

Safe Neighborhoods Newsletter

Safe Kids Now Network, LLC JULY 2024

Making Neighborhoods Safer for Kids & Families!

Safe Kids Now Network LLC (www.safekidsnow.com) shares information to empower and keep children, families, and neighbors safe throughout the global communities.



Children are God's love gift; they are Heaven's generous reward - Psalm 127:3

NEIGHBORHOOD BREAKING NEWS!

- ✓ Safe Kids Now Network is in its third campaign month to create stronger neighborhoods with a free download 10-step blueprint on protecting your children. Safe neighborhoods have always been a way for families to protect their children. Help us reach our goal of 1 billion people all over the globe. (www.safekidsnow.com)
- ✓ An SKNN member Theola Bright of Mobile, AL is now sharing her gift of serving youth in Liberia to keep kids safe.

Each month, Safe Neighborhood Breaking News will feature important information for our network. If you have any important news to share, email to safeneighborhoods@gmail.com and mention SKN Newsletter in the subject line.

From the Director's Desk

Greetings from Nevada! School starts soon, and it is important to make sure that your children are prepared in mind, body and spirit. It's not just about making sure that they have correct school uniforms or school clothes to wear. It's also about making sure they are prepared mentally to return to school, or to start school. How well children perform depends upon how well they are supported by their parents, guardians and the village. It does take a village to make sure our kids are safe.

SKNN has created a Resolution for governmental agencies including county commissions, city council, and state agencies to support the Establishment of Family and Neighborhood Safety Month in September. We need your help in getting this resolution to all local and state agencies to consider adopting this resolution. For more information, email safeneighborhoods@gmail.com to request a PDF you can use to inspire and empower your local and state legislative officials to help us adopt this resolution. For more information on advocating, email Sher Graham at slgraham4969@gmail.com, subject line: **SKN Resolution**

YOUR NEWS: If you have relevant announcements about important events aligned with our efforts to shed light on the problems that kids, their families, please email safeneighborhoods@gmail.com by the 30th of each month prior to our monthly newsletter emailed around the 15th-20th of each month. If it is an event, we need 60 days' lead time to promote your event.

Calming the Perfect Storm for Gun Violence - Where do we go from here?

By Stephanie Mann



On June 25, 2024, Dr. Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General, declared gun violence a public health crisis. As the nation's top doctor, he stated, "It will take a collective commitment of our nation to turn the tide. Our children's and future generations' safety and well-being are at stake." Gun violence deaths sharply increased after the pandemic as social isolation and mental health problems increased in every community.

Since 2020, guns have been the leading cause of death for children and younger Americans across all demographics. The 40-page report stated, "In 2022, the Black community endured the most significant firearm homicide rate in every age group, and Black youth accounted for about half of all firearm deaths among all youth, despite making up only 14% of the U.S youth population."

Every demographic within the U.S. has been affected by gun violence. The proliferation of guns and violence is a symptom of a much bigger problem. Social isolation has contributed to child abuse and neglect, costing taxpayers \$220 million a DAY. (Source: CDC)

Where do we go from here? First, we must engage people in America to create a "collective commitment" to keeping children safe. Second, community leaders must discuss what citizens can do to increase safety, as gang violence raises fear and costs taxpayers \$655 billion every year. (Source: youth.com)

Why do citizens need to take responsibility for their neighborhood safety? Nationally, there are only 2.5 police officers per every 1000 citizens. Police can only react to crime, while citizen involvement can prevent crime.

As a crime and violence prevention specialist who has worked forty years in high-fear neighborhoods, I saw that the fastest way to create change involves church and faith-based leaders. They can inspire congregations to put a plan of action together to "Love thy neighbor." When Faith-based groups adopt the block around the church, they can protect the church and help neighbors protect each other. Everyone grows stronger when people talk to each other. As neighbors get acquainted, they provide hope and reduce anxiety and fear as they build trust.

With 350,000 faith-based churches, community elders know that children need a spiritual understanding of themselves. Children learn by example how to stay strong and handle their emotions to grow spiritually centered, which can keep them safe and healthy. Many churches do an excellent job of helping other people with food, shelter, and self-empowerment. They can also create caring neighborhoods that all children need. The government has limitations, but the faith-based community can create national change to keep kids out of gangs, reduce the need for guns, and stop violent behavior before it starts. When "we the people" demonstrate "Love thy Neighbor," we restore hope and peace to people.

If fear, anger, and violence are obstacles, talk to foundations or community organizations about a grant to train and hire "Neighborhood Safety Experts" (NSEs) from neighborhoods who look like and speak the community's language. NSEs can be a bridge between neighbors and police to build trust and support for youth. If faith-based communities fill the needs of the people, the people will want to join them to support their families.

Involved neighbors create a safety net around children which benefits everyone:

- ✓ Citizens who feel safe and trust their neighbors are less likely to buy guns for protection. Involved neighbors have the power to reduce the need for more police as citizens "circle the wagons" and create a neighborhood safety zone.
- ✓ Families with neighbor support can reduce child abuse as friends often help each other. Women counsel and support mothers and daughters, and fathers support and guide men and boys. Neighbors can reduce social isolation and mental health issues.
- ✓ When neighbors know and trust each other, they speak up and put a check and balance on negative juvenile behavior. They can stop juvenile bullying, graffiti, smash-and-grab juveniles, and violent behavior at an early age.
- ✓ Neighbors who communicate with each other can report activities on the block, such as burglaries, suspicious activities, drug dealing, and prostitution.
- ✓ Surrounding youth with caring neighbors can prevent them from joining gangs or becoming violent. Connected youth are less likely to abuse drugs, drop out of school, or become school shooters.
- ✓ Relationships can be strengthened between racially diverse neighbors. Neighborhood involvement creates a healthy balance between citizens and police. Neighborhood leaders may evolve into new civic leaders.
- ✓ Neighbors can plan get-togethers or youth activities and grow a community garden to improve neighborhood health. With the help of city services, neighbors can clean up their neighborhoods.
- ✓ Neighbors can stay involved by using the homeowner's association and a local app to keep residents informed.

Neighbors who experience fear of crime need to hire "Neighborhood Safety Experts (NSEs)."

- When people know and trust "NSEs," they share information they would not tell the police, such as the identity of drug dealers, child abusers, neglected kids, or illegal activities.
- To reduce fear, anxiety, anger, and social isolation, neighbors living in high-fear areas need "NSEs" to help them come together. Neighborhood support restores hope, reduces social isolation, and improves mental and physical health issues.
- "NSE" can promote senior support for youth. Involved seniors can share their experiences, teach skills, babysit, become a safe house, or be trained as mediators to help settle neighborhood disputes. Seniors are valuable neighbors for change. They remember safer neighborhoods.
- "NSE" can designate neighborhood leaders so police can send information and descriptions to leaders who can contact their neighbors. Fast communication can catch criminals and stop destructive juvenile behavior.

Think about this. When we strengthen families, neighborhoods, and communities, we empower the people to become self-reliant, thus moving away from socialism and governmental control over the lives of freedom-loving Americans.

About the Writer: Stephanie L. Mann, Crime and Violence Prevention Consultant and founder of Safe Kids Now National Network LLC. Her experiences in crime prevention has given her the insight, wisdom, and vision to advocate for safe communities and neighborhoods for all children around the world. She is the author of five books on family, home, neighborhood and city safety. Stephanie conducts workshops and keynote speeches as a professional speaker on crime prevention and safety. You can reach her a safeneighborhoods@gmail.com or visit <https://www.safekidsnow.com>.

"It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men" - F Douglass

Safe Kids Now Network International
Caring for Kids in Liberia: A Calling from God
By Sher Graham



Last October, one of my long-time friends decided to travel back to Liberia to help start a school in a small community where children needed education, housing, food and love. At first, she said she might be gone for several months. As 2023 ended, somehow I knew that my wonderful friend would not be returning to the US, let alone come back to Mobile, AL, where she was born and lived, and where I live right now. Her name is Theola Bright, and I want to share her story with you about God calling her to serve in Liberia.

1. How did you first find out about the need for a school in the part of Liberia you are now living?

The photo above showed me the need for schools in Liberia. All of the public schools are overcrowded and have long waiting lists. If a parent wants to get their child in school at the appropriate age, they will have to pay to send them to a private school. Many parents are struggling and making sacrifices to get their children in school. Some of the children come to school hungry because their parents have no extra money to give them for food. Still, they are happy just to be in school. Sometimes hungry, they watch the children who have lunch money to eat. They look but say nothing. Parents value education highly because they see their educated children as the way out of poverty. This is why I started a free lunch program in my area of Caldwell, Liberia for the private school, Life Preparatory Academy, which needed a cafeteria to prepare food and a place where the children could sit to eat rather than sitting on the ground or standing.

2. Living in Mobile, did you make other trips to the area before you made your final journey last October? How long have you been supporting this area?

I had the opportunity to visit Benin as a delegate in 2018, and that visit filled me with curiosity about the other countries in Africa. I have supported projects in Africa remotely through missionaries and televangelists, but this is my first time to take on a project of my own. During my visit to war-torn Liberia, I saw too many needs to just turn my back and go back to the USA without doing something to help. I have been supporting the Caldwell area of Montserrado County in Liberia almost 9 months. (See map below for location.)



3. You have been a major influence and community stakeholder in South Alabama for many decades, as you have called Mobile, Alabama, home. What was it that made you realize that you wanted to live in Liberia full-time?

I lived in America 78 years of my life without knowing what it was like to live in another country, especially the country of my ancestors. I have had the desire in my heart most of my life to see and experience living in the Motherland. A friend, going to Liberia on business for 7 days, invited me to tag along to see Monrovia, Liberia. I jumped at this spontaneously opportunity because it offered me a traveling companion who could instruct me on the protocols of the country and how to stay safe.

4. How has life changed for you since the move?

My life has changed for the better; although, I have to start all over again from scratch at 78 years old. I left all the material things I owned behind to stay in Liberia to see the projects I started coming to fruition. Helping the struggling people in the area of Caldwell, which is similar to Prichard in Mobile County, (low-income, vulnerable community), became more important to me than anything else.

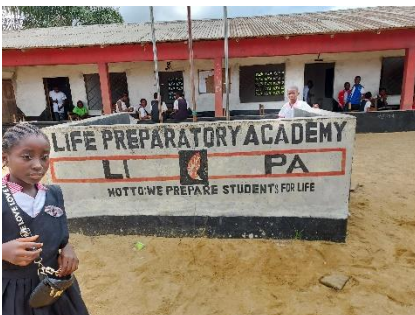
I knew it was my calling because all my lifetime experiences had prepared me to do just what I AM doing right now. I used to wonder why I had so many gifts and talents, but never focused on any one in particular. Now, I know because all of those gifts and talents are needed to do what I AM doing now to help and teach my people. I say my people because I also found out through conversation that my great grandmother who was a slave, was from the Kissi [pronounced "Gee-chee" in South Carolina] Tribe in Lofa, Liberia. I AM living the simple life and loving it. Many things I do now, I did as a child before technology programmed us for instant gratification. I truly feel free at last living here in Liberia.

5. God has given you so many talents over the years and so many projects where you have been influential in sharing stories, empowering youth and families. Now you are on a New Journey, what are some of your intentions for this next path in the community you are supporting?

I AM on a journey that YAH has prepared for me. I don't know where it is going to take me, or what my ultimate task will be. I just take one day at a time and deal with whatever or whoever comes my way that day. If I can help, I do. If I cannot at the present time, I put them on a list for future projects. I see no project too great for me to tackle. "Inch by inch anything is a cinch," and if it is in God's will for me to do, I know He will provide me with the means to do it. YAH is my boss (the vine), I AM the supervisor (the branch that produces the fruit). This journey is a glorious adventure that has its highs and lows, its trial and tribulations, but I find that every adversity is a teacher, every trial is a test to increase my faith, and every tribulation increases my stamina. To God be the glory for all that I AM.

For more information on her foundation and how you may support her efforts to keep kids safe through education, email her at theola_bright@yahoo.com.

Below are photos of Life Preparatory Academy, students and Theola Bright in Caldwell, Liberia. Currently, they are working on building a cafeteria so the kids do not have to stand up to eat their lunch.

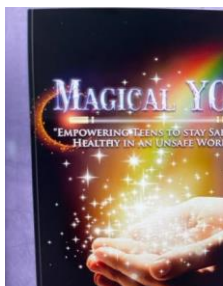




KIDS ARE KIDS NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE. THEIR CREATIVITY AND CURIOSITY ABOUT THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN AND WHAT IS OUTSIDE WILL ALWAYS BE THE UNIVERSAL RELATIONSHIP FOR EACH OF THEM. It is our responsibility to be the changemakers who can create a more peaceful and unified globe

About Theola Bright: I am so thankful for my friend and colleague, Theola Bright. A native of Mobile, Alabama, she is the CEO of T.C. Bright Productions Ministry, Inc and the founder of The Theola Bright Foundation, supporting a community and school in Caldwell, Liberia. She has been a Health and Life Coach and a mentor for the Boys and Girl Club of South Alabama, Strickland Youth Center, and Rape Crisis Speakers Bureau. Her community involvement included the International Festival, Toastmasters International of Mobile, The Black Ink Coalition of African-American Authors, and Poet Laureate for Word of Mobile. She is the author of five books and a former Artist-In-Residence for the State of Alabama. Theola is a graduate of Blount High School (Mobile, AL) and studied Business at Ann York Business School in New York City, NY; Pre Law and Real Estate, Miami-Dade College, Miami, FL; Liberal Arts, Florida International University, University Park, FL; and Television Production, Lindsey Hopkins Technical College, Miami, FL.

About the Writer: Sher Graham began as a community activist at age 12. Her commitment to making life better for others began with the legacy inspired from her grandmothers. As an author and professional speaker, she shares her personal journey of surviving parental substance abuse disorder, verbal/physical assault and being an unwanted child through her writings and speaking. A Neurobehavior Strategist, she is an international best-selling anthology author of 14 mental health and business books. You can reach her at slgraham4969@gmail.com or <https://www.shergraham.com>.



A WONDERFUL GUIDE FOR YOUR CHILD: Stephanie Mann has written an empowerment guide that targets our preteens and teenagers on how to stay safe and healthy in an unsafe world. **“Magical You”** is a unique opportunity for parents, grandparents, what they need to do to make better choices in everyday life. This is the time to prioritize time for that conversation with them about making choices, what events are happening in today’s world, and how those events impact their lives. “Magical You” is available on Amazon. Visit www.safekidsnow.com for more information. For more information on Safe Kids Now, or to book Stephanie for keynote speech, workshop or panel, community crime prevention consultation for law enforcement, education and faith-based affiliations, email her at safeneighborhoods@gmail.com.