWS

Community Job Fair Welcomes More Than 150 Job Seekers

Community mobilization is fundamental in mitigating gang recruitment and many other social problems. The February 25 Community Job Fair, held at the Charles Houston Recreation Center, was attended by 150 residents, and 11 job seekers were offered employment that same day.

The fair was made possible through the collaboration of many City agencies, including Alexandria Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Police Department, Sheriff's Office, the Untouchables Mentoring Program and the Court Service Unit. Special thanks to City Councilman Willie Bailey for embracing this effort. In the months before the job fair, the collaborating organizations provided job seekers with support groups, application support, job interview lessons, free haircuts and assistance in acquiring professional clothing. This Job Fair is a concrete example of how community mobilization can greatly enhance the quality of life for everyone.

In related job news, the Alexandria Court Service Unit and Alexandria Workforce Development Center have recently developed a pilot Job Readiness program. This collaboration builds job acquisition skills, job retention skills and supports acquired skills by pairing participants with adult mentors who serve as job coaches.

Task Force's Outreach and Education Subcommittee Reaches More Than 1,500 in FY16

In addition to gang prevention and awareness presentations, the Outreach and Education Subcommittee has developed and presented to a number of audiences on several topics. If you are interested in receiving a briefing or presentation on any topics please contact joe.regotti@alexandriava.gov. All presentations can be done in English or Spanish and can target children, parents, citizens or professional City or School staff.



On March 11, the Regional Gang Task Force provided an overview of gang prevention and intervention for 50 police officers from El Salvador at the FBI's Training Academy in Quantico, VA.

Police Officers from El Salvador (Policia Nacional Civil) learn about how the NOVA Regional Gang Task Force and Local Gang Task Forces operate and support gang prevention, intervention and suppression.



Gang Prevention and Intervention Coordinator Joe Regotti, Community Lodgings and Parents at Brent Place discuss parenting strategies and discipline

Padres En Accion (Parents in Action) is a parent support and education group offered at George Washington Middle School by the Alexandria City Public School's FACE Center. The center offers numerous opportunities for families to engage with the school. The [FACE Center](#) and Gang Prevention/Intervention Coordinator have partnered to provide monthly support to parents on very important topics that the parents themselves identified such as bullying, gangs, parenting strategies, internet safety, adolescent pregnancy prevention and substance abuse awareness.



(Padres En Accion get ready to do an ice breaker before learning about parenting strategies and tips for parenting teenagers).

This past winter the Space of Her Own and Community Lodgings mentoring programs for girls both received awareness educational briefings on the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation and child sex trafficking. Contact Joe.regotti@alexandriava.gov to schedule presentations in English or Spanish on the topics of *Sex Trafficking Awareness, Internet Safety Basics, Gang Prevention Awareness, Bullying and Parenting Strategies for Teenagers.*

SAVE THE DATES

May 5, 2016 Alexandria Mentoring Partnership's Mentor Recruitment 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Boat Ride
Start your mentoring journey aboard the Potomac
Riverboat Company's Ms. Christin
RSVP to Lily.rowney@alexandriava.gov or

703.746.4455

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| May 18, 2016 | Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force Meeting
Join Cora Kelly Recreation Center (Community Room)
Contact Joe.regotti@alexandriava.gov for information | 6 to 8 p.m. |
| June 11, 2016 | NOVA Regional Gang Task Force's Gang Prevention Soccer Tournament
George Washington Middle School. Contact Joe.regotti@alexnadriava.gov for more information or to volunteer. | 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. |
| August 2, 2016 | National Night Out (America's Night Out Against Crime)
The Gang Task Force will be engaged in community outreach and mobilization, find out more and join us by contacting Joe.regotti@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.4502 | 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. |

THE MAYOR'S CAMPAIGN TO END BULLYING

In Alexandria, nearly 40% of middle school students, and approximately 15% of high school students reported being bullied on school property, according to data from the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. **Check out what is being done about it!**

www.alexandriava.gov/EndBullying

Also, check out ACPS's Family Engagement Center resources on bullying! [Family Engagement Center Resources on Bullying](#) [PDF]



ALEXANDRIA GANG PREVENTION COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

The mission of the Task Force is to increase youth and family participation in positive activities and supports, decrease crew and gang crime incidents and increase school attendance, graduation rates and meaningful work and/or recreational experiences for youth and adults.

Members:

1. Mayor Allison Silberberg (Co-Chair)
2. Councilman John Taylor Chapman (Co-Chair)
3. Veronica Nolan (ACPS School Board)
4. Deborah Warren (City Manager's Representative)
5. Michael Cohen (High School Representative --T.C. Williams Academic Principal)
6. Dustin Barnes (Middle School Representative - Hammond Middle School)

7. Elementary School Representative*
8. James Williams (African American Community Outreach -Tenant & Workers United – African American Caucus)
9. Gabriela Delcid (Youth Representative)
10. Thomas Walczykowski (Member at-Large)
11. Steven Jansen (Vice President/COO – Association of Prosecuting Attorneys – Member at-Large)
12. Erin O’Leary (Bishop Ireton H.S. Director of Counseling Services - Representative of Private Schools)
13. Nelson Zavaleta (Business Community Representative -Arlandria Business Association)
14. Representative of a community organization with specific outreach to the Latino community*
15. Youth Representative*
16. Interfaith Representative*
17. Chad Kirk – (Parent Representative)

* Current Task Force Vacancy.

To learn more about becoming a member of the Task Force, visit the City’s Boards and Commissions page at alexandriava.gov/Boards and contact Joe Regotti at joe.regotti@alexandriava.gov.