

R.O.P.E. aims to curb gang violence

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By Phil Dunn

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Volunteers from the Calvary Community Development Corporation (CCDC) are again reaching out to provide a specific kind of service designed for young men.

R.O.P.E. (Reaching Out In Plain English), an extension of the CDCC, will hold an informative session Saturday on the subject of gangs.

Young men throughout Salem County are encouraged to attend.

"These sessions are a very a positive thing because they address the issue of violence in Salem County," said Michael Brown, chair of the R.O.P.E board. "Crime is on the rise and it's time we start to address these negative topics with a positive message."

The session will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the Edward W. Dorn Community Center in Pedricktown for males ages 12 and older.

Breakfast will be served and topics will be discussed such as the effects gangs can have on young men, their families, and the community. The Salem County Prosecutor's Office will also take part in the event. County Chief of Detectives Ralph Padilla will be giving a PowerPoint presentation on gangs.

The session will also promote positive alternative activities for the men. These include demonstrations on golf, fishing, and karate. Beginner cooking classes will also be held at the event.

"R.O.P.E. deals with problems our young men are experiencing and provides an environment that empowers them with skills to manage their situations," said Earl Ransome Jr., board member for the CCDC.

This session is the third installment for the R.O.P.E. program. The first session was held last May. It focused on the topic of manhood and what it means to be a man.

The second session, held in September, addressed the subject of peer pressure.

"The peer pressure session was a good one," said Ransome. "It was lead by Marcus Dowe Jr. He teaches in the Penns Grove School District and he helped act out different scenarios for the men."

The third session on gangs will be the first session Brown will take part in directly. The AAU basketball coach hopes for a turnout of nearly 50 young men.

The program will see men coming from Penns Grove, Carneys Point, Salem, and Woodstown. Students from Ranch Hope's Strang School will also be attending.

"Our young men are shown great alternatives in life, different from the lifestyle the media often portrays," said Ransome. "Different from the lifestyle some may be living currently."

R.O.P.E. recently reorganized and now has an executive board chaired by Brown, of Penns Grove, an activity committee chaired by Theodis Dowe of Carneys Point, and a recruitment/marketing committee chaired by Robert Green of Gibbstown.

"We expect the R.O.P.E. program will grow and have a positive impact on the youth in the surrounding community," said Ransome.

Approximately 30 men have volunteered their time and pulled resources together for R.O.P.E. They are doing what is necessary to have a positive impact on the youth here in Salem County.

"This program attempts to provide a leverage upon which we can challenge the status quo and move forward, raising the bar for ourselves, and more importantly for our younger males," said Ransome.

The R.O.P.E. third session will take place on Saturday at the Edward W. Dorn Community Center, located at 26 Pennsville-Pedricktown Road.

For more information on the free event, contact the CCDC at 299-8020.