



# Youth

## *in action*

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Shay Bilchik  
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FACT SHEET

## **Youth Crime Watch of America**

by *Vernon M. Jones*

### **What Is It?**

Youth Crime Watch of America (YCWA), Inc., is a nonprofit organization that establishes Youth Crime Watch programs throughout the United States and in other countries. YCWA began in 1978 in Miami, FL, with the purpose of replicating the activities and effectiveness of the Youth Crime Watch of Dade County. Dade's Youth Crime Watch program was modeled after the Neighborhood Crime Watch when adults realized that the youth volunteers knew more about what was going on than anyone else. For example, the youth knew who didn't belong in the neighborhood.

YCWA provides you with the tools and guidance needed to start a Youth Crime Watch in your school or community. A Youth Crime Watch program—motivated by the principle of good citizenship—enables you to take an active role in ad-

ressing the crime problems that exist in your area. Youth and youth advisors trained in YCWA methods run the program for their school, neighborhood, public housing site, recreational center, or park. With hundreds of programs already in operation, YCWA has greatly reduced crime and drug use. In 1995, Miami's Carol City High School reported a 45-percent decrease in student crime. In 1994, Tampa's Leto High School witnessed a 72-percent drop in crime. YCWA sponsors activities on the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Some YCWA goals are to provide crime-free, drug-free environments for healthy learning and living; instill positive values, foster good citizenship, and build self-confidence in youth; and enable youth to become resources for preventing drug use and other crimes in their schools and neighborhoods.

### **What Are Some YCWA Activities?**

Through local Youth Crime Watch programs, YCWA sponsors and encourages many activities. Some of these are:

- ◆ Providing drug and crime prevention education.
- ◆ Facilitating communication and creating anonymous crime reporting systems.
- ◆ Establishing youth patrols.
- ◆ Creating a mentoring program and teaching mediation skills.
- ◆ Teaching school bus safety.
- ◆ Participating in the National Youth Crime Prevention Conference.
- ◆ Providing conflict resolution training.
- ◆ Creating action plans.
- ◆ Training youth as leaders.
- ◆ Cultivating youth-police relations.
- ◆ Establishing community networks and partnerships.
- ◆ Planning events throughout the year.

In addition, YCWA, in collaboration with the National Crime Prevention Council, organizes the annual National Youth Crime Prevention Conference, a 4-day training conference for youth and adults. This conference provides an excellent opportunity for youth to be directly involved in shaping the conference agenda and in being exposed to leaders in crime prevention. More than 1,500 crime prevention advocates attend the conference each year to network and learn new and innovative prevention strategies. Youth and youth advisors attend training sessions that enable them to further implement YCWA programs in their schools and communities.

An important aspect of YCWA is honoring the individuals who work to keep schools and communities free of crime, drugs, and violence. At each National Youth Crime Prevention Conference, YCWA recognizes more than 75 individuals with the following awards:

- ◆ Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.
- ◆ Advisor of the Year.

- ◆ Student of the Year.
- ◆ Casey awards—named after the YCWA mascot, Casey the Crime Watchin' Cat—in the following categories:
  - ~ Youth volunteer.
  - ~ Adult volunteer.
  - ~ Education.
  - ~ Law enforcement.
  - ~ Legislative.
  - ~ State/national.
  - ~ YCWA alumni.

### **YCWA Membership**

As a YCWA member, you receive monthly updates and quarterly newsletters that inform you of upcoming training sessions, special events, conference activities and speakers, new resource materials, and current news from YCWA chapters. To assist youth in initiating and maintaining a local program, YCWA has developed a resource library that includes the following:

- ◆ YCWA startup kit.
- ◆ Operations manual.
- ◆ Youth handbook.
- ◆ Model YCWA varsity patrol programs.
- ◆ YCWA mentoring activities handbook.

- ◆ Community-based YCWA program handbook.
- ◆ *A Call for Young Heroes*, a motivational video.
- ◆ Safety and crime prevention presentations for use in elementary schools.

### **For Further Information**

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*The National Youth Network, founded and managed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, consists of diverse youth leaders from across the Nation who are sponsored by youth-serving organizations. The goal of the Network is to recognize and build upon the power and importance of youth leadership by uniting young people and adults, through communication and action, to enable youth organizations and nonaffiliated youth to have a positive, formidable impact in our communities and throughout our Nation.*

