



## Youth Center Offers Haven, Hope Program Aims to Unite Police, Community

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Though she is only 12, Cecile Carter knows the ravages of crime from growing up in the Carver Terrace Apartments in Northeast Washington. Her older brother was shot dead there last year, and she knows of the distrust residents harbor for the police. Yesterday, though, was a day for Cecile to be hopeful. She was among those who turned out for an opening ceremony for a community center at Carver Terrace that will include a play area, computer room, food bank and satellite police station.

Starting next week, the Youth Safe Haven Police Ministration at 2026 Maryland Ave. NE will begin operating in phases, placing D.C. police officers side by side with residents and community activists. The venture is sponsored by the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, a nonprofit foundation that promotes solutions to urban problems.

"I think this program will be great," Cecile said. "We get to know a safer side of the police, and the police get to [know] us kids and talk to us not as suspects or witnesses. On top of that, we get a community center where we can hang out with our friends and a place to do homework, play and be safe. I just can't wait."

Cecile's brother, Dennis Carter Jr., 17, was shot in the 2000 block of Maryland Avenue NE about 10:15 p.m. May 24. No one has been arrested in the case.

The foundation is putting up \$93,000 to get the program started.

The owners of the sprawling apartment complex -- the tenants and a management company -- are donating 12 units for the program that will be used to house various police and community activities. These will be used for recreational activities, computer classes, youth programs, police services and other purposes.

The sponsors said they hope the center will foster a better understanding between residents and police and lead to a reduction in crime in the area.

"We want them to understand the problems they both have," said Eddie W. Banks, co-director of the foundation's youth investment and police mentoring initiative.

The foundation, which has promoted projects to strengthen ties between police and residents, operates similar centers in Savannah, Ga., Columbia, S.C., and four

communities in New Hampshire. In Columbia, police Capt. Estelle Young said yesterday that the program has been "wonderful" for police and youth.

Lynn A. Curtis, the foundation's president, said the other efforts had impressive results, reducing crime in some neighborhoods by about 20 percent. The foundation said it initiated a similar program in the District in 1994, but it faded after the police department shifted officers out of the program.

Curtis called the project a humane alternative to the "zero tolerance" approach to policing in which officers arrest citizens for even the most minor infractions.

"We have found that zero tolerance is oversold," he said. "Programs like this, you develop kids. Zero tolerance does the opposite."

D.C. Assistant Police Chief Brian K. Jordan, who attended the opening ceremony, said he views the effort as another tool in the battle against crime.

Speakers at the kickoff event included Virginia E. Hayes Williams, mother of Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D), who stepped up to the podium and without further word, belted out a rendition of "Amazing Grace." Shortly into the song, she urged all to join in.

"I did this," she said afterward, "because we can work together, we can sing together, we can make this happen.

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