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CITY OF RICHMOND

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“Improving the safety and well-being of our residents has been a priority of this administration since day one. Considering recent events in the city, and in recognition of National Youth Violence Prevention Week, our gun violence intervention and prevention efforts have an even greater sense of urgency and importance. One life lost to gun violence is too many, which is why we’re making strategic investments in public safety, especially as it relates to our children and their families. Our investments are holistic in order to tackle this problem from every angle and direction by providing the resources, education, and enforcement necessary to save lives. It takes a village, and I’m grateful for the numerous partners who are invested and committed to enhancing public safety in our community.” – Mayor Levar Stoney

City of Richmond Recognizes Youth Violence Prevention Week – April 22 – 26, 2024

Richmond, VA - This week is Youth Violence Prevention Week. Sponsored by the National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) and Sandy Hook Promise, Youth Violence Prevention Week allows us to increase awareness of how we, as a community, are working to safeguard our children.

This week and every week, the City of Richmond works to support our children and families. Over the past few weeks, our City has been devastated by gun violence, and much of this violence has directly impacted our children.

Unfortunately, the nation saw a similar surge of gun violence in 2020, and Richmond felt the effects as well. As a result, a working group was established to find solutions, and in 2021, the City of Richmond declared gun violence a public health crisis. Shortly after, in 2022, the first-ever Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Report was released—detailing the City’s Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention (GVPI) framework, challenges, and solutions. You can find the most recent Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Report [here](#).

One of the six critical components of the GVPI framework focuses on intentional preventative, age-appropriate, and culturally relevant support to youth ages 10 to 24.

First-Ever Positive Youth Development Fund: In 2022, we established the City's first-ever Positive Youth Development Fund (The PYD Fund). The PYD Fund was established with an initial seed investment of \$1 million that the City allocated from its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation. This initial investment supports citywide programming through the summer of 2023, the 2023-2024 school year, and the summer of 2024. In addition to the initial investment, the city provided \$500,000 in surplus dollars and \$1M in FY24.

The PYD Fund addresses three activity areas:

1. Prevention activities, including programming and events, for youth ages 12 to 19 and their families.
2. Professional development and training opportunities for community-based organizations.
3. Coordination of services and fiscal management

Through the [PYD Fund](#), dozens of community-based grassroots organizations work directly with youth in our most impacted parts of the City.

First-Ever Children's Fund: In 2024, Mayor Stoney established the City's first-ever Children's Fund. This Fund allows the City to be responsive to the ever-changing, post-pandemic landscape of out-of-school time, including afterschool and summer programs, youth employment opportunities, and early childhood. To date, the Fund has supplemented existing non-departmental investments and helped the city address unexpected needs.

We Matter Program: The City of Richmond was awarded \$500,000 by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services in 2021 to launch a first-of-its-kind program to provide targeted support to children with multiple risk factors for violence perpetration, as identified by the CDC and continued funding in FY24. The program combines case management and resource navigation by Communities in Schools with recreation activities selected by participating youth and facilitated by a recreation specialist from Parks and Recreation. The program also offers youth mental health support provided by a qualified mental health care provider from ChildSavers or Challenge Discovery Projects in a collaborative effort to strengthen participants' protective factors against violence. Participating youth are also offered a stipend for their participation, compensating them for their contributions to the program and incentivizing their continued participation. Youth are identified based on their personal experiences at the start of their 7th-grade year and remain in the program through the end of 8th grade, with summer programming offered between 7th and 8th grade.

Activation of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities: Multiple investments in the Department of Parks and Recreation support violence prevention and reduction.

- An additional investment of \$1 million beginning in Fiscal Year 2024 has facilitated expanded hours and programming at three community centers – Powhatan, Randolph, and Southside Community Center – across the City so that more young people have access to positive activities during particularly high-risk times of the day and in particularly high-risk parts of the City.
- Winter and spring break camps at Parks and Recreation community centers created affordable, safe spaces for Richmond Public Schools students to spend time while school is closed. Breakfast and lunch are provided.
- Expanded summer camp offerings across the City offer families low-cost opportunities to engage their school-aged children while caregivers work.

- Expansion of the outdoor pool season to open Memorial Day weekend, with reduced operation hours until Richmond Public Schools have released students for the summer break. Expanded hours (Monday – Friday noon – 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday noon – 7 p.m.) will provide city residents with an additional hour of recreational swim time during the week and five extra hours on the weekends.
- All pools will be fully staffed this summer with 6 Lifeguards, 1 Head Lifeguard, and 1 Pool Manager at each location.
 - Our ability to fully staff each location is partly due to our work with Richmond Public Schools students at Armstrong, John Marshall, and Franklin Military Academy. Over the past few years, we've partnered with AHS to offer students swim lessons and lifeguard training during their Advanced Physical Education class. Out of our AHS group, we have four students who successfully completed the requirements and are projected to work for the department as Lifeguards for summer 2024.
 - Our Lifeguard School Program successfully produced 21 new Lifeguards this year. All of these Lifeguards will be working with Parks and Recreation. Additionally, 46 of the 65 Lifeguard positions we're hiring this summer completed this program either this year or last year!
- Adding a position focused on positive youth development within the department will promote best practices in youth programming, including trauma-informed care and de-escalation strategies.

Universalized school-based afterschool programming: Today, every zone elementary and middle school in Richmond Public Schools has school-based afterschool programming to ensure that children have a safe, positive, productive place to be between the end of the school day and the end of the work day. Dinner is provided, as is bus transportation home.

Establish the groundwork for Universal Pre-K: Mayor Stoney identified Universal Pre-K (UPK) as a priority in the City of Richmond because he believes education is a great equalizer. We must invest adequate resources into our education system to ensure everyone, no matter the color of one's skin or their zip code, has access to an affordable, high-quality education. Regarding UPK, investing in our youngest learners is critical in supporting positive youth development. Some of the most crucial cognitive development occurs between the ages of zero and three, and we must ensure we're doing all we can to expose Richmond youth to learning opportunities at a young age and provide them with healthy and safe learning environments.

Expanding Access to Child Care and Preschool: Since 2021, over \$2 million has been invested in the stabilization and expansion of high-quality child care and preschool across the City of Richmond. Eligible nonprofit and charitable organizations received funds through direct grants from OCF; additional funding was disbursed by Thrive Birth to Five to private businesses, like many home-based providers, who are not eligible for City grants. Through investments from the City's ARPA allocation and local general fund, this effort has generated over 250 new slots across Richmond and helped open four new centers – allowing more of Richmond's youngest residents access to high-quality early learning experiences while allowing their parents and caregivers the opportunity to participate fully in the workforce.

Each of these efforts represents significant, meaningful violence prevention investments. Yet, we recognize that our parents and guardians may still have questions about public safety's role in safeguarding their children.

Pathways Program: In 2023, Mayor Stoney announced the establishment of the Pathways Program, which provides RPS graduates support to and through community college. Pathways is administered by GRASP, a Richmond-based college access organization, in partnership with Office of Community Wealth Building's Youth Engagement Services and the Office of Children and Families. Programming begins while youth are still in high school when they participate in financial aid and durable skills workshops and continues for up to three years of enrollment in Reynolds or Brightpoint Community Colleges with a last-dollar scholarship, monthly basic needs stipend, mentorship, and other supports so that absolutely nothing stands in their way as they pursue their dreams.

Late Night Basketball: From May 31st until September 1st, the Department of Parks and Recreation, in partnership with Richmond Police Department, will operate Late-Night Basketball on Friday and Saturday nights at four locations across the City. 2024 marks the second year of the program, and to better serve our residents, Parks and Recreation has added two additional sites.

Operation Safe Summer Early Launch: Last week, the Richmond Police Department announced the early launch of "Operation Safe Summer," a cross-departmental collaborative effort by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and the City of Richmond's Human Services agencies to suppress violent crime, increase public safety, and further connect residents to wraparound services and supports. The full release and "Operation Safe Summer" details can be found [here](#).

Keeping Your Youth Engaged This Summer:

- [Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities Summer Digest](#)
- [NextUp Summer Youth Program Locator](#): Available in the coming weeks