



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Violence Intervention Film Festival Highlights Stories of Healing, Prevention and Community Leadership in Chicago

Film screening featured documentaries, “Pieces of the Puzzle” and License to Operate: Violence Interrupted’ along with short films from Chicago-based violence prevention organizations

CHICAGO, ILL. July 8, 2026 — Community Violence Intervention (CVI) professionals and community leaders gathered on July 8 for the CVI Film Festival, an evening of storytelling and dialogue focused on reducing gun violence and strengthening public safety across Chicago.

Presented by the [Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities \(PSPC\)](#) along with City Club Chicago and the Everytown Community Safety Fund, the event was hosted at the Metropolitan Peace Academy on Chicago's Lower West Side. The festival brought together local and national partners to elevate the voices, experiences and impact of CVI practitioners through film, reflection and conversation.

"This festival celebrates the organizations and practitioners advancing CVI across Chicago and nationally, said Esther Franco-Payne, Executive Director of Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities. “PSPC is proud to highlight the leadership and dedication of our partners, whose work is making neighborhoods safer every day. By sharing their stories, we hope to deepen the understanding of community-led solutions and inspire continued investment in the people and strategies creating lasting change."

The program featured a screening of Everytown's documentary [Pieces of the Puzzle](#), which follows violence prevention workers, healthcare practitioners, faith leaders, returning citizens and survivors of violence as they share testimonies on the transformative power of violence prevention strategy in their local communities and personal lives. The film offers an inside look at the individuals and organizations working every day to interrupt cycles of violence and support healing in communities most affected by gun violence.

“Too often, the people preventing violence receive the least recognition despite carrying some of the greatest responsibility,” said Jaunita Pye, Associate Director of Grant Administration and Programming at the Everytown Community Safety Fund. “Pieces of the Puzzle shines a light on the leaders and organizations whose work is making neighborhoods safer every day. We are proud to help elevate their

stories and demonstrate what is possible when communities have the resources and support to lead lasting change.”

The festival also showcased a collection of short films produced by Chicago-based CVI organizations including the Illinois Peace Project, Metropolitan Peace Initiatives, the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago (INVC), Chicago CRED, and the forthcoming documentary [*License to Operate: Violence Interrupted*](#) by filmmaker Rubye Lane and gun violence prevention advocate Chris Patterson. Each of the films highlights the people, lived experiences, and present-day work behind Chicago's violence prevention movement.

“MPI is proud to host the CVI Film Festival at the Metropolitan Peace Academy and showcase the ‘[Peace Portraits](#)’ project as we continue this critical conversation about public safety in Chicago and across the country,” said Vaughn Bryant, Executive Director of Metropolitan Peace Initiatives. Every day, dedicated men and women unselfishly answer the call to support healing among those most affected by gun violence. We are honored to share their stories in the very place where we train and professionalize the next generation of Community Violence Intervention leaders, equipping them with the skills and support needed to make an impact in their community.”

The evening concluded with a panel discussion featuring leaders from across Chicago's violence prevention ecosystem who reflected on the impact of community-based public safety efforts, discussing lessons learned from the field and exploring opportunities to further strengthen CVI strategies in the years ahead.

Panelists included:

- Eddie Bocanegra, Chief Program Officer, Centers for Employment Opportunities (Moderator)
- Benny Lee, CEO and Founder, National Alliance for the Empowerment of the Formerly Incarcerated
- Nekenya Hardy, Associate Director of Outreach, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago
- Marcus McAllister, CEO, McAllister Consulting and Training
- Rubye Lane, Founder and Principal Producer, Mustard Seed Vision, LLC
- Kanoya Ali, Lead Life Coach, Chicago CRED

As cities across the nation continue to invest in evidence-informed Community Violence Intervention strategies, organizers say storytelling remains a powerful tool for increasing public understanding of the work, challenges and successes of violence prevention professionals. Through film and conversation, the festival seeks to deepen awareness of how community-based approaches can create pathways to opportunity.

About the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities

The Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities (PSPC) is a coalition of more than 50 Chicago funders and foundations committed to aligning their funding to support proven and promising urgent responses to reducing violence in the next two to three years. For more details about PSPC, the strategies it supports and the PSPC Chicago Fund, visit: www.safeandpeaceful.org.

About Metropolitan Peace Initiatives and the Metropolitan Peace Academy

Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI), a division of Metropolitan Family Services, convenes Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P), a coalition of 15 community-based organizations focused on reducing gun violence in 28 of Chicago's highest-risk neighborhoods. The mission of the Metropolitan Peace Academy (MPA) is to professionalize the field of Community Violence Intervention (CVI), build a citywide network, and enhance community capacity to reduce violence. For more information, visit www.MetropolitanPeaceInitiatives.org.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Brian J. Packer
(630) 294-8315
PackerB@metrofamily.org

Samantha Edwards
(312) 906-2223
samantha.edwards@liveunitedchicago.org

###