**SMITH CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT BRINGS NEW SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS TO SOUTH SIDE OF CHICAGO**

 NON-PROFIT STRENGTHENS FAMILIES THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

CHICAGO—Promoting healthy families and advocating for a more protective environment at home and in school for Chicago’s children the Smith Center for Community Advancement (SCCA) is excited to announce it’s opening. The SCCA, a strength-based non-profit community organization, is focused on providing support to families and communities while building a support network for them.

The center, currently in its germinal stage, has begun piloting various external programs for families and youth as well researching communities to bring its services too and setup permanent offices.

Kicking off the initial event of the community center on August 25, 2013 Andre C. Russell, CEO and Lead Advocate, organized the Smith Center Annual Memorial Walk. Russell had this to say concerning the annual affair, “The walk was an introduction of the Smith Center onto the social service scene as well as it begins a tradition of what we would like to call “Community Action” projects that bring together the family and community in a combined and productive outlet. Additionally we will urge the families involved to contribute to these projects as a display of community investment and outreach.”

The walk was a chance for the community to speak out and to say, “enough is enough,” of the violence, and crime that has claimed so many Chicago youths. The participants consisted of volunteers and friends that walked roughly two miles there and back, starting at Chicago Vocational Career School (CVCA) located at 2100 E. 87th St., Russell’s alma mater, and ended at James H. Bowen High School 2710 E. 89th St. also in Chicago.

“The location of the walk was symbolic in that I am an alumni of CVS (now known as CVCA) and a longtime resident of the south side community, I felt it was important to start at my foundation and move forward from there,” Russell said.

Currently SCCA is in the midst of conducting its pilot program, Russell had this to say, “The pilot program is basically a practice run of the curriculum in order to work out the kinks and create a smooth and successful program. The plan is to work with a few families that are representative of our target population in regards to the youth displaying academic and/or behavioral concerns.”

The SCCA will target communities that are experiencing a plethora of issues that include economic depression, low performing schools, and families identified, as in need of professional intervention. “The goal is to definitely partner with schools once we have established our program to a level of completion that can handle the potential caseload and the proper funding to support it,” Russell said.

Russell has spent 11 years working in social services beginning in 2002 mentoring and tutoring youths. When speaking of the necessity for the SCCA to his south side community Russell puts it simply “The ‘need’ for the Smith Center is to contribute to the stabilization of the community by providing the family with the resources and state of mind for self-correction. We supply that thanks to the collaborative efforts of professionals dedicated to that goal.”

The SCCA hopes to work in partnership with city organizations such as the Chicago Department of Children and Family Services, “I’m hoping to collaborate professionally with fellow organizations in the community that share the same passion to work with the community as well as organizations and programs that specialize in providing academic resources, public assistance, and clinical level therapy. The goal is to definitely partner with schools once we have established our program to a level of completion that can handle the potential caseload and the proper funding to support it.”

The SCCA will not initiate treatment programs until 2014.

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