



MILWAUKEE FIRE DEPARTMENT Project Staying Alive

Michael L. Jones
Deputy Chief
Steven G. Riegg
Director

Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) - Project Staying Alive – History

The initial concept of Project Staying Alive was developed in the summer of 2006 by a small group of Milwaukee Fire Department members lead by Lieutenant David Anderson. The idea for this program was created to address the increasing amount of violent injuries involving young victims due to shootings, stabbings and assaults occurring in our city. Milwaukee Fire Department firefighters and paramedics were seeing an increase in the number of young patients being treated and transported to Children’s Hospital due to a violent injury. By witnessing first hand, the destruction caused by mismanaged anger; it prompted this small group of firefighters to initiate talks with stakeholders in the community in an effort to expand their efforts in helping to reduce intentional violent injuries. The initial concept was to teach children the skills needed to deal with anger, before it accelerated into fighting, by using a similar model of education and training used at the Survive Alive house. This successful model of education uses Milwaukee Fire Department members as primary presenters to teach fire safety education with the thought that the same success can be achieved by teaching anger management education in hopes that through education, an eventual decrease in violent injury will occur.

The group spent over a year researching and developing the curriculum for the program with the assistance of: Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, The American Academy of Pediatrics, The Medical College of Wisconsin, Project Ujima and the MPS violence prevention team. The research showed that 11, 12 and 13 year old children would benefit the most from this education, thus sixth grade students would be the initial focus of the program. In the fall of 2007, a \$20,000 grant was secured through Dr. Marlene Melzer of Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. This grant allowed for training and development of a pilot program to be started in four MPS schools as well as purchasing needed materials and supplies to present the curriculum to the students. The pilot program was a success by collecting data that showed positive objectives and outcomes, which helped gain interest and funding for the program.

In January of 2008, Deputy Chief Michael L. Jones appointed Lieutenant Steven Riegg as the Director of Project Staying Alive. Lt. Riegg was given the task of developing the initial concept into a full time program. This was accomplished by securing multiple grant funding sources totaling in excess of \$650,000. The grant funding is used to secure a full time Director position, train over 30 Milwaukee Fire Department members as primary instructors, and provide equipment, materials and training necessary for program implementation. It also provides for continual research & development of the program to further improve and enhance the curriculum. So far this has allowed us to include gun/weapon violence education, conflict resolution, problem solving and other multi-disciplinary asset building skills to have a greater impact on the students.

The current design of Project Staying Alive consists of 5 sessions with class sizes of 20-40 students, taught by MFD instructors, MPS sixth grade teachers and members of Project Ujima.

Goal of the Partnership

1. Reduce levels of disruption and violence in the schools
2. Prevent or reduce substance abuse among youth
3. Increase academic and social success in schools
4. Increase access to appropriate mental health services for students as needed
5. Increase school readiness of children in their early years of life

What Do We Hope To Accomplish

- Our goal was to reach between 300-500 Milwaukee six graders by the end of 2007-2008 School year which we accomplished.
- Another 1000 sixth graders will be taught in 2008-2009
- Another 2000 more by the end of 2009-2010

Short Term Goals already accomplished

- Establish a director's position to oversee scheduling, resource management and quality assurance
- Establish a Foundation to assist with fund raising.
- Develop goals, focus and results to measure the objectives and outcomes of the program.
- Continue to train Milwaukee Fire Department Personnel
- Establish protocols to accurately formulate feedback data from both students and presenters.

Long Term Goals

- Expand the program until all 6000-7000 MPS sixth graders are reached
- Assist with training all MPS personnel assigned to middle, upper, and high schools to apply the anger management techniques students learn in everyday schools situations
- Find internal and external funding to ensure financial stability of the program
- Create a site students could visit on a field trip or develop a complex such as the Survive Alive House for presentations

Currently, the Milwaukee Fire Department has partnered up with numerous agencies to help increase the impact and importance of this program. These stakeholders include: Milwaukee Public Schools, the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, the Wisconsin Medical College, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and the Office of Justice Administration. This program has also been supported by Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent William Andreopoulos, Milwaukee Fire Departments Chief Douglas Holton, and oversight boards within both Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and The Medical College of Wisconsin.

The Milwaukee Fire Department has successfully played a major role in the development and implementation of this program to address gun/weapon violence, teach problem solving skills, provide anger management training and discuss the effects of violent injuries with sixth grade children, as well as helping to direct the youth of our community in succeeding as the leaders and contributors of tomorrow.

