



**Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County**

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The Drug Intervention Group (DIG) is a Santa Rosa-based community action organization established in 2000 and comprised of socially conscious young adults from entirely diverse backgrounds. Although we attend different schools and live in different neighborhoods, we are deeply connected in the desire to make our city a safe haven for all youth. DIG uses community service and cultural involvement as a means of informing at-risk adolescents of the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and gang life. Furthermore, we challenge and encourage these same kids to take on active roles in our community, transforming them into campus leaders and positive role models. We have found that challenging and motivating youth to make their communities and schools safer places is one of the most effective strategies in reducing delinquency and youth victimization.

As a result of fundraisers, sponsorships, and a generous contribution from Kaiser Permanente, DIG had the opportunity to send nine group members to Denver, Colorado, for the 18<sup>th</sup> National Youth Crime Prevention Conference and International Forum (NYCPC) in March of 2006.

Since conference attendees represented 33 U.S. states and several international locations, our time in Denver was invaluable for extensive networking, training, and, most importantly, learning. This knowledge came in many creative forms, ranging from lectures and panel discussions to skits and game shows. DIG as a whole brought back the necessary tools, guidance, and self-confidence to help prevent crime, violence, and drug abuse. We acquired new skills and prevention methods that have made us more effective leaders in the community. On a deeper level, however, we witnessed firsthand a

*"Our experience was simply unforgettable! This annual conference offers youth and our adult allies inspiration, valuable skills, prevention knowledge, and national resources in the fight against crime, violence, and drugs. In Denver we were empowered by personal testimony from conference speaker Paul Rusesabagina (whose incredible story inspired the film *Hotel Rwanda*), as well as a plethora of valuable and relevant workshops such as Analyzing Gangs: Do We Have the Right Problems?, The Hip Hop Culture and Its Influence on Families, and Youth Fighting Substance Abuse."*

phenomenon that validated all of our aims as a community action group: Every community, regardless of location, struggles with certain problems. Fortunately, there are also people devoted to solving these problems. The Denver conference opened my eyes to the importance of youth crime prevention on a large scale, and thus confirmed my work with DIG- and DIG's work on the whole- as a truly worthy pastime.

**Celebrating 40 Years of Helping People & Changing Lives 1967~2007**

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On April 28, 2006, DIG hosted a citywide youth leadership conference in conjunction with the nationally renowned Youth Leadership Institute (YLI). This "LIFE Summit" (Lead, Inspire, Focus, and Encourage) provided nearly seventy young adults with tips to enhance their leadership potential through cooperation, determination, and self-confidence. Several of the activities in our LIFE Summit were based on workshop lessons we learned in Denver.

The time has now come to begin raising money for the 19<sup>th</sup> National Youth Crime Prevention Conference in Miami, Florida. DIG members have already planned out numerous fundraisers for the following months, but we realize that we cannot possibly raise the funds to cover the cost of the entire trip without large sponsorships and contributions. We have already secured a "match" of up to \$4,000, but we have calculated that the full price of the journey will run slightly over \$13,000. That number seems monstrous (indeed, terrifying, especially to DIG members on little or no incomes!), but I trust we can reach it together. I urge you to think of any contribution as an "investment" rather than a "donation", because the money will reap benefits far beyond Miami. There are no limits to what youth can achieve, especially when we are equipped with the right tools, the right plan, the right support, and the right attitude.

DIG members will undoubtedly gain significant knowledge in all areas of youth crime prevention, but this time we are much more focused in terms of what we specifically desire to take away from the conference workshops. In the past year, several alcohol-related teenage tragedies have hit dangerously close to home; so recently, after much deliberation, DIG decided to focus its efforts especially on community problems associated with underage drinking. Through a combination of our present prevention strategies and the cutting-edge methods we will learn in Miami, DIG plans to reduce the numbers of youths reporting that they have driven or ridden with someone under the influence, increase community awareness of alcohol-related problems and solutions, and curtail the prevalence of alcohol outlets selling to minors. We feel these are laudable goals that will benefit the entire community. Thank you for your time and your support in making Sonoma County a safer, healthier place for all that live here.

Sincerely,

Conference Committee Chair