



Bringing People Together

An Urban Neighborhood's Restorative Approach to Marijuana Markets

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- » Partners in Restorative Initiatives is a nonprofit community-based organization in Rochester, NY. Our goal is to build a more peaceful community.
- » Works with schools, courts and communities to instill restorative practices through education, training and facilitation.
- » Offers training in Peace Circles, Community Conferencing and other restorative practices.

Partners In Restorative Initiatives (PiRI)



- » **Our mission with the Drug Free Streets Initiative:** make urban residential communities in the city of Rochester, NY safer by reducing open-air drug sales (sales on the street, parks, outside of businesses, etc). Our work developed through the Ibero-American Development Corporation.

- » Ibero-American Development Corporation (IADC) is a non-profit that does:
 - > Community Development: real-estate and property management with rental-to-own properties at affordable rates; and neighborhood engagement (community organizing)
 - > In 2008: hired a group of community organizers (Project HOPE) who began to work in a challenged neighborhood. Residents identified Drugs as #1 issue that affects their health and the health of their neighbors through an asset mapping survey.
 - > In 2009: Residents began getting involved in creating solutions.

Our Mission



Where did we start?

In 2009, residents decided to start taking action and began community walks, resident meetings, and planning around the issue.



Drug Walks: over 60 in the neighborhood in the last 5 years;
Message delivered: "We love you but hate what you are doing to our neighborhood."



Commitment to change

Improvements include:
Housing, Sofrioto Garden,
El Camino trail, Conkey
Corner Park.



Out with the Old



Improving the Neighborhood



Still... plagued by drug
sales on the streets,
especially marijuana
sales.



Community meetings, programs & events: block clubs, safety committee, youth & elder focused programs and events through Project HOPE.

Why Marijuana?

- **New York State Laws**

Decriminalization of laws pertaining to marijuana; possession of 25 grams or less is a violation – receives a fine but back on the corner selling the next day. A sale is a crime but not a priority in the courts due to harder drugs and other cases.



- **Limited resources to test & prosecute**

Crime lab tests for the city of Rochester, county and surrounding counties; marijuana isn't a priority to test compared to other cases (homicides to arson, etc).



- **Increased Social Acceptance**



Here's an Example



Corner of Clifford & Conkey Avenues – has been a drug market for over 30 years



The **new park** we built with residents: in the background here



What the **community sees**: same people on the corner/street day after day, arrest after arrest; Children, sisters, cousins, neighbors negatively influenced by their actions;

Residents/Business owners feelings: frustrated with police officers, limitation on what they're willing to do; threatened if constantly reporting on sellers; tired/weary from trying to do something about violence/drug issues

Police: frustrated by recurrence; limitations on what they CAN do



Neighborhood Victimization

Rochester Police

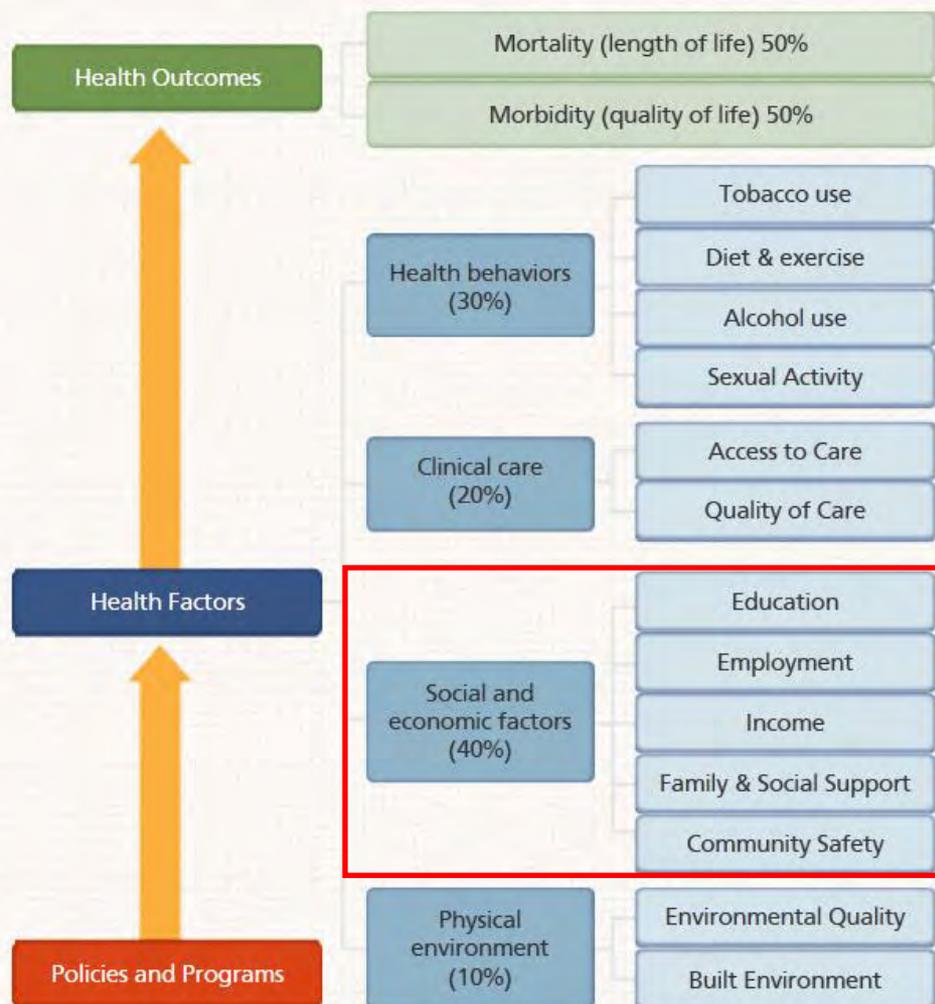
Department: letter writing campaign to people buying in the area of that Conkey-Clifford corner to deter buyers.



66% of letters were mailed outside the City of Rochester



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



County Health Rankings model ©2012 UWPHI

- The *Roadmaps to Health Community Grants* program (Community Grants) will support communities to implement policy or system changes to address one of the social or economic factors that, as defined by the County Health Rankings, most strongly influence health outcomes in their community.

RDFSJ is one of two Roadmaps to Health grantees funded around Community Safety. We built a Coalition of organizations including DA's office, City Law Dept., residents, police, nonprofits, etc who are working to address the issue.



Our Proposed Model



- » Neighborhoods we're working in (2 in particular with the Conkey-Clifford market as pilot focus):
 - > Lower income; troubled with violence, drug sales, loitering, high unemployment; low social determinants of health; many renters
 - > Rich with neighbors who care; residents name "good neighbors" as one of the best parts of the neighborhood; people that own that have lived their for 20 or more years and a few year renters who don't want to leave.
 - > Rich with community organizing, active resident participation, close libraries, schools, businesses and recreation centers.

- » Individuals who are selling on the street tend to be:
 - > Male, between 16 and 28 years old, dropped out of school, some with records and some without convictions (this quadrant of Rochester has the over 65% of the formerly incarcerated population of the city).
 - > Some addiction to street life while others very ready and interested in other paths of gaining income; most seem to desire GED and trade training OR immediate employment .

Demographics



Restorative Community Circles (RCCs)

- » Community residents take action within their neighborhood
- » Individuals who are selling are held accountable for his/her actions
- » Achieve a sense of reconnection to the residents and the community

What caused you to begin selling marijuana?

How has this choice affected you, your family, the community?

What supports do you need to achieve your goals?



RCC = a hybrid of community conferencing, peace circles & restorative transition circles (Lauren Walker's work with youth in HI); Purpose is **intervention** (before a conviction); **Harm** we're focusing on is the impact of selling = **BEHAVIOR**; Victims are: resident (self, family, neighbors) and neighborhood; **Restoration** -- focused on supporting a change in behavior and a different way to get one's needs met



Restorative Process



Voluntary

Outreach

- Building relationships with individuals; includes building buy-in to the restorative process

Pre-circle

- Includes supporters

Restorative Community Circles

- Residents and supporters using restorative language
- Who is present varies based around the individual's goals and needs
- Individual Plan for Success created during break

Follow-up

- Support individual, problem solve and celebrate successes
- Uses restorative conversations

Sustainable

- Residents as facilitators



Restorative Community Circle

Roles:

- ❖ **Facilitators** (in start up they are staff & 2 in-training resident facilitators; long-term all facilitators will be residents)
- ❖ **Staff members- 2** (our Outreach person is the most consistent Supporter in the whole process; RP coordinator as a resource person in the circles)

Agenda

- ❖ Welcome
- ❖ Guidelines
- ❖ **What's Going on & Impact**
- ❖ **Strengths**
- ❖ **Individual Plan for Success**
- ❖ Closing >



> **Individual Plan for Success (IP4S):**

- + Respondent: share your goals and what type of support you need to help you reach them.
- + Everyone else: what they would like to see happen and offers of support they want to make.
- + All of the above is recorded on flip-chart paper on the wall.
- + Take a break (about 15 min) to create IP4S:
 - Respondent works with supporters , staff resource person and lead facilitator to draft a plan.
 - The focus is on taking 1- 2 of the goals written up on the flip-chart paper and drafting a couple of first-second action steps for reaching each goal. These go on an IP4S plan paper. Steps for other goals will be developed in the weekly to bi-weekly follow up between the RP coordinator and the Respondent.
- + Reconvene the circle: Respondent shares her/his plan with the Circle.

Individual Plan for Success





Seller
Engagement



Resident
Engagement



Where
are we?



» Resident engagement:

> Successes

- + Over 100 residents (in 2 focus neighborhoods) sign-uped to learn more and/or be involved
- + Active Resident Advisory Committee (10-12 people at monthly meetings)
- + Residents spoke at City Council about drug issues in their neighborhood
- + Engaging with RCCs : restorative practices training (more to come) with PIRI; role plays on RCCs; have 5 people in training as apprentice facilitators (2 are residents rest are staff); have about 15 in training for community resident role
- + By end of Nov -- enough residents to run the RCCs (2 apprentice facilitators, about 12 community residents)

> Challenges: intimidation, fear of retaliation, fear that nothing will change/burnout

> Learnings:

- + Nothing will change: Mock circles/role plays for education; gotten more people to buy-in; willing to try alternatives, something new
- + Community “education” through community forum
- + Intimidation: Name and outreach message changes: new Community friendly name – INSPIRE: Invested Neighbors Seeking Progress, Inspiration, Restoration, and Empowerment

» Street outreach with individuals selling:

> Connecting with youth on the streets selling – building a relationship

> Restorative: focus is on What’s going on? What’s your story?

> Successes: A number of the individuals selling are interested & willing to take part voluntarily

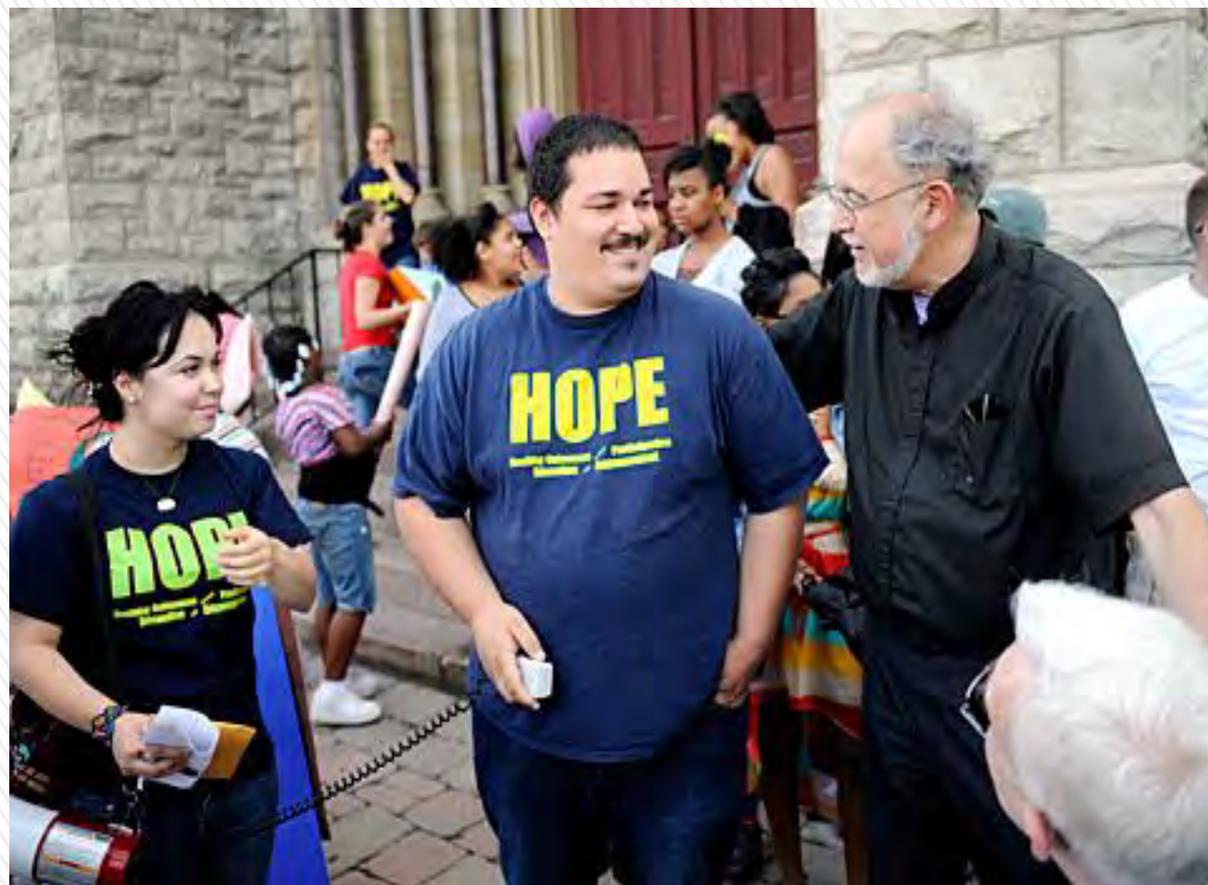
> Challenges:

- + Following up with interested individuals
- + Short amount of time: trying to get buy-in to talk to us and consider following up with us without much time to trust-build – it’s going to take longer and be an on-going process
- + One outreach worker on staff

> Learnings

- + Buy-in: getting introductions from community outreach staff (community organizers through Projects HOPE, Project Bridges To Wellness, and our city’s Gang Intervention outreach workers at Pathways to Peace)
- + Try engaging in a different place –at library/rec center, over a meal, etc

Information on “where are we”?



INSPIRE
INITIATIVE
Invested Neighbors Seeking
Progress, Inspiration,
Restoration, & Empowerment

Community Nuisance Issue

We're seeking relief for the **weary residents**. We want to engage people in restorative practices but know it will not work for everyone. Protection for the community is the second tier of our model.



- » Civil Injunction for those caught selling drugs in identified area.
- » Prohibits individual from being in the area in which they've consistently sold drugs.
- » Does not penalize individuals with criminal records.

Protective Order for the Community...for those who continue to sell marijuana in the neighborhood.



Protective Order for the Community: The Process

- **Amendment of Local ordinance or State Statute**
- **Undercover buys will be conducted on sellers who refuse to stop selling drugs.**
- **Undercover buy will be used as evidence in a civil injunction brought forth by the City of Rochester and the community in a joint petition.**
- **Injunctive relief will prohibit seller from hanging out in the area in which they have repeatedly sold drugs.**
- **If the individual violates the protective order they will be subject to contempt of court order.**

**Protective Orders will be individually tailored.
Exceptions will apply for work, family, school.
This model will apply city wide.**

So what are we trying to accomplish?

- » Avoid criminal records amongst people selling low-level drugs in the community and offer alternatives.
- » Address the nuisance of low-level drug sales and its community impact, not the drugs themselves.
- » **Protect Neighborhoods and the future of our City!!**



Questions & Answers



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