



News Release

Office of the Dutchess County Executive

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COUNTY'S G.R.E.A.T PROGRAM TO GET EVEN BETTER IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CATHARINE STREET COMMUNITY CENTER

Anti-Gang Program expanded with funding secured by NYS Senator Saland

Poughkeepsie, NY.... Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro and New York State Senator Stephen Saland announced \$100,000 in funding secured by Senator Saland from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice for Dutchess County to expand the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program. The funding will enable Dutchess County's Office of Probation and Community Corrections to integrate researched-based family strengthening and summer components into the GREAT program through a collaboration with the Catherine Street Community Center in the City of Poughkeepsie.



The GREAT Program is a federal program designed to prevent youth crime, violence and gang involvement while developing a positive relationship with law enforcement, families and young people through collaboration with other community-based prevention programs to create safer communities.

New York State Senator Stephen Saland, Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro, Catharine Street Community Center (CSCC) Executive Director Shirley Adams and Dutchess County Office of Probation and Community Corrections Director Mary Ellen Still with participants from CSCC's summer program announce the GREAT Program today.

Senator Saland said, “Dutchess County has seen positive outcomes from its successful GREAT program. I am very pleased to provide additional funding to enhance this program that will enable the County to integrate the community-based programming at Catharine Street Community Center and offer a unique approach to combating gang involvement among our youth and keep our communities safer.”

County Executive Molinaro said, “The work of our dedicated probation officers with the GREAT program has made Dutchess County a leader in New York State for anti-gang initiatives. We are grateful to Senator Saland for recognizing the value of this program and assisting us with the necessary funding to be able to take the program to the next level of success.”

The GREAT program can be offered in multiple components: middle school curriculum, elementary school curriculum, a family strengthening program, and a summer program. Dutchess County Probation and Community Corrections currently offers the middle school curriculum in a partnership with Poughkeepsie Middle School. The \$100,000 funding secured by Senator Saland will allow the department to add family strengthening and summer program components into the Catharine Street Community Center’s (CSCC) after-school and summer enrichment programs.

Catherine Street Community Center Executive Director Shirley Adams said, “By weaving the GREAT program into our after-school and summer enrichment programs, we can focus on positive pro-social activities that include a strong family component. Parental involvement is essential to successful youth development and it is important to keep the whole family working together to prevent participation in gang activity.”

The **GREAT Families component** is a research-based family strengthening program designed to strengthen communities by engaging parents and youth in an effort to facilitate better communication and enhance family decision-making skills. Engaging parents is considered a critical element in the program. The GREAT Families curriculum covers a wide range of issues facing today's families. Approximately 10 families will participate in six week cycles. During the six weeks, there will be multiple sessions, each designed to encourage positive behaviors and interactions as well as promote healthy family development. Session topics include:

- Truth and Myths About Gangs
- The Role of Families in Healthy Communities
- Overcoming Communication Barriers
- Family Skills including benefits of having rules, parental monitoring and effective discipline
- Role Models
- Family Relationships
- Families in the Electronic Age including Influence of Different Types of Media on Children and Internet Safety

The **GREAT Summer Component** offers youth an opportunity to enhance their social skills, giving them an alternative to gang involvement by providing them with positive activities. Sports, educational and recreational as well as community service projects will be featured. The goal is to provide students with positive activities to fill their free hours over the summer months and increase their opportunities for social, cognitive and interpersonal growth.

Dutchess County Probation and Community Corrections Director Mary Ellen Still said, “We are very pleased to be able to add the Family and the Summer component to our GREAT program in such a conducive setting as the Catharine Street Community Center. The probation officers who teach the GREAT curriculum develop long lasting relationships with participants. The partnership is already off to an excellent start with kids getting a chance to visit a local firehouse and meet the K-9 unit of the Dutchess County Sheriff Office.”

The Dutchess County Office of Probation and Community Corrections has offered the GREAT program curriculum in the Poughkeepsie Middle School since 2006, when Dutchess County Probation Officer Norm Roush became the first probation officer in the Northeast United States to be certified as an instructor of GREAT by the U.S. Department of Justice. Dutchess County is the only county in New York State to offer the GREAT curriculum through Probation and today has three probation officers certified as GREAT instructors.

“Gang activity is a concern in Dutchess County, and we want to deter our youth from joining gangs by providing pro-social activities and promoting positive and supportive relationships between youth and law enforcement,” said Probation and Community Corrections Director Mary Ellen Still. The City of Poughkeepsie Police Department serves as lead agency for the Operation Impact, a state initiated and funded effort to reduce crime, including gang related crime, in targeted jurisdictions in 17

counties outside of New York City. The Office of Probation is a member of Operation Impact. “We have seen the successful outcomes of focused law enforcement agencies partnerships with Operation Impact. When criminal justice agencies then partner with community agencies demonstrating positive relationships, we can diminish the attractiveness of gangs for young people.”

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