

## MEE's Unique Peer-to-Peer Outreach Model: Delivering the Youth Violence Prevention Message

Violence prevention messages travel fast with the help of the Blueprint Campaign Community Action Team (CATs). Equipped with both promotional materials (brochures and post-cards) and strong Blueprint campaign messages, CATs members engage their peers in life-changing dialogues about “changing the game,” and stopping youth violence in Philly—individual by individual, neighborhood by neighborhood. Team members encourage local youth to be a leader rather than a follower, and to realize that they have choices about how to live their lives.

Community Action Teams are made up of the peer group—young Philadelphians who have had first-hand experience with being victims of or witnesses to violent crimes. Trained to counter arguments that justify apathy toward violence and encouraged to share their personal stories, CATs members reach out to their peers on a one-to-one level, hoping this more intimate approach will get to the “heart” of the issue. Moving to unify Philadelphians behind the concept of ending youth violence, CATs members go everywhere—including beauty

salons, barbershops and mass transit stops—to pass out information directing Philadelphia parents and youth to supportive resources and services throughout the city. ☒



**BLUEPRINT**  
for a Safer Philadelphia

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For information about the Campaign,  
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## An Overview of Community Action Teams: Outreach in Action

For Blueprint messages to be given genuine credence, it is vital to allow a cross-section of Philadelphians to have a face-to-face dialogue that allows for the kind of “story-telling” that reflects their oral communications culture. The primary “message senders” in the Blueprint social marketing efforts are young Philadelphians. MEE uses its unique peer-led interpersonal communications model to spread positive word-of-mouth about the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia Campaign, serving as a key message delivery component. Peer-level involvement in the campaign is an effective and empowering mechanism to engage Philadelphians in ongoing conversation around violence prevention. By doing this, we build respect and positive sentiment for the campaign.

MEE recruited youth from targeted neighborhoods in Philadelphia to become CATs members, and to go into communities to disseminate and display campaign materials and the campaign’s messages about youth violence prevention. Adult CATs Coordinators were recruited to supervise youth during structured three-hour outreach activities, as well as to serve as their mentors and guides.

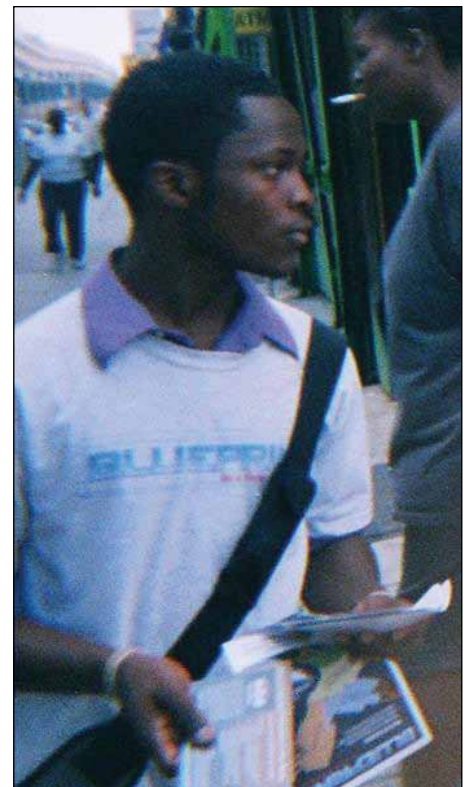
To prepare youth to conduct community outreach, youth were instructed on MEE’s outreach process during half-day training sessions, where they also learned how to effectively engage peers and community residents in dialogue. They use MEE’s argument/counter-argument approach to change attitudes and ultimately influence behavior change. These empowered individuals have shared their experiences



and knowledge about violence prevention and promoted the campaign messages, even appearing as guests on local talk radio programs.

CATs members who have been trained to conduct outreach in groups of three or more have “pitched” the Blueprint’s message in a variety of public settings that allow for brief contact, including hair and nail salons, barbershops, public housing, high-traffic retail outlets, including malls, and shopping centers and mass transit stops frequented by the target audience. Street-blitzing materials include brochures, flyers, posters and other campaign giveaways.

In addition to conducting ongoing street outreach, CATs members disseminate campaign materials and promotional items at community forums and festivals, health fairs, jobs and other related activities. Through one-on-one interactions, along with materials dissemination at large community events, the CATs have helped distribute nearly 150,000 pieces of Blueprint marketing materials since the start of the campaign. ☒



### **CATs Outreach**

*Individual by individual, neighborhood by neighborhood, CATs members encourage local youth and residents to realize that they have choices about how to live their lives.*

## Expanding Opportunities for Young People

Year Two (25)



In **Year Two** of the Blueprint Campaign, MEE successfully developed and launched the proprietary peer-to-peer called “Community Action Teams.” We recruited, trained and retained approximately 25 male and female youth participants. These young people delivered violence prevention messages to their peers and community adults using verbal pitches and customized materials. They promoted the importance of education and helped residents seeking resources to assist with their problems, through the toll-free resource line and campaign Websites.

Year Three (50)



**Year Three**, the CATs participated in numerous community-based events across the City, with a focus on the Point Breeze and Cobbs Creek neighborhoods. The CATs Teams, made up of approximately 50 local youth and young adults, saturated these two neighborhoods with messages and materials as part of their outreach activities. Members continued to direct residents to the hotline and the Website for resources in their communities.

Year Four (100)



In **Year Four**, MEE continued to penetrate communities across Philadelphia with the Blueprint message. MEE continued to grow the CATs peer-to-peer outreach component of the campaign, providing numerous incentive-driven opportunities to youth up to age 18. We sought to increase the numbers of participating youth from 50 to 100, and had them deliver a message of education as a prevention strategy for violence. We also hired more adults to assist in implementing this grassroots delivery component.



## Developing Youth: Providing Growth Activities for Peer Leaders

### 2007 Retreat

The Blueprint held its first CATs Retreat on the weekend of June 30 and July 1, 2007. The goal of the retreat was to foster teamwork and collaboration among CATs members and their Coordinators (the adults who supervise and mentor the youth). Held at The Country Place Retreat Center in Whitehaven, PA, there was an exciting weekend full of fun activities and personal development exercises conducted by local experts in the fields of mentoring, team building and youth development. The retreat was a huge success, with nearly three dozen youth engaging in various training and skills-building exercises,

along with recreational activities such as swimming and football. Nine CATs Coordinators and six members of MEE's staff also attended the retreat.




### 2009 Youth Development Activities

CATs participation not only provides participants with many short-term, campaign-oriented outreach skills, but also instills long-term life skills that participants can apply for successful living. Youth development aspects supported by CATs participation include: socialization skills; personal hygiene and public speaking; self-esteem/confidence building; work ethic and workplace expectations; financial literacy; and educational development. Booster trainings were held throughout the campaign to further educate participants around conflict-resolution strategies, answer any questions they might have and to reinforce learned skills.

During the summer of 2009, more than 60 youth combined street outreach with half-day youth de-

velopment sessions focused on skills-building. Presenters from the private and non-profit sectors were brought in to conduct interactive sessions focused on career paths, promoting sexual health, increasing academic performance and navigating the politics and criminal justice systems. For example, in August, MEE provided a writing workshop that engaged youth in various exercises designed to increase their vocabulary, reinforce the “rules” of punctuation and grammar and improve their reading and communications skills. Youth also visited local colleges and the city’s African American Museum. The learnings from this and other sessions will help CATs members in their academic, personal and professional pursuits. [B](#)

## Community Action Teams - What They Do

During outreach, groups of CATs members go out into the community on scheduled days, led by an adult CATs Coordinator who serves as both the outreach leader and, when necessary, a social worker for members who need help with personal issues. When in the field, CATs members are responsible for implementing five aspects of MEE's outreach strategy: **Hand It** (postcards and flyers); **Place It** (postcards); **Post It** (stapled posters), **Promote It** (partnering with Blueprint grantees and campaign partners), and **Outreach** (talk about it). The outreach activity translates into earned outreach points for members, and upon reaching pre-established levels, members have the option to trade in their points for material goods or services from program sponsors. 



### *CATs Outreach Preparation*

*To prepare youth to conduct community outreach, youth are instructed on MEE's proven outreach process. They learn how to effectively engage peers in dialogue through MEE's argument/counter-argument approach to changing attitudes and community norms.*

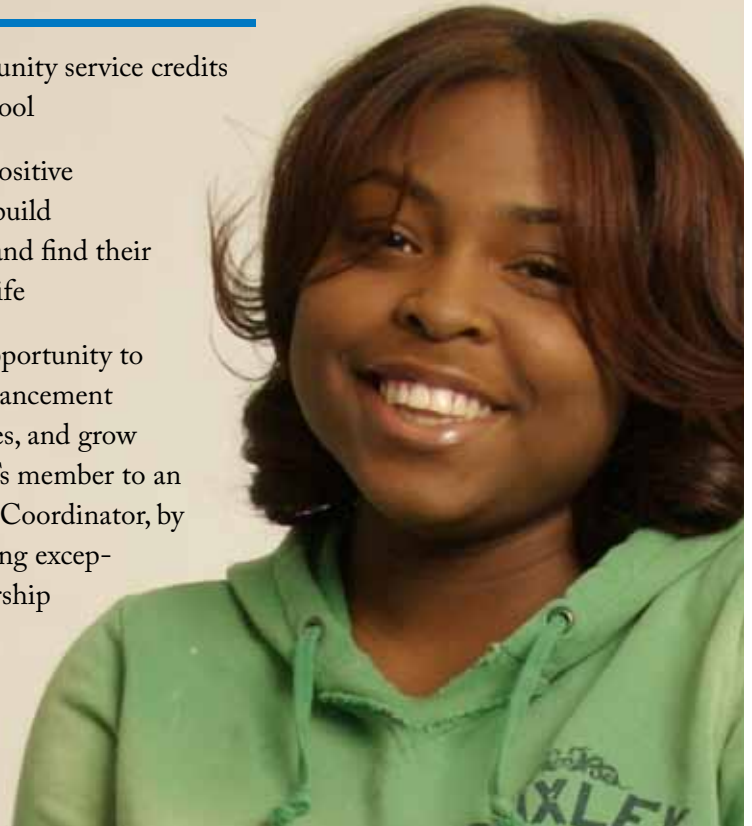


## Everyone Benefits from Peer Leader Development

*Peer-led outreach is a tool that can be used for a variety of services, issues and needs!*

### **Participating Youth:**

- Develop leadership skills that will last a lifetime
- Receive free training in important life, academic and communications skills
- Learn to navigate their city using public transit
- Gain exposure to new experiences, people and places
- Earn money and incentives as compensation for their participation
- Build their résumé with outreach and communications experience gained in the campaign
- Earn community service credits for high school
- Develop a positive self-image, build confidence and find their purpose in life
- Have the opportunity to leverage advancement opportunities, and grow from a CATs member to an adult CATs Coordinator, by demonstrating exceptional leadership skills



### **The Community as a Whole Also Benefits:**

- Community youth are engaged in positive, constructive activities that are safe and adult supervised.
- The message “content” on violence prevention (or any public health issue) gets left in the community, leading to changes in norms, attitudes and behaviors.
- Being part of the campaign teaches youth how to influence their peers and empowers them to create positive change in their community—on any issue of importance.

## Measuring Our Effectiveness

Throughout the Blueprint Violence Prevention campaign, MEE measured the effectiveness of its CATs component by monitoring the number of: materials handed out and/or posted; people engaged in conversation with youth regarding the campaign messages; youth participating in each outreach activity; and local zip code areas blitzed.

MEE conducted an ongoing comprehensive process review of its CATs standard operating procedures for youth recruited and trained to participate in the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia campaign. We examined how effectively the CATs members conducted peer outreach in the community. MEE's internal review included an assessment of the recruitment and training process; the sequencing and timing of CATs activities; and the allocation of duties among CATs coordinators and MEE staff.

MEE management conducted audits of the CATs component throughout the campaign, in order to review the continued commitment of members to participate in the campaign. Top staff also ensured that appropriate documentation was in place, such as

parent consent forms for those under 18. That process began with a review of all in-house hard-copy CATs personnel files. MEE also developed a three-tiered CATs incentive point system and compensation plan, with graduated levels of required activities.

MEE examined the importance of financial incentives in attracting and retaining CATs members and the effectiveness of activities designed to enhance their educational development (including tutoring support and stipends for improved grades). In addition, a CATs Accountability Tracking Sheet was developed to assist in auditing each CATs member for participation in various bonus activities, and more importantly, for earning the point awards that would allow him or her to be promoted to the next tier level of campaign participation.

MEE used audience mapping software to audit the outreach calendar (to ensure adequate blitzing of targeted zip codes). The CATs Coordinators reviewed and monitored the assignment forms and attendance sheets for every outreach session during the campaign. They also provided an accounting of the

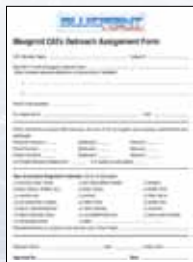


### **Adult CATs Coordinators**

*Adult CATs Coordinators have been recruited to supervised youth during structured outreach activities, as well as to serve as their mentors and guides.*

amount of materials disseminated, locations blitzed and number of points/stipends earned. We also implemented photo/video documentation and unannounced, on-site monitoring of CATs outreach. Booster trainings kept outreach messages on target and allowed CATs members to provide important input into how the campaign was shared with their peers. [B](#)

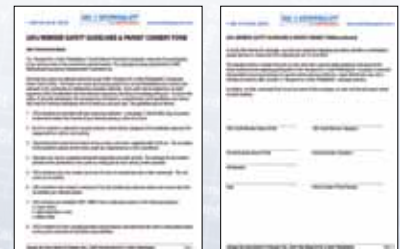
**Outreach Form**



**Training Manual**



**Safety Guidelines**



## CATs Members Share Their Stories

### Henry Richardson, 16

Hello, my name is Henry Richardson. I'm a CATs member at the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia.

As a young Black African American, I like to enjoy life, instead of getting into fights and arguing all the time. I like to travel, play basketball and football, and I also like riding my bike around the city with my friends. I'm also a honor roll student. I get my work done on time, and I receive rewards for my accomplishments. For my last report card, I received two Bs and five As; my GPA is 3.70. I'm proud of my accomplishments and I will work harder to get all As for my final grades when I graduate out of high school.

I don't like to promote violence. I like to increase the peace, and talk about education to other kids, so they can be inspired and live up to what they want to

be. I feel that violence is destroying our population, so I'm glad to go out and have the opportunity to talk about preventing violence and promoting education, because education is the key to success.

### Maria Carambo, 20

My name is Mariaeloina Carambo. I have been involved with the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia Campaign since it began. I started off as a shy eleventh grader in May 2006. The Blueprint program opened doors for me that I was not even aware existed. It helped me find my voice, which I now use for public speaking in high schools. I began as a one of the Community Action Team members, and am now a CATs Coordinator and administrative assistant for MEE Productions.

My experience with MEE and the Blueprint Campaign has been amazing and life altering. I am dedicating my college education to learn more about the problems MEE and Blueprint are dedicated to raising. I am studying the history and current state of poor urban African American communities across the United States.

As both an African American and Hispanic, I am proud to be part of such an amazing company and campaign that is dedicated to addressing and attempting to fix problems in the Black and Hispanic neighborhoods.

### Kyree Marsh, 17

My name is Kyree T. Marsh. My mom died when I was 2 and my dad was never in my life, so they placed me and my sisters in foster care. And we've been bouncing around from foster home to foster home until I was at least 9 yrs. old. When I was 9, I found the perfect foster home or it seemed like the perfect one. That is when I met some wonderful people whose names are Marvin Summerville and Janice Blake-Summerville, who were willing to take a kid like me in. To tell you right now, I would not be the person I am today if it wasn't for them. They were by my side even when we went to a custody hearing when my dad told the judge that he didn't want me back. That broke my heart to hear that from my own dad's mouth. But this Summerville household kept me on the straight and narrow, where I went to church with them and on vacations. These two people should win a lifetime best-parent award, because they didn't have to take me in. I learned how to be a man from the one and only man that has been there for me. That is my uncle today Marvin Summerville. And the lady that is by

his side that taught me to respect women is Janice Blake-Summerville. [@](#)

