



THE ROOT

"Growing Safer Communities,
One Branch at a Time."

Vol. I Issue I • January 2025

ABOUT US

The Gun Violence Prevention Initiative, housed in the Lake County State's Attorney's Office, is one of only five of the like in the country. By grounding the work in the pillars of (1) evidence-based approaches, (2) trauma informed practices and (3) community-grounded engagement, the GVPI's vision is to, "interrupt cycles of violence through the use of evidence-based practices that rely on collaborative approaches in meeting the needs of people who have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed." The pieces that comprise the GVPI are six: Firearm Risk Reduction, Youth Engagement, Resource Ecosystem, Intervention (Community Violence Intervention), Victim Services, and Restorative Justice.

WELCOME TO "THE ROOT,"

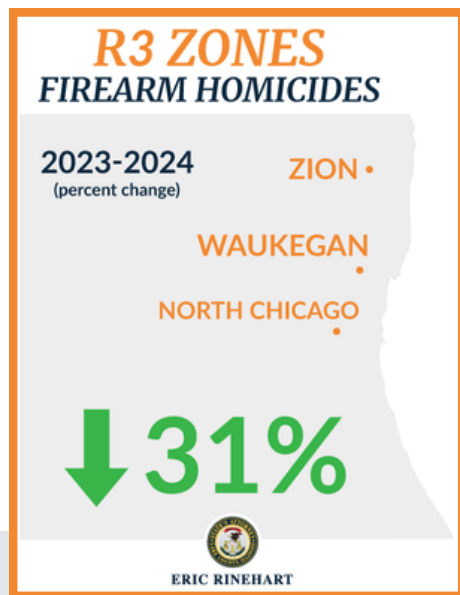
the Gun Violence Prevention Initiative's Quarterly Newsletter! The GVPI is excited to launch this new medium to connect with the Violence Prevention Coordinating Council and with residents of Lake County at large. Since the GVPI's launch in 2022, the team has grown significantly, both in capacity and in scope. This team is committed to approaching gun violence holistically and robustly—where the root causes are tangibly addressed, *not* brushed under the rug. In this inaugural issue, you will get a glimpse into the team's trials and triumphs, as well as its ambitions and hopes for the future. We sincerely hope you enjoy engaging with this newsletter and with the broader GVP movement.

The GVPI Team

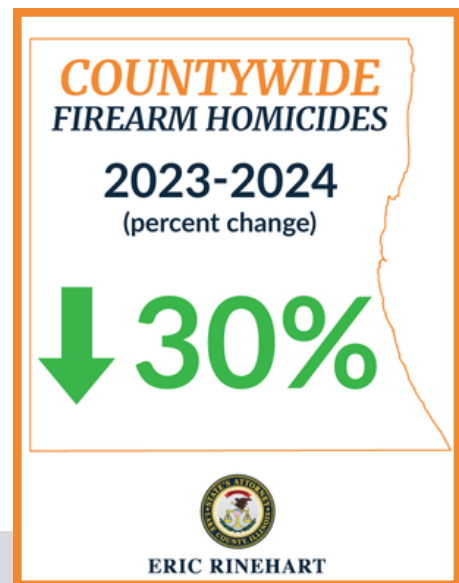


Achievements in GVP in Lake County

One of the priorities of the GVPI is to track gun violence in Lake County to assess where intervention and services are most needed. Gun violence steadily continues to decrease in our county each year. **In 2024, Lake County gun violence homicides decreased by 30 percent from 2023.** We look forward to tracking more downward trends every year.



2024 Total Homicides in R3 Zones:
Zion: 4 | Waukegan: 5 | North Chicago: 0



In 2024, there were a total of **14 firearm homicides** in Lake County. In 2023, there were 20 firearm homicides. This indicates a continued decline in firearm homicides from 2022, which were 38.



Lake County is **beating** the national average for Firearm Homicide Decreases.



Pieces of the GVPI “Puzzle”

This piece focuses on raising community awareness about safe firearm storage and leads community education and support on Firearm Restraining Orders (FROs) and Clear & Present Danger Reports.

FIREARM RISK REDUCTION

What We've Accomplished:

- Lake County named the **statewide leader of FROs per capita**
- Partnered with jurisdictions across the country engaging in similar gun violence prevention work:
 - Johns Hopkins University - ERPO Center
 - University of Colorado, Boulder - Gun Violence Research Center
 - Illinois State Police
 - Illinois Attorney General
- GVPI distributed over **4,000 gun locks** across the county

What You Can Look Forward To:

- FRO guideline pocket cards for law enforcement, physicians, & social workers
- More gun lock distribution sites
- Firearm Safe Distribution Program
- More trainings across the county

What We Can Provide:

- FRO trainings
- FREE Gun Locks

This piece focuses on providing services to people who have been affected by gun violence, as well as those navigating the legal system as a result of violent crime. Victim Services (VS) within the GVPI is unique in its ability to serve victims and survivors of gun violence, specifically. The VS team is holistic in its approach and goes beyond court advocacy by connecting people to support services in the community.

What We've Accomplished:

- Held a vigil for people who have been lost to gun violence
- Hosted Townhalls to assess needs for community healing

What You Can Look Forward To:

- Homicide Survivor's Support Group
 - *every 2nd Wednesday of the month*
- More community healing events

What We Can Provide:

- Individual and Family Therapy
- Court Advocacy

VICTIM SERVICES

This piece focuses on engaging youth by providing mentorship services that utilize storytelling and spoken word poetry to provide healthy outlets for self-expression. The flagship programs highlighted in this piece are, “My Brother's Keeper's Alliance” (MBK) & “Our Greatness is Our Story.”

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

What We've Accomplished:

- MBK Programs in 6 schools
- Of 99 participants in 2023, *every* MBK senior graduated.
- Apprenticeship Programs with Aeon Credit Union, Granger, Lake County Workforce Development Board
- 109 Total MBK Participants
- 22 Lake County Teachers involved in MBK programming

What You Can Look Forward To:

- MBK Programs in more schools in Lake County
- Spring MBK Scholar Symposium
- Building a strong MBK alumni network
- More Apprenticeship Partners

What We Can Provide:

- MBK Programming at your Lake County High School
- Programs for younger scholars



Pieces of the GVPI “Puzzle”

This piece works to establish and maintain an ecosystem of resources for the residents of Lake County. The Violence Prevention Coordinating Council (VPCC) forms essential partnerships with community-based violence prevention organizations and connects them to those affected by gun violence (or those at risk to gun violence).

What We’ve Accomplished:

- A coalition of 49 organizations in Lake County
- Monthly Convenings to discuss gaps and share resources

What We Can Provide:

- Access to Referral Network of organizations in Lake County
- Opportunities for Trainings

What You Can Look Forward To:

- A Resource/Asset Map of organizations in Lake County that provide essential services
- Committees that address Youth Engagement, Community Engagement, & Victims Services
- More Community Events centering Gun Violence Prevention

RESOURCE ECOSYSTEM

The purpose of this piece, and of the State Attorney’s Office in general, is to invest in alternatives to arrest and incarceration for non-violent offenses through a focus on accountability measures and repairing harm.

What We’ve Accomplished:

- Initiated Prosecutor-Led Diversion programs
- Partnered with VPCC organizations to pilot diversion programs
- Partnered with Specialty Courts

What We Can Provide:

- Presentations about Diversion/Deflection Programs
- Legal Expertise about how organizations can implement diversion programs
- Provide Connections to Restorative Justice Experts and Trainings

What You Can Look Forward To:

- Hiring a Diversion Coordinator
- Scaling both misdemeanor and felony diversions
- Deflection Trainings

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

This piece, known as, “Community Violence Intervention,” is managed by the Lake County Peacemakers. This team works to, “interrupt the cycles of violence by building trust with the community, mediating disputes, preventing retaliation, and engaging with high-risk individuals.” Their prominence and efficacy in the community speaks for itself, as the correlation between their influence and the decrease in homicides in Waukegan, North Chicago, and Zion should not be ignored (*see graphics on page 2*).

What We’ve Accomplished:

- Hired a team of 15 Lake County Peacemakers
- Built rapport and trust within LC communities
- Played an essential role in the decrease in homicides in Waukegan, North Chicago and Zion

What We Can Provide:

- Conflict Resolution and Mediation
- Response to incidents of gun violence within 90 minutes
- Case Management for High-Risk Individuals

What You Can Look Forward To:

- Expanding the team
- A Prominent Presence on Social Media
- Quarterly events

INTERVENTION

"Thank You!" to VPCC Community Partners

The GVPI would like to extend its sincere appreciation for **YOU**, the partners that comprise the VPCC. We here at the GVPI understand that gun violence prevention begins with the work that you all do for the community. Your passion for tackling the root causes of gun violence makes Lake County safer and more prosperous. We look forward to continuing to build a stronger coalition, together!

[A Safe Place](#)

[Advocate Aurora Health](#)

[Alternatives Youth](#)

[Antmound Foundation](#)

[Arden Shores Child and Family Services](#)

[Art Impact Project](#)

[Boys and Girls Club of Lake County](#)

[College of Lake County](#)

[Donzell Williams Foundation](#)

[Heart of the City Sports](#)

[Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center](#)

[Lake County Regional Safe School](#)

[Lake County Suicide Prevention Taskforce](#)

[NIRCO](#)

[Prairie State Legal Services](#)

[Renacer Latino](#)

[Warren Township Highschool](#)

[Waukegan Public Schools D60](#)

[Wraparound Center Services](#)

[Youth Conservation Corps](#)

[Adelante Virtual Food Pantry](#)

[Angel's Boxing Academy](#)

[Big Brothers Big Sisters Metro Chicago](#)

[Community Care Connection \(Rosalind Franklin University\)](#)

[Families Left Behind](#)

[Great Lakes Credit Union](#)

[Gro Community](#)

[Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County](#)

[Honey B Wellz](#)

[Illinois State Police](#)

[Job Center of Lake County](#)

[Kids Above All](#)

[Lake County Coroner's Office](#)

[Lake County Peacemakers](#)

[Legacy Reentry Foundation](#)

[Lovell Federal Health Care Center](#)

[Mano-a-Mano](#)

[Mother's Trust Foundation](#)

[My Employee Connections](#)

[North Shore Church](#)

[North Suburban Legal Aid Clinic](#)

[One World, Shared Future](#)

[SGA Youth and Family Services](#)

[The Gentlemen's Club](#)

[Trauma Recovery Center](#)

[United Way 211](#)

[Waukegan Public Library \(Bilingual Adult Education\)](#)

[YouthBuild Lake County](#)

[Zacharia's \(Z\) Center](#)

****Are You a Lake County community organization who believes you belong on this list? Contact our VPCC, Selma Ismail!****



Happy Retirement, Sandra!

Dear Sandra,

On behalf of the entire GVPI team, we extend our deepest gratitude for your boundless kindness, wisdom, and unwavering passion for serving others. Your deep roots in the community have exemplified the essence of true, hyper-local leadership, inspiring us all with your dedication and heart. As you embark on this new chapter, please know how profoundly you will be missed, and how your legacy will continue to guide us. Thank you for being a beacon of strength and compassion. We are forever grateful for you!

~Tierra Lemon

Get Involved With the GVPI

Join the Violence Prevention Coordinating Council (VPCC)

The Violence Prevention Coordinating Council includes a blend of nonprofit organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, behavioral health providers and law enforcement. They provide a range of services/opportunities in youth programming, crisis and victim services, mentorship, legal aid, counseling, and violence intervention.

We meet on a monthly basis. **Join us!** Contact Selma Ismail (VPCC) for more information.

Below are the 2025 Meeting Dates:

- January 24
 - February 28
 - March 28
 - April 25
 - May 30
 - June 27
- July 25
 - August 22
 - September 26
 - October 24
 - November 14
 - December 12

Scan Here to View our Dashboards & Join Committees!

[Asset Mapping Form](#)



[VPCC Committee Form](#)










[Firearm Fatality Dashboard](#)



[Gun Lock Distribution Sites](#)



Contact Us

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