



**Save Our Streets Crown Heights (S.O.S. Crown Heights)
*Stop Shooting. Start Living.***

Save Our Streets Crown Heights (S.O.S.) is a community-based effort to end gun violence in our neighborhood. S.O.S. works closely with local organizations, neighborhood churches and pastors, community residents and the individuals most likely to commit a shooting.

The staff of S.O.S. Crown Heights prevents gun violence from occurring in the S.O.S. catchment area in Crown Heights by mediating conflicts that may end in gun violence and acting as peer counselors to men and women who are at risk of perpetrating or being victimized by violence. S.O.S. Crown Heights works closely with neighborhood leaders and businesses to promote a visible and public message against gun violence, encouraging local voices to articulate that shooting is an unacceptable behavior.

How it Works

S.O.S. Crown Heights builds on a successfully pioneered model in Chicago (Ceasefire) and demonstrated to reduce gun violence between 40-70% in the neighborhoods studied. Based on health strategies that have controlled tuberculosis and cholera, S.O.S. Crown Heights seeks to control the spread of violence. The key elements are:

Outreach: The program sends four Outreach Workers and four Violence Interrupters into the community after dark, where they engage men and women who are at risk of perpetrating or being victimized by violence. The staff, who all have intimate knowledge of life on the streets, serve as peer counselors by offering advice and guidance on how to respond to conflicts without violence. They use positive peer pressure to redirect high-risk individuals towards school or jobs and help them think and behave differently about violence. Each Outreach Worker has a caseload of 15 individuals most likely to be affected by street violence. Violence Interrupters' primary focus is to prevent a shooting from occurring by engaging in high-risk mediations.

Public Education: S.O.S. Crown Heights staff and community volunteers distribute palm cards, and posters with messages that promote peaceful resolution. Merchants have signs in their windows counting the number of days since the last shooting. Blogging, texting, and e-blasts keep the community updated and involved. No matter the medium, the consistent message is, "Our community is putting the violence behind us." Currently, there are two main campaigns, "Don't Shoot, I Want to Grow Up," and "Don't Let 6 X 9 or 6 Feet Under Be Your Only Options. Don't Shoot."

Community Mobilization: S.O.S. Crown Heights works with a wide range of community partners who seek to spread an anti-violence message. S.O.S. Crown Heights organizes street fairs, concerts, "speak outs" and barbecues that advance one simple idea: our community is moving past gun violence. Local residents work as canvassers to promote events and disseminate program information. S.O.S. Crown Heights also organizes a rally or vigil in the location of the shooting **every time** there is a shooting to call attention to the tragic results of violence.

Youth Organizing to Save Our Streets : YO S.O.S. is the youth mobilization arm of S.O.S. Young people aged 14-17 participating in this “out of school” time program learn about gun violence and become peer educators and advocates for change in the local schools and throughout the community. (More information on this program can be found at www.yosos.org).

Faith-Based Leaders: Faith-based organizations are an essential partner in the S.O.S. violence reduction strategy. S.O.S. Crown Heights works with the 77th Precinct Clergy Council and the S.O.S. Clergy Action Network (C.A.N .) to encourage clergy to preach against gun violence from their pulpits, attend vigils, counsel people who are potentially involved in gun violence, and refer high-risk individuals to the S.O.S. team. Faith-based leaders are encouraged to sign a “Covenant of Peace and Action” and to participate in “Nonviolence Worship Weekends” to demonstrate their commitment to creating a culture of nonviolence.

Use of Data: S.O.S. Crown Heights uses data to identify neighborhood “hot spots” and the times of day and days of week that shootings occur. This allows resources to be focused most effectively to help Crown Heights move past gun violence.

Results from January 1, 2011- December 31st, 2012

In 2011, the S.O.S. Crown Heights program created a target area of Kingston Avenue to Utica Avenue and Eastern Parkway to Atlantic Avenue to strengthen the program’s ability to have an impact. In this 40 block area, shootings decreased from 25 in 2010 to 12 in 2011. During this time, the team mediated 71 conflicts, 51 of which involved people who had access to guns. The Outreach Workers mentored 68 high risk young people helping them to change the way they think and behave about gun violence. Eighteen of these S.O.S. participants gained employment and twelve entered into school or an educational program while in the program.

Organizational History

S.O.S. is a project of the Crown Heights Community Mediation Center. The Crown Heights Community Mediation Center is an innovative effort to improve intergroup relations, encourage positive youth development, and promote non-violent conflict resolution. Operating out of a community-based storefront since the summer of 1998, the Crown Heights Community Mediation Center provides conflict resolution services and training, innovative youth programs, and resource links to community residents. Its mission is to promote community harmony and prevent future conflicts by promoting public safety, and encouraging communication and understanding. The Mediation Center is a project of the Center for Court Innovation—a public-private partnership between the Fund for the City of New York and the New York State Unified Court System.

For More Information

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