

THE REPUBLICAN STUDY COMMITTEE

ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVE



Congressman Jim Jordan (R-OH), RSC Chairman
Congressman Steve Southerland (R-FL), Anti-Poverty Initiative Co-Chairman
Congressman Tim Scott (R-SC), Anti-Poverty Initiative Co-Chairman

Monthly Newsletter

November 2012

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."
—The Declaration of Independence*



There may be no greater obstacle to the pursuit of happiness than poverty, but the traditional welfare state has failed to do justice to the poor. Nearly 50 years and \$16 trillion after President Johnson launched a federal War on Poverty, [46.2 million Americans](#) continue to live in poverty. The question policymakers must confront is how to best combat poverty and help Americans lift themselves up the economic ladder without further increasing the size of the administrative state.

Poverty is about much more than material hardship—it is about relational breakdown. That's why the relational approaches modeled by the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) network are so important. Social entrepreneurs who live in the neighborhoods they serve are showing that success is possible as they transform lives and communities. We need to build on that success and identify and remove barriers to expanding these efforts. Many conservatives believe that effective welfare reforms should include efforts to empower these institutions to do more of the work they do.

This month's RSC Anti-Poverty Initiative newsletter features: 1) the work of the Richmond Outreach Center (the ROC), a private organization that uses the power of strong relationships to help fight poverty in Richmond, Virginia; 2) the Safe Passage program which is a community effort to ensure the safety of early morning pedestrians through the surrounding neighborhood schools in Washington D.C.

The Richmond Outreach Center (the ROC)



(Reps. Jordan and Southerland were hosted by Bob Woodson and Pastor Ronnie "Rsen" Ortiz on a site visit at George Wythe H.S.)

According to a [case study](#), conducted at Baylor University, the city of Richmond had the highest per capita murder rate in the United States in 1999. In 2001, the violent crime rate for youth under 18 was almost four times the state average. In particular, [George Wythe High School](#) had a truancy rate of 66 percent in 2006-07 and was tied for the most youth arrests between January and June of 2008 (36% of all youth arrests in Richmond high schools for that period). But the ROC, working with The Center for Neighborhood Enterprise and local partners, turned this story around by implementing a Violence Free Zone (VFZ) program.

A dynamic team of school officials, the Richmond Police, pastors from [the ROC](#), VFZ youth advisors, and private funders have achieved remarkable results at George

Wythe High School. Calls to police have dropped 18%, truancy is down 41%, and arrests at the school have decreased by 15%. The school today provides a safer, more educational environment for its students.

In addition to helping implement the Violence Free Zone at George Wythe High School, the ROC operates more than [150 outreach programs](#) in the city of Richmond. A non-denominational church, the ROC serves over 11,000 individuals every week through after-school programs, addiction recovery groups, financial literacy courses, and dozens of other ministries.



(Reps. Jordan and Southerland hear from ROC Founder, Pastor Geronimo Aguilar, during their visit to the ROC this past spring)

Since the ROC was established in 2001, crime in the region has significantly decreased. The ROC's youth programs have been cited as a "best practice" to reduce and end youth gang involvement by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Governor Bob McDonnell attributed a 35% crime reduction

in Essex Village and Southwood to the ROC's ministries at work in those areas. Furthermore, he credited the ROC with more young people going to school and a reduction in dropouts and truancy.

The Safe Passage: Anti-Poverty Site Visit

[Safe Passage](#) is a community effort to ensure the safety of early morning pedestrians, predominantly school age children, through the surrounding neighborhood schools in the Glenncrest, Lincoln Heights, and Kenilworth communities of Washington, D.C. Safe Passage is a program that is organized by [Phelps Stokes National Homecomers Academy \(NHA\)](#) which is dedicated to increasing opportunities for the successful integration of returning citizens. The academy's curriculum is based on holistic education, which is essentially about understanding "mind, body, and spirit". NHA embeds these principles by assisting homecomers to redefine themselves as community change agents, thus removing the stigma due to past identities and associating with acts that positively and in a genuinely contribute to the betterment of their respective community.

[Homecomers walk with children each week, daily, from 7:30 -8:30am](#), and the Safe Passage walk is one that demonstrates Homecomers' dedication and contribution to the safety and academic success of students and residents in the District of Columbia.



The RSC will be partnering with Heritage and the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise to host a Member site visit to Safe Passage. If any RSC Member is interested in attending please see the details below, and RSVP.

- **When:** December 5, 2012
- **Time:** 7:30-8:30 a.m.
- **RSVP:** ja'ron.smith@mail.house.gov

Please contact Ja'Ron Smith, at ja'ron.smith@mail.house.gov, if you have any questions or if you know of more private sector organizations that are showing results to solving poverty.