



# IMPACT REPORT

**Youth Violence Prevention Week**  
**April 24-30, 2022**



**Prepared By:**  
**Mustafa Ali-Smith**



# FROM THE DIRECTOR

The City of Knoxville Office of Community Safety is excited to have partnered with community-based organizations to observe National Youth Violence Prevention week in 2022. We have a collective responsibility to prevent youth violence—in all forms—and create safe, healthy homes, schools, and neighborhoods for young people to live, learn, play and grown. There are roles for all of us in addressing youth violence. Through the Youth Violence Prevention Week microgrants, we encouraged community partners to be creative in elevating youth violence prevention and equipping community members to engage in the work.

National Youth Violence Prevention Week allows our entire community to focus our resources and lend our voices toward reducing youth violence and promoting healthy engagement among young people. In the inaugural year of this micro-grant program, participating organizations focused on mental health, positive communication, sportsmanship, self-expression, emergency medical response...just to name a few activities. In addition to the micro-grants, the City of Knoxville partnered with the Knoxville NAACP to host a Day of Prayer, held a Youth Skate Night at the Change Center, and partnered with The Edge Foundation and No Bull to host a youth Kickball Tournament. We hope that our community will continue to advocate and work for the reduction of all forms of youth violence, not only during Youth Violence Prevention Week but continuously.



**LaKenya Middlebrook**  
Chief Community Safety Officer, City of Knoxville



# 2022 YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION WEEK

## ABOUT

National Youth Violence Prevention Week (YVPW) is the time of the year when organizations, community members, and key city stakeholders focus on preventing youth violence through engagement opportunities. Sponsored by the National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) and Sandy Hook Promise, the week looks at the different instances of youth violence that have taken place over the past few years and challenges communities to think about how their efforts are, or could be, impacting this important public health issue. YVPW also encourages student involvement, so people of all ages are better prepared to tackle cases of youth violence before they occur. The end goal is to ensure no young lives are lost in horrifying acts of violence.

Youth violence awareness is key so communities can better support young people throughout Knoxville, in turn helping them exist in healthy, thriving spaces to be the engaging, productive individuals we hope for them to be. It is critical for the City of Knoxville to make sure we are engaging our young people, listening to them, creating pathways for them to be involved, and elevating not only the issues that are important to them but also the experiences that are impacting them every day. It is also important that we work with community-based organizations that are on the ground working with young people and their families each day. These types of engagement are what make YVWP so critical to addressing violence in the City of Knoxville and beyond.



# 738

**Knoxville residents participated.**

Among 8 organizations in Knoxville, roughly 738 individuals including youth, their parents, and other community members participated in YVPW programming.

# PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Girls Inc.

MUSE Knoxville

YWCA

Karate Five Association

My Daughter's Journey

Shora Foundation

The Bottom

Forget You Not





# YVPW OUTCOMES



1

## PROVIDING YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Youth need opportunities for affordable engagement opportunities such as sports, participating in the arts, storytelling activities, music, and others. These opportunities not only provide youth a sense of belonging and a health distraction from their challenges, but help build a support network around them to steer them away from violence. YVPW program provided youth and their families with these opportunities.

2

## HELPING YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES NAVIGATE PAST TRAUMA

Several YVPW programs helped students and their families facilitate healing from past violence and work to address their past trauma. Violence in cities is often cyclical and the trauma that comes with it can lead youth to engage in violence. Programs were able to confront this narrative, building evidence-supported tools and offering suggestions for navigating trauma in the future.

3

## PROVIDING YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT & RESOURCES

YVPW programs emphasized the importance of mental health support for children and their families to address current instances of violence and prevent future ones. Physical, emotional, and social changes, including exposure to poverty or violence, can make youth vulnerable to mental health problems. Being able to confront these head-on brings us closer to addressing community-based violence. For parents, supporting their mental health puts them in a better position to care for and nurture their children. It's hard to ask parents to encourage their children when they are barely surviving emotionally or going through hardship.



# YVPW VOICES



One young lady is learned how to cope with her severe anxiety, although she was not able to complete the entire program during YVPW, she indicated that she was happy she pushed herself to come out to the event and push herself past her fears.

— My Daughter's Journey

Teaching youth mental, physical and emotional disciplines of martial arts helps youth and adults to become self-confident, raises self-esteem and instills leadership qualities and respect for their environment and those around them in school, home, or in their neighborhoods and communities to build strong confident paths avoiding negative peer pressure influences

— Karate Five Association

One activity called for students to write love letters to themselves, focusing on the positive and moving forward after a difficult year. Many of the boys discussed how much they loved their mothers and basketball, and some even mentioned school and Phyllis Wheatley staff. In his letter, one of the young men discussed the importance of mental health after such a tough year, following the loss of so many students in the community due to violence. He expressed the pain last year brought, but also how the community came together for what felt like “the first time in a long time.” He ended by saying he loves that his friends are still remembering those that we lost, and that they’re trying to do it in a healthy way.

— YWCA



