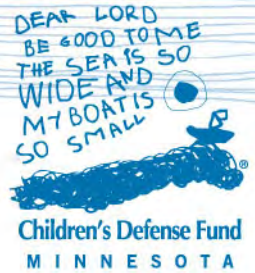


10-10-10 March for Children and Youth Because *All Children and Youth Need Safe Communities*



Children thrive in safe, violence-free neighborhoods where they have trusted neighbors and positive role models, as well as a healthy physical environment. Conversely, children living in dangerous neighborhoods are often forced to stay indoors, unable to interact with people and explore their world.

- Last year in Minnesota, more than 13,000 violent crimes and 25,000 burglaries were committed.
- 15 children were murdered and 108 children died of unintentional injuries.
- More than 43,000 juveniles were arrested for criminal offenses.
- 48% of Minnesota households contain at least one firearm.

Many risk factors contribute to youth violence and unsafe neighborhoods, such as low levels of community participation, poverty, social disorganization like racism and gang activity, drugs, alcohol and firearms.

Research shows that youth join gangs to meet specific needs. Some of the reasons given by gang members for joining gangs are safety and security, love and belonging, power and respect, freedom and choices, and fun.

Environmental hazards also contribute to an unsafe community for children.

The unique developmental stages experienced in childhood make children more vulnerable to harmful effects from exposures to certain hazards, such as air and water pollutants.

- Adverse effects from lead, found in paint, toys and water, may cause learning problems and developmental delays contribute to attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, distractibility, and increase the risk for antisocial behavior.

Children respond differently from adults to environmental contaminants.

- Children breathe more air than adults and the breathing zones of children are closer to the floor where heavier airborne contaminants such as radon tend to accumulate.
- Children drink seven times as much water as adults during the first six months of life.
- Children have greater contact with their surroundings and may absorb through their skin a larger dose of a pollutant than would an adult.

Communities can implement protective factors that will buffer children and young people from violence and unhealthy environments.

By responsible adults protecting children from firearms in their homes, schools and communities, by the state enacting common-sense gun safety laws, and by providing positive community based alternatives to gangs, we can reduce violence in our neighborhoods. We must work together to hold businesses and local institutions accountable for environmental pollutants that harm our children.

Questions for Candidates:

What is your plan to curb youth violence in Minnesota?

What will you do to make sure physical environments are safe and healthy for children?