



AN EDUCATION IN VIOLENCE

Violence is the leading cause of death for African-American men and women aged 15 to 23. In Toledo, OH, media reports of youths dying are common. At St. Vincent Medical Center, between 1990 and 1994, the number of penetrating trauma (gunshot and stabbing) victims under the age of 21 increased 83 percent.

St. Vincent, a level I trauma center located near Toledo's central city area, is one of two trauma centers in the region and treats most of the city's youthful victims of violent crime. The high incidence of such cases told St. Vincent officials that they needed to seek ways to help reverse this alarming trend.

In April 1994 city officials, who were also studying ways to stem the loss of lives, asked St. Vincent to sponsor local activities of the national "Let's Stop Killing Kids" week, a series of events aimed at raising people's awareness of youth violence and at helping teens avoid potentially violent situations.

A team that included a minority psychiatrist; members of St. Vincent's trauma, community health, and behavioral services programs; and representatives of the City of Toledo Youth Commission and Scott High School (a school near St. Vincent) thought about the problem. They came up with the idea of "Kids Saving Kids"—a dramatization that would show a group of teens what happens when someone is injured by a penetrating weapon. The dramatization was a big success.

*Staged
"Trauma
Care" Shows
Teenagers
Some Harsh
Realities*

BY NANCY WILSON

In fact, it was such a success that local healthcare providers and City of Toledo agencies agreed to offer the program on an ongoing basis. Over the past 18 months Kids Saving Kids has touched the lives of more than 600 teens, and participants have given the program high ratings for helping them avoid potentially violent situations.

REMOVING THE GLAMOUR FROM VIOLENCE

The program, which is put on in a classroom at St. Vincent, begins with a brief description of national trauma statistics. The instructor tells the group that 1 out of every 12 of them is likely to be injured by a firearm. He asks 2 of the students to stand up (there are usually 20 in a group). This brings home the fact that statistics represent real human beings.

At this point, a trauma alert is called over the hospital paging system. Twelve members of the real trauma team on call that day rush to the classroom to work on their "patient," a student from the class who has been in a "gang fight" and has two simulated gunshot wounds. As the trauma team begins to resuscitate the "patient," the medical director of trauma services provides a narration so that the students understand everything the team is doing and why. This portion of the program visually underscores the physical damage, pain, and helplessness victims experience.

After the dramatization, the teens are allowed to ask questions. In a brief presentation, the founder of the community's antiviolence group displays newspaper articles about—and photos of—children who were actually shot and killed. The teens then discuss the impact of these deaths on the victims' families and friends.

The session ends with a discussion of conflict resolution, in which the teens are shown alternative behaviors to violence. A St. Vincent behavioral

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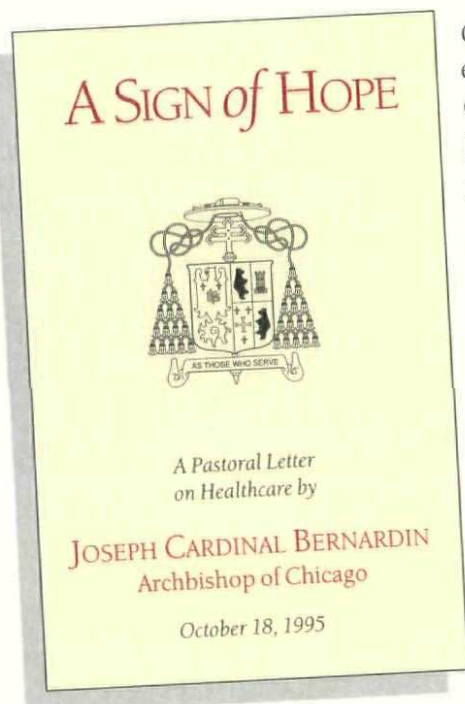


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MUST READING FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE CATHOLIC HEALTH MINISTRY

"As Christians, we are called, indeed empowered, to comfort others in the midst of their suffering by giving them reason to hope."

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago



Calling healthcare "an essential ministry" and one especially capable of providing the "sign of hope" so badly needed by the ill, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin has prepared a new pastoral letter on healthcare.

"A Sign of Hope" provides a theological, moral, and social foundation for understanding what is distinctive about the Catholic healthcare ministry. The Cardinal also reflects on his recent illness.

Following up on earlier writings, the Cardinal reiterates his support of the not-for-profit nature of healthcare delivery, asking for others to join him "in resisting efforts to make healthcare in our nation or our own ministry merely another commodity, simply another item to be sold."

As described in the *Chicago Tribune*, November 7, 1995:

"[Card.] Bernardin [in "A Sign of Hope"] urged that Catholic institutions collaborate to survive competitive financial pressures, and hark back to their religious mission of providing hope, comfort, and a sense that patients are part of a community."

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therapist usually leads this part of the program. The final activity is a tour of the real trauma rooms in St. Vincent's emergency department.


JUST THE BEGINNING

In late 1994 St. Vincent began sharing the Kids Saving Kids program with Medical College Hospitals, the other level I trauma center in the region, as a collaborative, community initiative. St. Vincent and Medical College will each host six sessions this year.

Area schools have booked the program through 1996. St. Vincent trauma experts have spoken about the program to the principals of Toledo public schools, the County Juvenile Justice Department, and the Rotary Club of Bowling Green, OH. And representatives from St. Vincent have appeared on a local public television program about teen violence.

St. Vincent has hosted 12 sessions per school year. Evaluations, based on ratings of 1 to 10 (10 being "strongly agree"), show that 86 percent of those students agree the program is worthwhile, giving it a rating of 9 or 10. In addition, 75 percent have affirmatively answered the question, "Would you be more likely to avoid a potentially violent situation as a result of the program?" Perhaps it is no coincidence that the number of penetrating trauma victims at St. Vincent from January through April 1995 was down 44 percent from the number seen in the same period of 1994.

Many officers of the Toledo Police Department have attended the Kids Saving Kids program, and the department has placed an officer in each of the city's high schools to help prevent violence. Also, the Kids Saving Kids committee is applying for grants to fund programs for teens at neighborhood centers. If the applications are approved, some of the grant money will fund a mentor program in which Kids Saving Kids participants will train other teens in conflict resolution. □

 For more information, call Nancy Wilson at 419-252-2009.