**Rage to Responsibility (“R2R”):**

**A Community Initiative to Keep Our Youth off the**

**Slippery Slope of Violence**

**Problem:** *Youth today are becoming victims (and perpetrators) of violence at an alarming rate. Perpetrators of this violence can be fellow young people, neighbors, friends, and even family members.*

**Proposal:** *Begin a community-based dialogue and initiative to engage our youth and community members/leaders on the societal norms and issues that perpetuate this violence. The Rage to Responsibility (“R2R”) program is designed to begin and sustain this initiative. It is based on the delivery of a variety of awareness and educational programs to combat the perpetuation of the negative and destructive stereotypes that have paralyzed our city youth for generations. R2R is committed to bringing the best in community leaders and role models together to help bring this message to our youth in a positive and meaningful way.*

*In addition to educating our youth, R2R will also provide effective training strategies to our many neighborhood and community-based workers and volunteers who interact with our youth on a regular basis.*

**Delivery:** *The R2R program will be coordinated by the senior leadership team at WSM Trainers and Consultants (Rochester, NY) and will require a direct liaison with 1). the Mayor and/or County Executive’s office, 2). the primary law enforcement agency, 3). the Board of Education, and 4). the local leaders in the faith community. The first priority will be to recruit community volunteers and mentors and to provide train-the-trainer level awareness training in a series of 2-4 hour programs.*

*The second priority will be to identify and facilitate the targeted programming and community outreach initiatives to bring the R2R program to our youth in the most successful way possible (church related outreach, prison/probation & parole populations, programming in community and recreational centers, K-12/Higher Education initiatives, working with other community-based programs, etc.). Initial and on-going program assessment will be an integral aspect of this program. WSM is also committed to writing articles, applying for grants and hoping to bring this new initiative to a national dialogue and action.*

*Some of the most significant components of this new program are noted below:*

**“The 3 Pillars” of Lifting up our Youth:**

1. **DIGNITY**; **Building the Foundation of Effective Communication**

**D**evelop rapport; be patient, it may take time (talk with others; not at them or about them) **I**nvite healthy debate and the sharing of differences, **G**ain a new perspective (open your mind to the world of other people), **N**avigate the minefield of emotions with compassion and understanding,  **I**nvolve everyone in dealing with issues/problem-solving, **T**ell the truth, and remember **Y**outh are the future!

2. **RESPECT**; **The Communication Recovery System**

**R**ecognize the breakdown in communication,
**E**xplain your intent and acknowledge the impact,
**S**olicit/accept the feedback,
**P**araphrase your new understanding,
**E**ngage in a deeper dialogue to seek greater understanding,
**C**lose the dialogue and apologize, and
**T**hank them!

3. **TRUST**; **Effective Bystander Intervention for Everyone**

**T**reat both parties/everyone fairly,
**R**eframe the dialogue/debate,
**U**se **LEAPS** (Listen, Empathy, Ask, Paraphrase and Summarize),
**S**ummarize your agreement, and
**T**ake responsibility!

**Additional Teaching Strategies and Program Goals:**

* Teach the foundational history of the black experience in American (i.e. challenging the myth of black inferiority).
* Discuss the on-going challenges of the Black, Latino and other minority populations in assimilating into the American dream.
* Address the societal negative racial stereotypes through positive dialogue and peer/mentor examples.
* Teach bystander intervention strategies through scenario-based role plays and an in-depth study/discussion of previous violent encounters (i.e. Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Eric Gardner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, etc.).
* Address self-respect issues through positive peer and mentor examples/ interactions.
* Produce high impact public safety announcements (PSAs) and other multi-media initiatives to support R2R.
* Solicit grant and private industry funding sources and create a non-for-profit foundation to sustain the program at a national level.

**The Continuum of Communication:**

 *(This is where we want to be)*

PASSIVE ------------ **ASSERTIVE, yet respectful** ------------ AGGRESSIVE

**STREET SURVIVAL for our Youth:**

* Be assertive, yet respectful in your interactions with others
* Know your rights and responsibilities
* Obey all lawful orders and reasonable requests
* Don’t interfere with someone doing their job (police officers, teachers, business owners, etc.)
* Listen without interrupting
* Pay attention to others around you (it’s not all about YOU)
* Know when to disengage
* Be a good support to others

**A DIVERSITY Pledge:**

I will **respect** the differences of all people,

I will actively try to **understand** and **appreciate** the differences of all people,

I will not use hateful or stereotype language and labels,

I will not tell or listen to jokes, anecdotes or stories that perpetuate negative stereotypes, and

I will advocate and intervene in a respectful manner when I witness hateful words or actions of others.

**A CIVILITY Pledge:**

I will be civil in my words and actions,

I will respect others; even if I disagree with them,

I will strive to appreciate the difference of others, and

I will combat incivility when I see it.

The three coordinators of the Rage to Responsibility (R2R) initiative from WSM Trainers and Consultants (Lee Struble, Steve Grant and Clifton H. Manns, Sr.) have a combined 75 years of law enforcement and higher education experience. As such, they are uniquely qualified, as well as personally committed to lead this important dialogue and effort. For more information, please feel free to reach out to them for additional information:

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