

Youth gangs discuss street crime

The causes and prevention of youth crime are best analyzed by those closest to the problem, according to "Youth Crime and Urban Policy: A View from the Inner City," published by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

The report contains the proceedings of a recent AEI conference in which urban activists met to discuss inner city problems. Editor of the report is Robert L. Woodson, director of the AEI Neighborhood Revitalization Project, which seeks to determine the combination of public policies and neighborhood strategies most likely to succeed in revitalizing urban centers.

Representatives of nine neighborhood-based organizations, which have been working with delinquent youth in some of the nation's largest cities, identified three major problems they encounter in their work:

- Difficulty in dealing with the criminal justice system and with government agencies that exercise authority over various aspects of their work.

- The need to search constantly for financial support from funding agencies.

- Problems in interacting with the young people who need their help.

All agreed, says Woodson, that "when social problems call for doing things to or for people with these problems, it is mandatory that the people themselves become the foremost participants in any policy established and any solutions attempted. Communities themselves must be in charge of their own revitalization and reform services."

JUVENILE AUTHORITIES are largely unaware of the success of local approaches to curb youth crime, Woodson says. He adds that those who do know about these unofficial efforts remain skeptical or indifferent to them. At the same time, he says, official efforts to deal with the problem have been unsuccessful.

"No clear, significant relationship has yet been discovered between any institutional youth program and the subsequent life history or criminal activity of youth treated in these programs. . . . The needs of minority youth who commit most of the serious crimes remain largely unmet."

Those who begin community youth programs are usually people who have successfully survived the frustration and temptations of ghetto living and the threats of minority status, Woodson says.

"They know personally what activates the struggling, violent young people in their midst," he says. "Experience shows that neighborhood people are uniquely able to provide the supportive and subjectively meaningful guidance required so that their own youth can help themselves to wholesome maturity."

In the book, former members of black youth gangs talk about their street experiences and about the reasons they have decided to stop youth crimes instead of committing them. Leaders of community-based organizations explain how they have succeeded on a shoestring when government agencies with millions of dollars to spend have failed.

In the words of Robert (Fat Rob) Allen,

a gang leader for 10 years before joining the House of Umoja in Philadelphia:

"THIS IS A JOB that has to be done beyond nine to five. At the House of Umoja we only work 24 hours a day, any time of day. The people that you pay \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year to deal with these problems can't even deal with them. When there is a problem in the street, those people call us."

Woodson underscored the need for greater public support for self-help neighborhood youth programs.

"The crucial contributions of these youth programs cannot be fully realized if these groups continue to work isolated from one another and outside the main institutional structure," he said. "The recognition, financial support and cooperation necessary to make their work fully effective will only be forthcoming when the true value of these programs becomes widely known."

Woodson, a resident fellow at AEI, is author of "A Summons To Life: Mediating Structures and the Prevention of Youth Crime," published in 1981.

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H.B. Fortney, long-time SC instructor, dies



Harold Fortney

Harold B. Fortney, one of Schoolcraft College's first faculty members and a history instructor there from 1964 to 1977, died Sunday following surgery in St. Mary Hospital.

Services for Fortney, 69, were yesterday from the R.G. and G.R. Harris Funeral Home, the Rev. David Strong of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church officiating. Burial was in Floral Gardens Cemetery, Bay City.

Fortney is survived by his wife, Wilma;

a daughter, Sue Wurdock; brothers Howard and Charles; sister Mary Ullar and two grandchildren.

A West Virginia native, Fortney taught at Bay City Junior College and Delta College, near Bay City, before coming to Schoolcraft.

He was named an "Outstanding Educator of America" in 1975, and he was an active member of the Schoolcraft Foundation board of governors.

Utility scams bring warning

Every summer it gets hot. And just about as regularly some area people — generally the elderly — get ripped off by phony utility representatives.

A new string of scams prompts the Detroit Edison Co. to remind its customers one more time that utility employees never deliver cash refunds or rebates in person. If you're lucky

enough to get one, a uniformed representative of the U.S. government will drop a check in your mailbox.

Check for ID before admitting anybody to your home who identifies themselves as a utility employee. If you're still not sure, call Edison before allowing admittance.

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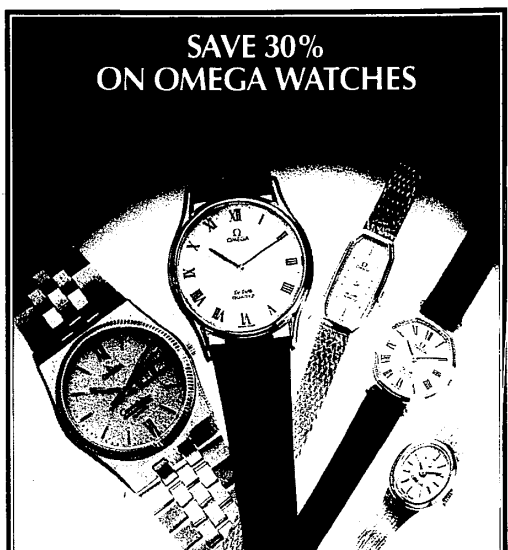
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