

January 2009

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Dear Friends:

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Safe Streets' creation. Since 1989, Pierce County has undergone dramatic changes. Then and now, community members continue to demonstrate that they value healthy neighborhoods and strong youth leaders. Here's a look back at some of our highlights in 2008:

SPRING



The Larchmont Safe Streets Block Group received an Innovative Grant from Tacoma's South End Neighborhood Council to design and install ten metal street signs. Emblazoned with the words, "Entering a Larchmont Safe Streets Block Watch," it further states that all suspicious activity is reported to the Tacoma Police Department. The personalized signs—a first for a Safe Streets block group—will warn criminals against doing their business in Larchmont territory.



Safe Streets' Youth Leading Change members attended a three-day retreat to strengthen valuable leadership and interpersonal skills. Team-building activities brought students together from different chapters and built connections that transcended school affiliation. Of the several workshops, one that made a strong impression addressed bullying and aggressive behavior. Students discussed how bullying is a form of violence that can lead to fistfights and gun violence.



Over 250 people joined together to paint over graffiti during Safe Streets' "Operation Graffiti Cover-Up." At the kick-off, guest speaker Rebecca Lambert, whose son was murdered by gang members, gave some insight to volunteers: with the simple act of painting over graffiti, they were rejecting gang intimidation and violence. Volunteers painted 247 sites in Eastside, South End, North End and downtown Tacoma; and Lakewood, Spanaway, Parkland and Midland.

SUMMER



High school students in the "Transforming Lives...Transforming Communities" Youth Media Contest shared their opinions about the impact of drugs on their lives and community by creating artwork about the dangers of meth, marijuana and alcohol. The winners were Gabrielle Bell of White River for creative writing; Sarah Clifton of Mount Tahoma for print art; and Steven Cooper, D.J. Hortman and James Ross of Mount Tahoma for public service announcement.



The Rainier Heights Safe Streets block group led 29 people in the installation of playground equipment and other improvements at "The Jumps" park. Youth actively labored alongside adults. Block group leaders Janet and Bruce Emig and Dave Anderson used the county-funded project as a way for neighbors in this small East Pierce County community to have fun, learn more about Safe Streets, and work together to enhance a safe gathering place for children.



On the first Tuesday in August, neighborhoods throughout Tacoma-Pierce County celebrated community unity during National Night Out. This year, 98 block parties were registered with Safe Streets, with anticipated attendance between 8,000 and 10,000 people. That same night, Safe Streets also sponsored “A Show at the Brick,” promoted as a sober, violence-free night of music for youth. Security measures ensured that youth were able to rock out to local bands in a safe environment.



FALL



Every year, we recognize a select group of Superstars—people who exemplify the spirit of community. In September, over 400 people helped us honor them at Safe Streets’ annual Superstar Celebration.

Director’s Award: Representative Dennis Flannigan, a leading community organizer and the founder of Safe Streets.

Outstanding Youth: Teens Empowered Against Meth, a group of high school students who educate Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula youth about the dangers of methamphetamine.

Outstanding Block Group or Coalition: *(Pictured)* Pacific Avenue Business District, a coalition of residents and businesses working to improve Pacific Avenue.

Outstanding Strategic Partner: Reverend Freeman Rhoades of Bethlehem Baptist Church who is reaching out to the Eastside community.

Outstanding Neighborhood Leaders: Gary & Barb Wellman and Norma Levingston, block leaders of the 117th & A Street Block Group in Parkland.



One of the largest and most collaborative demonstrations against crime took place in the fall. The groups—South Yakima, Fern Hill Alliance, Larchmont, Upper Pacific Avenue, Wapato, Stewart Heights, Park Avenue, Pacific Avenue Business District, Mann, Lincoln LAWGs, Lincoln South, and Lincoln West—were joined by Safe Streets staff, elected officials and business owners in waving signs and shouting anti-crime messages at busy intersections.



Nearly 300 people attended the “Unifying Strengths” conference with the objective of organizing a cooperative response to the ongoing meth crisis. Hosted by the National Methamphetamine Training & Technical Assistance Center—led by Safe Streets and Pierce County Alliance—the conference drew participants from as far away as Hawaii. Workshops ranged from meth trafficking by gangs to child endangerment by meth-addicted parents.

It’s no secret that challenging times lay ahead, which is why it is more important than ever that neighbors remember the power of grassroots action and collaboration. We are confident that community members will remember the remarkable progress they’ve made in twenty years. We hope you continue to support us in this new year as we reach out to new friends, find new opportunities, and forge new strategies to address crime. “Together We Can...” make 2009 an amazing year!

Sincerely,

Priscilla Lisicich, Ph.D.
Executive Director