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In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

Advance Peace Sacramento Fights to End Gun Violence

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

After doing prison time for non-violent crimes, Clemmie Fields vowed never to be behind bars again. The 54-year-old Sacramentan has upheld that promise since 2003 and urges others do the same through his work with Advance Peace Sacramento (APS).

“The work that we do here, I would do it for free,” Fields, a Neighborhood Change Agent (NCA), said recently, sitting in the headquarters of Advance Peace Sacramento (APS). “I enjoy helping others better their lives.”

Advance Peace is an organization dedicated to ending gun violence in urban neighborhoods. The program has not only been successful where it was founded, in Richmond, CA, but also in Sacramento where it was implemented in June of 2018. APS currently has a four-year, \$1.5 million contract with the City of Sacramento, and received additional funding from a state grant. APS is also supported by The California Endowment.

As an NCA, Fields helps prevent gun violence in Oak Park, Del Paso Heights and South Sacramento by reaching out to gang members or other residents who may be affiliated with crime, both young and old. These three areas were identified by the City of Sacramento’s Gang Prevention & Intervention Taskforce as being “gunfire hot zones. NCAs act as mentors and outreach workers, often drawing on their own experiences as former gang members or felons. Many of these NCAs were raised in

the same neighborhoods where they are now looking to make a positive difference.

“Neighborhood Change Agents have accomplished a significant amount in only about six months of regular outreach work,” stated a report by Jason Corburn, a professor in University of California, Berkeley’s Department of City and Regional Planning and School of Public Health.

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IN 2018.”

Julius Thibodeaux
Program Manager, Advanced Peace Sacramento

The 24-page report said there were 18 homicides in Sacramento in 2017, and the same number in 2018. Although gun-related homicides rose in Del Paso Heights from five to 12 between the two years, they dropped from six to two in Oak Park and from seven to four in South Sacramento.

“The key finding was that we had no teen homicides in Sacramento in 2018,” said APS Program Manager Julius Thibodeaux, who also noted there were nine in 2017.



Advance Peace Sacramento had a successful start, an independent evaluation found. Its Program Manager, Julius Thibodeaux (right), posed with Clemmie Fields, an APS Neighborhood Change Agent. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

Thibodeaux credited that improvement to Advance Peace and its community partners who also advocate for non-violence, like the Anti-Recidivism Coalition.

Mayor Darrell Steinberg agreed.

“Advance Peace has added an important new tool to address gun violence in Sacramento alongside the great work already being done by [other] nonprofits in our city,” said Steinberg in reaction to the evaluation.

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