



## U.S. Department of Justice

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### **VOICES OF YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL MAKES DEBUT**

PHILADELPHIA - Hundreds of community members gathered at Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church for the premiere screening of two videos produced by students participating in the United States Attorney's 'Voices of Youth' Violence Prevention Initiative. U.S. Attorney Zane David Memeger joined the 32 students who participated in the program.

This is the inaugural run for the Voices of Youth initiative. The program focused on Northwest Philadelphia due to the high incidence of violent crime and murder in that area in 2010. Students from four Northwest Philadelphia High Schools were chosen to participate in the eight-week curriculum based program. They worked with Philadelphia's Village of Arts and Humanities and Well Productions. Each group produced a video, with the help of instructors, that relayed the students' thoughts and visions with regard to the impact of violence on their lives and/or the consequences of making good life choices.

"The Voices of Youth Project has been a major outreach initiative for the U.S. Attorney's Office this year and our first which has focused specifically on students and their views of violence," said Memeger. "The videos produced from this project convey a message about the impact violence has had on the students' lives, the lives of their families, and their community, as well as the importance of making good decisions. The thoughtful and reflective nature of their ideas, discussions, and efforts is nothing short of powerful. I want to commend our student participants for putting so much of the time, thoughts, and heart into this project. We hope their message reaches not only their peers, but the community at large which must support the hopes and dreams for this generation as well. With programs such as 'Voices of Youth', we are hoping to break the cycle so that the victimization of our community through crime can be significantly reduced."

Following the screening of the videos, U.S. Attorney Memeger awarded certificates of achievement to each student who completed the program.

The U.S. Attorney's Office worked closely with the Northwest Community Coalition for Youth, the Philadelphia Center for Arts & Technology, principals at the participating schools: Hope Charter High School, Imhotep Charter High School, New Media Charter High School, and Martin Luther King High School, the staff and Pastor Waller of Enon Baptist Tabernacle Church, and Widener University's Center for Violence Prevention.

The project concludes on Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, with a town hall meeting at the National Constitution Center from 9:30 am to Noon. That event will feature panel discussions about each video and the overall program. The participating students will join in that discussion along with the U.S. Attorney, Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey, and Deputy District Attorney George Mosey.

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