ESTABLISHING A DC POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE: A ROAD TO REDUCTION IN YOUTH VIOLENCE

by
Nicole Harrison

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Abstract

Youth violence remains a critical challenge facing many American communities and is increasing in lethality. A pilot Police Athletic League program established in two Police Service Areas in the Sixth District will help decrease youth violence in these high poverty, low-income, extremely violent neighborhoods of 602 and 604. A Police Athletic League program should be proposed to the District Commander of the Sixth District, David Taylor, who we will pass on and endorse the proposal for approval to the Chief of Police, Cathy Lanier. Police Athletic Leagues in other cities and states have proven to be effective in reducing youth violence. Outcomes show that 97% of participants of the Philadelphia Police Athletic League feel safer when they are at a PAL center. U.S. Department of Justice statistics document that juvenile crime triples between the hours of 3pm and 6pm, which shows the need for youth to be involved in positive after-school activities during this portion of the day, which the Police Athletic League program will provide.

The World Health Organization has determined that preventing youth violence requires a comprehensive approach that also addresses the social determinants of violence, such as income inequality, rapid demographic and social change, and low levels of social protection. Thus, the World Health Organization, among others, views the issue of youth violence as a public health issue. The establishment of the Police Athletic League does not solve the problem of youth violence as efficiently or effectively as a public health strategy may aid in decreasing
youth violence. With that, an after-school program like the Police Athletic League
can be seen as part of the solution, but not the only solution or the entire solution.
Decision Memorandum

TO: MPD Sixth District Commander and MPD Chief of Police

SUBJECT: The establishment of a new youth after-school program, the Police Athletic League, would reduce youth violence in Washington, DC communities.

Action-Forcing Event

WJLA reported there was a community meeting on January 23, 2015 in the Congress Heights neighborhood of the District of Columbia, which was held to discuss a recent outbreak of violence in the District\(^1\). Concerned residents and community leaders met as a result of recent events that are becoming all too common - two young men were shot and killed just days apart\(^2\). Meeting participants want to figure out how all these guns get on the street and why police officers are not present in the community, before or after the shooting.

Statement of the Problem

Youth violence remains a critical challenge facing many American communities and is increasing in lethality. It includes a range of acts from bullying and physical fighting, through more severe sexual and physical assault to homicide\(^3\). In 2010, an average of 13 young people aged 10 to 24 years were victims of homicide each day and in 2013, more than 580,000 were treated in emergency

\(^1\) Roz Plater, Rachel Schaerr. "D.C. community plagued by recent violence comes together to find solutions". WJLA. 23 January 2015.


rooms for nonfatal injuries sustained from assaults. Homicide remains the third leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24 with a tremendous increase in rates for young people of color. The proportion of homicide victims ages 10 to 24 years old who are killed by a firearm is 82.8%. According to the District of Columbia’s Metropolitan Police Department’s Annual Crime Totals 2007-2012, crime statistics in the city are alarming. The number of forcible rape arrests has increased from 192 in 2007 to 236 in 2012. Reports of larceny/theft arrests have been steadily increasing over the span of five years, from 16,476 to 22,196.

Recent statistics paint a sobering picture of the lives of black boys who have been involved in, or impacted by, community violence:

- The homicide rate for black youth ages 10-24 is over three times higher than any other group of youth in America.

- The homicide rate for black boys ages 10-24 is over 51 deaths per 100,000, compared to only 12 for boys in general.

- Of the more than 700,000 young people ages 10–24 treated in emergency rooms for assault-related injuries in 2011, over 61 percent were males, (and most

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5 Root Cause for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.
8 Metropolitan Police Department Crime Statistics – Citywide.
9 Metropolitan Police Department Crime Statistics – Citywide.
10 Metropolitan Police Department Crime Statistics – Citywide.
commonly black males)\textsuperscript{11}.

These devastating statistics paint a picture of negative impact on not only our nation's youth, but on the nation’s economic and social potential as well. Youth violence not only results in injuries and deaths, but also furthermore impacts health care, productivity, property values, and social services. In 2010, the estimated costs of youth violence were $17.5 billion, which includes an estimated $9 billion in medical expenses and work loss due to homicide and $8.5 billion in nonfatal medical and work loss assaults\textsuperscript{12}. Additionally, youth victimization increases one’s odds of becoming a perpetrator of violent crimes, creating an endless cycle in far too many communities nationwide\textsuperscript{13}.

Violence by young people is one of the most visible forms of violence. Both fatal and non-fatal assaults involving young people contribute greatly to the global burden of premature death, injury and disability. Youth violence deeply harms not only its victims, but also their families, friends and communities. There are close links between youth violence and other forms of violence. Violent young people frequently commit a range of crimes and display other social and psychological problems\textsuperscript{14}.

\textsuperscript{11} Metropolitan Police Department Crime Statistics – Citywide.
\textsuperscript{12} Root Cause for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.
\textsuperscript{13} Root Cause for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.
History

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has illustrated that violence is rising up the ranks of leading causes of death, which is a high priority problem that needs to be addressed. As the United States became more successful in preventing and treating many infectious diseases, homicide and suicide rose in the rankings of causes of death\textsuperscript{15}. Since 1965, homicide and suicide have consistently been among the top 15 leading causes of death in the United States\textsuperscript{16}. The risk of homicide and suicide reached epidemic proportions during the 1980s among specific segments of the population, especially youth and members of minority groups\textsuperscript{17}. From 1985 to 1991 homicide rates among 15- to 19-year-old males increased a whopping 154\%, an extremely dramatic rise from rates in the previous 20 years for this age group\textsuperscript{18}. This increase was particularly severe among young African American males.

In 2000, approximately 199,000 youth murders took place globally – equivalent to 565 children and young people aged 10-29 years dying on average each day, as a result of interpersonal violence\textsuperscript{19}. From 1985-1994, youth homicide rates increased in many parts of the world – a growth associated in many cases with a more frequent use of guns as the method of attack\textsuperscript{20}. For every young person killed

\textsuperscript{16} The History of Violence as a Public Health Issue.
\textsuperscript{17} The History of Violence as a Public Health Issue.
\textsuperscript{18} The History of Violence as a Public Health Issue.
\textsuperscript{20} Youth Violence.
by violence, an estimated twenty to forty youth endured injuries that required
hospital treatment\textsuperscript{21}.

The above evidence suggests a few conclusions about trends in youth
violence over the past decade. First off, there is a substantial increase in the violence
victimization rates for adolescents, particularly for 12-15 year olds\textsuperscript{22}. Next, there
has been a relatively small increase (8-10 percent) in the proportion of adolescents
involved in some type of serious violent offending\textsuperscript{23}. Lastly, there has been a
dramatic increase in adolescent homicide rates, increasing steadily beginning in
1988\textsuperscript{24}.

Today's youth are more frequently the victims of violence; but about the
same proportion of youth are committing serious violent offenses today as in 1980,
and their frequency of offending is surprisingly approximately the same\textsuperscript{25}. However,
one important, dimension of youth violence has clearly changed: today’s violent acts
are more lethal - a larger proportion of these acts of violence result in serious injury
or death\textsuperscript{26}. The fact that the adolescent homicide rate has more than doubled since
1988, while the overall homicide rate has remained relatively constant, is shocking
evidence of this increased lethality\textsuperscript{27}.

In the District of Columbia, in 2012, violent crime had spiked sharply – a 40
percent increase – which includes twice as many robberies at gunpoint than at the

\textsuperscript{21} Youth Violence.
\textsuperscript{23} Delbert S. Elliott.
\textsuperscript{24} Delbert S. Elliott.
\textsuperscript{25} Delbert S. Elliott.
\textsuperscript{26} Delbert S. Elliott.
\textsuperscript{27} Delbert S. Elliott.
same time of the previous year. Across the city, all police districts were reporting increases in violent crime, and all but one had double-digit percentage increases, according to internal Metropolitan Police Department documents. Overall, incidents of violent crime — homicides, sexual assaults, robberies and assaults with deadly weapons — were rising at an alarming pace.

The biggest increase was in the 1st District, where violent crime jumped by 69 percent, with 110 incidents reported compared with 65 at the same point in 2011. The second highest increase was in the 7th District, east of the Anacostia River, where 181 were reported, up 43 percent from the 127 incidents recorded at the same point in 2011. Overall crime — violent crimes and property crimes such as burglary, theft and arson — had increased 25 percent from 2011 to 2012. The statistics also show that the increase in crime rates has been building steadily, making it difficult for Washington DC officials to dismiss it as a prevalent problem that needs to be addressed.

To attempt to address the problem of youth violence to date, numerous city, county, and state police departments have initiated a community-based program called the Police Athletic League (PAL). Since establishment, PAL’s mission remains to keep young people out of trouble and prevent juvenile crime and violence, by channeling their energy and time into recreational and athletic programs. The Police Athletic League program is based on the conviction that young people - if they are

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29 Andrea Noble.
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reached early enough - can develop strong positive attitudes towards police officers in their journey through life toward the goal of maturity and good citizenship. The PAL program brings youth under the supervision and positive influence of a law enforcement agency and expands public awareness about the role of a police officer and the reinforcement of the responsible values and attitudes, along with community outcome goals including a reduction in youth violence.

In 1914, New York City Police Commissioner Arthur Woods began the social movement that would eventually be known as the Police Athletic League. Commissioner Woods had a special concern for the poor children who lived in the congested tenements of New York City with no safe places to play. In reaction to this problem, the police commissioner organized a citywide search for vacant parking lots that could be converted into playgrounds. The objective of these playground blocks was to “reduce the temptations of wrongdoings by keeping children off the streets and by giving them a chance for wholesome play under proper supervision” and reduce tensions between police officers and youth. The public reaction to the development of these playstreets in New York City was overwhelmingly favorable.

Following this success, in 1931, a New York Crime Prevention Officer took an interest in a group of boys and organized a Twilight Athletic League, which started

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35 Police Athletic League New York.
36 Police Athletic League New York.
37 Police Athletic League New York.
with eight baseball teams and grew to include basketball and football. The following year, the 1932 Annual Report of the Police Department stated, “During a Depression, it is the children who stand in the greatest danger of permanent injury” In response to this concern, the Crime Prevention Bureau formed the Junior Police Athletic League, which was an outgrowth of the Twilight Athletic League. A committee to oversee the new organization was headed by baseball legend Babe Ruth, and included Police Commissioner Edward Mulrooney and Deputy Commissioner of the Crime Prevention Bureau, Henrietta Additon.

As the success of the PAL concept spread, PAL programs developed in other communities. Today, there are over 400 PAL Member Chapters in law enforcement agencies servicing over 700 cities and 1,700 facilities throughout the United States including the U.S. Virgin Islands, serving more than one million youth, ages 5 to 18. The District of Columbia is not one of the 700 cities that provide the Police Athletic League as an impactful positive outlet for its inner-city youth, who are in desperate need of such a program.

**Background**

Youth violence remains a critical challenge facing many American communities and furthermore, lethality of youth violence is on the rise. Youth violence paints a picture of negative impact on not only our nation’s youth, but on the nation’s economic and social potential as well. Youth violence not only results in

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39 Police Athletic League New York.
40 Police Athletic League New York.
injuries and deaths, but also furthermore impacts health care, productivity, property values, and social services.

As we now know, the evidence suggests a few disheartening conclusions about trends in youth violence over the past decade. First off, there is a substantial increase in the violence victimization rates for adolescents, particularly for 12-15 year olds\(^{42}\). Next, there has been an increase (8-10 percent) in the proportion of adolescents involved in some type of serious violent offenses\(^ {43}\). Lastly, there has been a dramatic increase in adolescent homicide rates, increasing steadily beginning in 1988\(^ {44}\).

The World Health Organization states that there are several complex risk factors that increase the likelihood of youth violence are complex. Risk factors within the individual include hyperactivity, antisocial beliefs and attitudes, and poor behavioral control\(^ {45}\). A low level of attachment to positive adults is another risk factor that influences the prevalence of youth violence in communities\(^ {46}\). There are major risk factors within the community and wider society which impact the rate of youth violence as well, among the top rated factors being a low level of social cohesion within the community\(^ {47}\). These low levels of social cohesion within a community have been linked to higher rates of youth violence.

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\(^{43}\) Delbert S. Elliott.
\(^{44}\) Delbert S. Elliott.
\(^{46}\) “Youth Violence”. World Health Organization.
\(^{47}\) “Youth Violence”. World Health Organization.
Local news reports of community meetings in Washington DC held to discuss a recent outbreak of youth violence in the District are becoming more frequent, such as the one held in January of 2015 in the Congress Heights neighborhood. Many District residents say there are not enough positive opportunities or activities available to children in low-income neighborhoods, in addition to the resident belief that there is not a strong police presence in the community. U.S. Department of Justice statistics document that juvenile crime triples between the hours of 3pm and 6pm, which is also the period when children are most likely to be victims of crime and participate in risky behavior\textsuperscript{48}. This statistic shows the need for youth to be involved in positive after-school activities during this portion of the day.

Officer John Wright has been a police officer at the Metropolitan Police Department for seven years. Officer Wright says he sees a large amount of youth violence on the job every day. He states that at face value, it doesn’t appear that there are enough role models or actors in the community to dissuade violence in the communities\textsuperscript{49}. Disturbingly, group gang robberies are very prevalent\textsuperscript{50}. Youth arrests per capita according to the home Public Service Areas of juveniles committing crimes in Ward 7 – 2.2%-3% of youth are arrested in Public Service Areas 602 and 2-2.2% in Public Service Areas 604\textsuperscript{51}. When asked if he thinks that youth need more recreational and after-school opportunities to help decrease youth violence, Officer Wright’s answer to that is “no”. Officer Wright feels the culture of

\textsuperscript{48} Police Athletic League, Inc. 2012 Annual Report. \hspace{1em} <http://www.palnyc.org/Public/F07_PALAnnual2012_low_rez_spreads.pdf>
\textsuperscript{49} Officer John Wright, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{50} Officer John Wright, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
negative behavior is what needs to be changed; recreational opportunities are part of the solution, but not the stand-alone answer\textsuperscript{52}.

When asked about the state of youth violence in the District of Columbia, the DC Metropolitan Police Department Assistant Chief of the Investigative Services Bureau, Peter Newsham's first reaction was “there is too much”\textsuperscript{53}. However, Chief Newsham explains, “of all of the violence in DC, youth are responsible for a very small percentage. We see a very small group of youth involved, many of which are recidivists. But we do see some youth who are one-time offenders, perhaps influenced by peer pressure”\textsuperscript{54}. In conclusion, Chief Newsham states that, “youth are not the largest contributor to violence in DC”\textsuperscript{55}. When Commander Daniel Hickson of the Youth Investigations Division answered the same question, he made clear that, “juvenile arrests have gone down considerably in the last 5 years. But juvenile arrests have become more violent. The most common charge now is robbery, while ten years ago it was Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle (auto theft). So there may be less youth arrests but the arrests/crimes are more serious”\textsuperscript{56}.

One of the principal players in the issue of youth violence in Washington DC is the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department’s Chief of Police, Cathy Lanier. Chief Lanier is very passionate about using a community-policing mindset when strategizing ways to decrease crime in the District. She embraces the idea that police departments can reduce crime by increasing cooperation and involvement in

\textsuperscript{52} Officer John Wright, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{53} Chief Peter Newsham, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{54} Chief Peter Newsham, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{55} Chief Peter Newsham, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{56} Commander Daniel Hickson, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
high-crime communities\textsuperscript{57}. With that well-known fact, Chief Lanier would support a proposed new program of the Metropolitan Police Department that would benefit District youth and reduce youth violence by establishing long-term youth-centered programs, in addition to positively integrating the police department in the community.

In a study by the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corp, surveyed youth expressed a desire to have more caring adults in their lives to help either guide them through life situations and choices and motivate them\textsuperscript{58}. Youth are looking for acceptance and something to belong to even, if they know it is in the wrong places\textsuperscript{59}. Youth explained the reason why they (or their peers) join and engage in some negative/at-risk behaviors including substance use, gang activity, and youth violence. An overarching theme was that these youth are looking for support, love, acceptance, to fit in, and a reason to feel needed. Acknowledging that they are looking for these things in the wrong place was a common theme among youth\textsuperscript{60}.

\textbf{Description of Policy Proposal}

A pilot Police Athletic League program established in two Police Service Areas in the Sixth District will help decrease youth violence in these high poverty, low-income, extremely violent neighborhoods of 602 and 604. The budget for the

\textsuperscript{58} DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation. “Needs and Assets Assessment of Washington, DC Youth.” December 2011.
\textsuperscript{59} DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation.
\textsuperscript{60} DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation.
Police Athletic League program for the first year will be $50,000 from the Washington Police Department Foundation and DC government funding. This annual cost projection is based on what it costs to run these leagues elsewhere on a much larger scale. The Sixth District MPD Community Outreach Coordinator, in addition to a new position of Police Athletic League Coordinator, will run and manage the program. The Police Athletic League will start with offering a basketball league in the fall/winter and a baseball league in the spring.

**Policy Authorization Tool**

A Police Athletic League program should be proposed to the District Commander of the Sixth District, David Taylor, who we will pass on and endorse the proposal for approval to the Chief of Police, Cathy Lanier. The Chief of Police wants to focus on decreasing crime in 2015 in three Police Service Areas, two of which are 602 and 604 in the Sixth District. Chief Lanier is just embarking on this initiative and is requesting extra resources be utilized in these areas. Chief Lanier can start the Police Athletic League through executive authority. “The Chief of Police is responsible for managing and directing all operations of a police department, including protecting local citizens and preventing crime.”

The Chief of Police must approve the budget and the utilization of police officers as volunteers for the league. Once approved, the mandate to create the league will come from Commander Taylor.

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to police officers in the Sixth District to volunteer for this new community outreach initiative, the Police Athletic League.

This Police Athletic League will measure effectiveness and outcomes measures through pre and post surveys completed by youth and their caregivers, in addition to police officers, evaluating whether youth are using their time after-school more constructively and positively. Furthermore, with the primary goal of reducing crime, the Police Athletic League Coordinator will also track individual youth participants whether they commit crimes or other destructive behavior. The program will also compare program participants’ violence rates against kids who have similar profiles who do not participate in the program. Youth crime rates in the areas where the new leagues are being formed will be tracked as well as a macro indicator, to evaluate whether there is a decrease in violent youth behavior in the Public Service Areas of 602 and 604. Additionally, success can be measured by participation rates and growth in youth participation. Lastly, pre and post surveys can be utilized to evaluate whether youth participants gain increased feelings of respect for the police.

**Policy Implementation Mechanism**

In the first year, the Police Athletic League will aim to serve 60 youth each season in Police Service Areas 602 and 604 with a budget of $50,000. It will require the help of an already established Community Outreach Coordinator, in addition to a new hire of a Police Athletic League Coordinator. The League will operate Monday through Friday between the hours of 3pm and 6pm at the Deanwood Recreation Center in PSA 602 and at Benning Terrace Recreation Center in PSA 604 (or another
community/recreation center in these PSAs). The District of Columbia boasts a dynamic Parks and Recreation Department (DPR), which includes over 80 Recreation centers located in every Ward\(^63\), so there would be options in terms of community centers. Regardless of location within DC, there is purportedly a recreation center no more than two miles from a given spot in the District. The facility space needs to be located in the 602 and 604 neighborhoods to make it easily accessible for the children to walk to after school. The Community Outreach Coordinator and Police Athletic League Coordinator will need to partner with DC Parks and Recreation in order to secure facility space and equipment.

Sermons are policies that utilize the media and the influence of certain offices and individuals to encourage or discourage certain type of behavior or actions.

To encourage Metropolitan Police Department officers to volunteer, police officers who volunteer to coach in the Police Athletic League will be paid for 4 hours of volunteer time a week. Statute 5 U.S.C. 4503 states that the head of an agency may "pay a cash award and incur necessary expense for the honorary recognition" of an employee who makes by his suggestion, invention, superior accomplishment, or other personal effort contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations or achieves a significant reduction in paperwork; or performs a special act or service in the public interest in connection with or related

to his official employment\textsuperscript{64}. Regulation 5 CFR 451.104(a) states an agency may grant a cash, honorary, or informal recognition award, or grant time-off without charge to leave or loss of pay on the basis of a special act or service in the public interest in connection with or related to official employment\textsuperscript{65}. Additionally, all police officers that volunteer will be eligible for an annual, prestigious community service award presented by Chief of Police, Cathy Lanier.

Sixth District Commander Taylor will advertise and promote the Police Athletic League to police officers in the district. The Sixth District will partner with the DC Parks and Recreation Department to hold seasonal sports leagues starting at a willing, local community center, every day from 3pm to 6pm. The police officers will volunteer in the roles of coaches and referees; DC Park and Recreation will serve the role of providing the space and some equipment.

\textbf{Policy Analysis}

\textbf{Pros}

The Police Athletic League Inc. of New York City illustrates that children who participate in their programs build brighter futures because PAL provides them with safe, attractive, and supportive environments at which to spend their free time after school. With centers in all five boroughs, NYC PAL has specifically targeted communities that have scarce recreational and youth development facilities. PAL NYC has proven its effectiveness in many ways, including the statistic that 59\% of


PAL participant children at PS 48 passed their statewide math assessment as compared to 34% in the general PS 48 population. At the Police Athletic League of Philadelphia, 96% of PAL youth and adolescent participants agree or strongly agree they were able to complete more homework due to participation in PAL. These statistics show that the program is effective and illustrates impact in improving educational outcomes, but doesn't necessarily show these leagues reduce crime and violence. However, outcomes do show that 97% of Philadelphia Police Athletic League participants feel safer when they are at a PAL center.

As we learned earlier, U.S. Department of Justice statistics document that juvenile crime triples between the hours of 3pm and 6pm, which is also the period when children are most likely to be victims of crime and participate in risky behavior. This statistic shows the need for youth to be involved in positive after-school activities during this portion of the day, which the Police Athletic League program will provide. Research shows that after-school programs reduce crime by offering constructive alternatives to gangs and drugs during the peak hours for juvenile crime. A study of after-school programs in 12 high-risk California communities found that, among kids participating in the programs, vandalism and stealing dropped by two-thirds.

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violent acts and carrying a concealed weapon fell by more than half, and arrests were cut in half; furthermore, school discipline, detention, suspensions and expulsions dropped by a third\textsuperscript{71}. In the three years after Baltimore’s Police Department opened a Police Activities League afterschool program in one high-crime neighborhood, juvenile crime in the neighborhood dropped nearly 10 percent, and the risk of children and teens becoming crime victims was cut nearly in half\textsuperscript{72}. While juvenile victimization rates were decreasing for all Baltimore juveniles, the rate in the area served by the PAL program came down nearly three times as fast as it did for the city as a whole\textsuperscript{73}.

The DC Metropolitan Police Department already has a Community Outreach system in place that will help make building the program easier. Community Outreach Coordinators are located at each of the seven Districts. The task of each Community Outreach Coordinator varies, based on that particular police district and its Police Service Areas (PSAs)\textsuperscript{74}; which gives the Community Outreach Coordinator the flexibility to work on Police Athletic League initiatives if made a priority by the Sixth District Commander. Each Coordinator serves as the liaison between the community and the police department.

MPD Officer John Wright sheds light onto how many police officers feel they can help reduce youth violence in DC, by explaining that police officers can

\textsuperscript{71} After-School Programs Prevent Crime.
\textsuperscript{73} After-School Programs: Keeping Kids – and Communities – Safe. Afterschool Alliance.
\textsuperscript{74} Community Outreach. Metropolitan Police Department. <http://mpdc.dc.gov/page/communityoutreach>
make an impact by being part of any program that has a long-term plan to integrate itself in a neighborhood or community with the support of the Police Department. This allows police officers to have responsibility to build bonds and relationships with children and their families in the neighborhoods they patrol in order to make the positive connection, with the aim to prevent violence before they reach an age where violence becomes a way of life.

Officer Wright’s supervisors agree with this belief. Assistant Chief Newsham truly feels that if the Police Athletic League were able to accomplish set program goals, show it is effective, and show that youth violence is declining, there would be nothing but benefits. Commander Hickson says that a program like the Police Athletic League would definitely be a benefit to the city if it can reduce crime. If the program can show strong, intentional outcomes in violence reduction, more funding and resources could be allocated to the program. This shows one pro of the establishment of a Police Athletic League is that many police officers will feel it is worthwhile, potentially impactful program.

In regards to being able to achieve set goals, the likelihood of achieving these goals is high. In a NYC PAL program, 94% of PAL Youth who are involved in this PAL Program for 12 months do not get remanded or arrested during the

75 Officer John Wright, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
76 Officer John Wright, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
77 Chief Peter Newsham, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
78 Commander Daniel Hickson, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
program. The ability to track youth violence arrests and reports of destructive program participants is an easy measure to track. The Police Athletic League Coordinator will be responsible for tracking these outcomes through MPD juvenile records and pre and post program surveys completed by the youth and their caregivers. The Metropolitan Police Department is continuously tracking crime rates in the city, so it will be easy to evaluate whether there is a decrease in violent youth behavior in the Public Service Areas of 602 and 604. It is very likely that youth who regularly participate in the program will use their time after-school more constructively and positively, as they will be involved in a structured activity in that danger time of 3pm to 6pm, as opposed to simply hanging out on the street, likely unsupervised. It is also very likely that youth participants will gain increased feelings of respect for the police.

Both Assistant Chief Newsham and Commander Hickson agree that establishing a Police Athletic League program in DC would certainly be possible. The trick will be to find a group of dedicated people who are willing to get it done and willing to do the hard work for the long term. Additionally, politically, one would need to find support in MPD management who will back the program for the long term, because being able to illustrate the effectiveness of a program takes time. Assistant Chief Newsham suggests that the Police Athletic League should start on a small level in select Police Service Areas and then be built up and expanded to other PSAs in DC once it is proven to be effective.

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80 Chief Peter Newsham, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
effective. Newsham and Hickson both reiterated that it is critical to capture outcomes and show what kind of success is coming from it.

The Washington DC Police Foundation’s established programs aimed to support public safety fall into four categories: 1) urgent grants and guidance to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD); 2) shorter-term member programming for the MPD; 3) longer-term programs focused on MPD priority areas such as youth violence prevention; and 4) city-wide public safety programs and policy initiatives. The DC Police Foundation attempts to support Metropolitan Police Department efforts by focusing on vulnerable children and neighborhoods with pro-active preemptive programs working hand-in-hand with the community. In recent past years, the DC Police Foundation has funded year-round mentoring and intervention programs and summer camps for at-risk city youth. However, the Foundation does not currently fund any year-round or long-term programming focused on preventing youth violence. The DC Police Foundation hosts and coordinates many one-time or short-term youth focused events and programming, but there is nothing to report on that lasts longer than a couple weeks. The Foundation coordinates annual one-day events, such as “Shop with a Cop”, and a couple summer programs for youth, including “Reaching New Heights Summer Youth Academy” and the “Junior Police Academy”. According to Officer Wright and Commander Hickson, many officers

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feel these one-day, short-term events are worthwhile, but officers also agree it takes more than a single event to make any lasting changes\textsuperscript{83}.

Yet another case study that illustrates the potential success of a program like the Police Athletic League is the story of the Watts Bears in Los Angeles. The team of 7-, 8- and 9-year-olds were drawn from a Los Angeles housing project and is coached by Los Angeles Police Department officers. For the cops it’s part of community policing, aimed at building neighborhood bonds and reducing gang-related crime\textsuperscript{84}. The football team is the product of a partnership between the Police Department and the city’s Housing Authority, which oversees housing projects that used to account for much of the crime and violence in Watts\textsuperscript{85}. It’s a test of "relationship policing" as a way to make life safer and break through generations of hostility between LAPD officers and residents of the projects. The program started two years ago; since then, there’s been just one shooting death in Watts' largest housing projects, compared with 43 homicides in the previous six years\textsuperscript{86}. This case study shows that programs very similar to the Police Athletic League contribute to reductions in violence.

**Cons**

Although there are certainly many pros to establishing a Police Athletic League, there are cons as well, just like any policy or program. Starting off with

\textsuperscript{83} Officer John Wright, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{85} Banks, Sandy. "Young players on the Watts Bears are part of a larger team effort."
\textsuperscript{86} Banks, Sandy. "Young players on the Watts Bears are part of a larger team effort."
the example of the Watts Bears program where violence has reduced in the neighborhood. LAPD police officers coach this team as a part of the force's relatively new anti-crime effort in three of Watts' toughest housing projects, called the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)\textsuperscript{87}. This partnership includes not only coaching the Watts' Bears, but also consists of 30 cops selected to be part of the force's relatively new anti-crime effort in Watts where much of the time, the officers patrol the developments on foot\textsuperscript{88}. Although crime has decreased significantly since the initiation of the Community Safety Partnership, some of the crime has just moved elsewhere, like the streets beyond the three projects that the CSP isn't currently patrolling\textsuperscript{89}. And some residents who regularly attend a weekly anti-gang task force in Watts say crime is on the rise in a fourth housing project known as Gonzaque Village\textsuperscript{90}.

A Police Athletic League is not an end-all, be-all measure to prevent or decrease youth violence. The World Health Organization identifies that youth violence prevention programs shown to be effective include programs with life skills and social development incorporated into programming, designed to help children and adolescents manage anger, resolve conflict, and develop the necessary social skills to solve problems\textsuperscript{91}. A variety of community program approaches have been tried to reduce violent behavior among young people.

\textsuperscript{88} Siegler, Kirk. "After Years Of Violence, L.A.'s Watts Sees Crime Subside".
\textsuperscript{89} Siegler, Kirk. "After Years Of Violence, L.A.'s Watts Sees Crime Subside".
\textsuperscript{90} Siegler, Kirk. "After Years Of Violence, L.A.'s Watts Sees Crime Subside".
\textsuperscript{91} “Youth Violence”. World Health Organization.
Many of these approaches focus on community settings and some of the more prominent societal factors related to youth violence. They range from public information campaigns and community policing strategies, to improving settings such as schools and community centers. A few examples of strategies to prevent youth violence in the community include after-school programs, extracurricular activities, and community policing\textsuperscript{92}. However, in addition to community program approaches, promising youth violence prevention programs include programs that support parents and teach positive parenting skills; preschool programs that provide children with academic and social skills at an early age; and programs that improve school settings, policies, teacher practices, and security measures\textsuperscript{93}.

The World Health Organization has determined that preventing youth violence requires a comprehensive approach that also addresses the social determinants of violence, such as income inequality, rapid demographic and social change, and low levels of social protection\textsuperscript{94}. Thus, the World Health Organization, among others, views the issue of youth violence as a public health issue. The establishment of the Police Athletic League does not solve the problem of youth violence as efficiently or effectively as a public health strategy may aid in decreasing youth violence. With that, an after-school program like


the Police Athletic League can be seen as part of the solution, but not the only solution or the entire solution. Therefore, the program may help make strides in youth violence in the two areas of 602 and 604, but a grander impact will require more than simply recreational after-school programming.

Officer Wright states that in addition to having a long-term community program, furthermore, there needs to be targeted and strict enforcement on already existing violent gangs and violent actions\textsuperscript{95}. This officer explains a common belief that recreational opportunities are part of the solution, but not the stand-alone answer. “In theory, the more involved [police officers] are, the more they will know what is going on and who is doing what, so that will hopefully help to curb violence or problems in the community moving forward. But the community has to have a vested interest in itself for any of this to be successful” \textsuperscript{96}.

The program will take time to prove its effectiveness. First, it will take time to set up a system to recruit youth participants. The first sports season or session will likely serve a small number of youth, but the program will have the potential to grow much larger. Additionally, it will take time to prove its effectiveness due to the fact it will take a couple seasons to have enough outcome survey data and program performance data to report on to the public. The Executive Director of the citywide New York City Police Athletic League, Frederick Watts, admits that their main goal is participation, and that they are currently not really good at showing or tracking

\textsuperscript{95} Officer John Wright, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{96} Officer John Wright, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
outcomes. “We are numbers driven and just want to get as many people participating as possible”, he says. Participation rates are certainly part of showing success, but not enough to show effectiveness and overall program success in reaching set outcome goals.

Another con is the amount of human and monetary resources needed. At the NYC Police Athletic League, Mr. Watts notes that the support from the very top of the New York Police Department is unfailing. However, any pushback to the program comes from the precinct level, not because they don’t want to help at that level, but because PAL is not always the priority. Preventative measures such as programs like PAL are good, but the police department needs to deal with the immediate needs first, which is the crime currently occurring. As a result, the only push back comes from lack of human resources available. The department wants to maintain police presence on the street, so human resources are precious. Both MPD Assistant Chief Newsham and MPD Commander Hickson agree that if there were to be push back from MPD administration or police officers, it would be a result of funding and resources. Newsham explains that, “we get pulled in a lot of different directions, so we can’t do everything”.

The District of Columbia’s MPD Commander Hickson shed light on the fact that a similar program had been tried before. There used to be something similar to the Police Athletic League run in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club over

97 Frederick J. Watts, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
98 Frederick J. Watts, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
99 Chief Peter Newsham, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
fifteen years ago. However, it was shut down because it was too costly\textsuperscript{100}. The Metropolitan Police Department handed it over to the Boys and Girls Club with hope that the Boys and Girls Club organization would keep it running – unfortunately, they were not able to do so. This illustrates the possibility that MPD may not be ready to try a program like this again as a result of this previous experience and decision to shut down a similar program.

Although the police department is clearly committed to preventing youth violence and MPD Assistant Chief Peter Newsham’s first reaction to the state of youth violence in DC is “there is too much”, he ends in saying that “youth are not the largest contributor to violence in DC”\textsuperscript{101}. Therefore, youth violence prevention may not be the highest priority for all of MPD, which may make it less likely for MPD to dedicate substantial resources into a youth-focused program that they do not see as their highest priority.

One of the biggest challenges a new Police Athletic League would face, according to Commander Hickson, would be securing facilities from DC Parks and Recreation Department\textsuperscript{102}. These departments are notorious for not be willing to work with other programs and organizations; they are very territorial. Securing a partnership or collaborative relationship with a recreational facility and/or space is essential in order for the program to be able to be consistent.

The Washington DC Police Foundation provides funds to the DC Chief of Police and the Metropolitan Police Department to support youth programs such

\textsuperscript{100} Commander Daniel Hickson, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{101} Chief Peter Newsham, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
\textsuperscript{102} Commander Daniel Hickson, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
as summer programs, after school programs, career days, and other programs to keep kids engaged in positive activities\textsuperscript{103}. The Police Foundation would likely be the main source of funding for a youth-focused MPD program such as a Police Athletic League. The most recent available Form 990 with the DC Police Foundation’s financial records show that in 2013, the Foundation lost $30,622 dollars\textsuperscript{104}. This may mean that the Foundation does not have the financial capacity to help start up a new youth program at this time, as funding a new program may take money away from an already established program.

**Political Analysis**

There are numerous key stakeholders in the establishment of a new, pilot Police Athletic League. First off, there are the police officers in Public Service Areas 602 and 604. The agenda is to help police officers prevent crime in their Public Service Areas more effectively, resulting in a decrease in crime, and meeting crime reduction goals. The key leader of decisions made within the Metropolitan Police Department is the Chief of Police, Cathy Lanier. Assistant Chief Newsham states that Chief Lanier wants to focus crime prevention efforts in three specific Public Service Areas in 2015, with two of those being 602 and 604\textsuperscript{105}.

Additionally, the DC City Council and the Mayor are stakeholders. “As the central and chief policy-making body for the District of Columbia, the Council’s mission is to provide strong, innovative and effective leadership for the benefit of

\textsuperscript{104} 2013 990 Form.
\textsuperscript{105} Chief Peter Newsham, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
residents across the city”\textsuperscript{106}. Led by the Council Chairman, the 13 members of DC’s City Council are working to improve the quality of life in District neighborhoods by ensuring safer streets and implementing groundbreaking programs\textsuperscript{107}. The City Council responsibilities include oversight of multiple agencies, commissions, boards, and other instruments of District government, in addition to its central role as a legislative body to make laws\textsuperscript{108}. The City Council and the Mayor work closely together. The Mayor oversees a city’s main departments, including the police, fire, education, housing, and transportation departments\textsuperscript{109}. Furthermore, the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions in Ward 7 would be stakeholders in the Police Athletic League. The Commissions consider a wide range of policies and programs affecting their neighborhoods, including traffic, parking, recreation, street improvements, liquor licenses, zoning, economic development, police protection, sanitation and trash collection, and the District’s annual budget\textsuperscript{110}.

Lastly, interest groups with the goals of “fighting police brutality” and improving police-community relations are stakeholders. Given the police-community conflict occurring in the District of Columbia and throughout the nation, these interest groups will want to ensure the foundation of a Police Athletic League would be established with the right intentions and in an effective way to improve these police-community relations.

\textsuperscript{107} About the Council.
\textsuperscript{108} About the Council.
Chief Lanier believes in the value of the police developing community ties. Lanier changed MPD’s policing tactics when she was promoted to Chief. Lanier believes that “when you’re doing zero-tolerance policing...who are you picking up and who are you alienating? Your residents, your victims, and your witnesses. Now they have no respect for the police. They have no reason to speak to the police.”

Lanier changed course. Instead of cracking down on minor disorder in high-crime neighborhoods, she encouraged patrol officers to develop sources. Chief Lanier’s number one principle is to reduce crime by bettering community ties. This transition in thinking is the first step in rebuilding trust within the community. A Police Athletic League would improve community ties, while simultaneously reducing youth violence in the communities – something Chief Lanier would see as a win-win.

As with any new program or policy, there are pros and cons, in addition to likely opponents and allies. Possible opponents may be certain members of police management, who may want more of a police presence on the street, rather than having a handful of their officers coaching after-school programming. As Mr. Watts, the Executive Director of New York’s Police Athletic League, notes regarding his experience, from the very top, the support is unfailing. Any pushback comes from the precinct level, not because they don’t want to help, but because the Police

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112 Buntin, John


114 Frederick J. Watts, interviewed by the author, March 2015.
Athletic League is not always the priority. The only push back comes from a lack of resources, not from a lack of feelings of value in the program.

A potential ally of the establishment of a Police Athletic League outside of MPD would be Yvette Alexander, the Ward 7 DC council member. Both of the Public Service Areas that the Police Athletic League would serve are in Ward 7. Alexander would be an ally for this program for the reason that as a council member, her responsibility includes oversight of instruments of District government\textsuperscript{115}. Alexander would very likely support such a program for Public Service Areas within her ward and could possibly help secure funding for a Police Athletic League.

Furthermore, Mayor Bowser, would be a very likely ally. Bowser submitted a Fiscal Year 2016 Proposed Budget with five overarching priorities that guide the budget and provide pathways to the middle-class: education; economic opportunity; public safety; neighborhoods; and the environment and infrastructure\textsuperscript{116}. Two of these five, public safety and neighborhoods, are addressed by a Police Athletic League. Lastly, Chief Lanier would also be a likely ally, as long as monetary resources are available and would not need to be taken from other programs, and as long as she is convinced that this new initiative would not impact human resources or effectiveness in other MPD priority initiatives.

If the program is able to show successful outcomes in youth violence in the first year, more resources will be able to be dedicated to the Police Athletic League,

\textsuperscript{115} About the Council. \textit{Council of the District of Columbia}. April 2015. \\
<http://dccouncil.us/pages/about-the-council> 

\textsuperscript{116} The Bowser Administration’s FY 2016 Proposed Budget: Pathways to the Middle Class. April 2, 2015. \\
so that the program can reach more kids and have more widespread impact. Many District residents say the key to a solution of youth violence is a stronger police presence—something they claim doesn’t exist\textsuperscript{117}. A Police Athletic League would increase police presence in the community, which is viewed by the public as critical.

Endorsing the establishment of a Police Athletic League to Chief Lanier has several political benefits. First off, the program could potentially decrease youth violence in two high-crime, priority areas of DC. Recreational programs and activities outside of school have been shown to contribute to reduced juvenile delinquency\textsuperscript{118}. The number of arrests related to non-aggressive assaults is on the rise and the number of juvenile arrests related to thefts and stolen property is also increasing\textsuperscript{119}. The DC Metropolitan Police Department needs to take action in some way to turn these crime numbers around. Forming a program that is effective in reducing youth violence in the District would not only be good for the city, but it will greatly impact your career, by enabling you to leave a legacy as the founder of a successful, impactful, program.

However, endorsing the establishment of a Police Athletic League has political costs as well. First off, a cost could be a lack of police presence on the street due to officers volunteering with the Police Athletic League, which could lead to increases in crime in other areas, as seen in the studies on Watts community in California. Additionally, there could also be a potential backlash from the community for

\textsuperscript{117} Roz Plater, Rachel Schaerr. “D.C. community plagued by recent violence comes together to find solutions”. WJLA. 23 January 2015.


\textsuperscript{119} DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation.
paying police officers to volunteer their time. Furthermore, it would be a large cost if youth violence does not decrease - the program would be seen as ineffective, not worthwhile, and a waste of time, which will lead to the program being shut down. Furthermore, it may be costly to utilize monetary and human resources on a type of violence that some DC officials do not see as the most pertinent violence problem in the district.

Another political con will be interest groups that would rather see money spent elsewhere. In regards to the Metropolitan Police Department budget, perhaps funds used towards the Police Athletic League could be utilized to increase training for police officers in certain areas, such as cultural competency. An additional political con would be interest groups that don’t trust police in today’s environment. Some groups would not want the police to involve themselves in the community to this degree.

In order to ameliorate costs, the program would need to start small in one or two of the Chief’s priority Public Service Areas to pilot the program, to not utilize too many resources before effectiveness can be proven. The program needs to show effectiveness in youth participant violence, which will lead to program success and program growth.

Metropolitan Police Department management will need to trade-off having a few less officers on the street, since human resources will be needed to coach the Police Athletic League teams and games. There is also the trade-off of trying this program, as opposed to testing or putting resources into other community programs. The Police Athletic League is an after-school recreation crime prevention
program. There are other programs that have could be utilized as community crime prevention programs instead, such as community-based mentoring, gang prevention and intervention programs, community mobilization strategies, family-based crime prevention, or school-based crime prevention. Thus, resources would be going to this after-school recreation program as opposed to another crime prevention program options.

**Recommendation**

Given the high prevalence of youth violence, and its burden on the government and society as a whole, the need to look at levers for reducing youth violence is more urgent than ever. An example of a major burden on society is the statistic that in New York State taxpayers $226,320 to provide one slot in juvenile detention per year; however, it only costs $3,700 to serve one juvenile per year through Police Athletic League’s Youth Link program\(^\text{120}\).

The U.S. Department of Justice statistics document that juvenile crime triples between the hours of 3pm and 6pm, which is also the period when children are most likely to be victims of crime and participate in risky behavior\(^\text{121}\). This statistic shows the need for youth to be involved in positive after-school activities during this portion of the day, which the Police Athletic League program will provide.

The program model has been proven in other metropolitan areas. In a NYC PAL program, 94% of PAL Youth who are involved in this PAL Program for 12

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\(^{120}\) Police Athletic League, Inc. 2012 Annual Report.  
<http://www.palnyc.org/Public/F07_PALAnnual2012_low_rez_spreads.pdf>  
^{121} Police Athletic League, Inc. 2012 Annual Report.  
<http://www.palnyc.org/Public/F07_PALAnnual2012_low_rez_spreads.pdf>
months do not get remanded or arrested during the program\textsuperscript{122}. The program started two years ago; since then, there's been just one shooting death in Watts' largest housing projects, compared with 43 homicides in the previous six years\textsuperscript{123}. This case study shows that programs very similar to the Police Athletic League contribute to reductions in violence. One advantage that the DC Metropolitan Police Department has is the department already has a Community Outreach system in place that will help building the program easier.

The biggest con to be addressed is the resources, both monetary and human, needed for this program to run and be successful. Preventative measures such as programs like the Police Athletic League are good, but the police department needs to deal with the immediate needs first, which is the crime currently occurring. As a result, the only push back would come from lack of human resources available. The department wants to maintain police presence on the street, so human resources are precious. However, for one team of 10 kids, to practice 4 times a week, you would only need 1 police officer. So with that, to serve 60 youth in the first year, MPD would need 6 officers to volunteer, which is not a large number of resources.

I would highly recommend that a Police Athletic League be formed in the Public Service Areas of 602 and 604. This would be a valuable opportunity for the community and the youth in these areas, as youth violence will be prevented and reduced, and police community ties will be stronger.

\textsuperscript{122} Police Athletic League, Inc. 2012 Annual Report. \textless http://www.palnyc.org/Public/F07_PALAnnual2012_low_rez_spreads.pdf\textgreater
\textsuperscript{123} Banks, Sandy. “Young players on the Watts Bears are part of a larger team effort.”
Curriculum Vita
Nicole Harrison
Author’s Birth: April 5, 1989 in Alexandria, Virginia

Education
Johns Hopkins University, Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Science
Master of Arts in Public Management, Expected Graduation Date: Spring 2015
Cumulative GPA: 3.8
University of Virginia, College of Arts and Sciences
Bachelor of Arts in Biology, 2011
Cumulative GPA: 3.5

Honors And Awards
University of Virginia Dean’s List
Dean's List at Manhattan College 3 of 4 semesters

Professional Experience
BEST Kids Mentoring
Program Director, May 2013 to Present
Washington, DC
May 2011 - Present

• Manage and develop all full-time and part-time program staff
• Develop programming to increase effectiveness of mentoring relationships and Peer Group programs
• Manage program evaluation to ensure desired outcomes and high quality mentoring
• Expand organizational and corporate partnerships

Supervisor of Mentoring Services, August 2012 to April 2013
• Supervised three full-time Mentor Coordinators and three part-time staff
• Revised and created organizational program improvements alongside Executive Director

Mentor Coordinator, May 2011 to August 2012
• Proactively managed the mentoring relationships of over twenty-five foster care youth
• Coordinated and facilitated experiential learning activities each month for youth and mentors
• Collaborate with each youth’s social workers to ensure clients’ goals were met

Community Outreach and Service Intern
University of Virginia Health System
Charlottesville, VA
August 2010 – May 2011

• Assisted with organizing and coordinating various events and programs including Remote Area Medicine, Community Service Awards, Health House, and United Way Day of Caring
• Directed the Information Station children's safety and wellness education program

Activities And Leadership
Volunteer Mentor at BEST Kids, June 2013 – June 2014
Assistant Youth Basketball Coach, Fall 2012 – Spring 2013
Youth Service Opportunities Project Workcamp Leader, February 2012 – September 2012
Division I Manhattan College Women’s Basketball player, Fall 2007-Spring 2009