

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mobilizing a village (or a big city) to help kids

Thank you for your Focus section on mentoring and for the articles that have covered Mayor Rahm Emanuel's effort to raise up to \$50 million from the business community to support a new anti-violence initiative in Chicago ("Life lessons," March 18). I have a concern for the mayor's effort on several levels.

First, there are high levels of poverty, violence and poorly performing schools in many Chicago community areas not included in the areas prioritized in this effort. Unless

companies dedicate new dollars to this anti-violence program, the money is likely to come by taking dollars away from programs being funded in other neighborhoods. We can't let this happen.

Second, the current level of violence is not a new problem. The media have devoted space and air time to this story, but they have not consistently used their resources to mobilize volunteer talent, time and dollars to support a wide range of youth programs.

Crain's readers understand

the power of advertising. Chicago needs to draw upon this knowledge and innovate new ways to provide support to a network of youth-serving organizations operating in different parts of the city and the suburbs.

Finally, many nonprofits don't have manpower and dollars to support operations and attract a flow of resources and talent. Companies know how to support multiple stores in many locations. Apply that knowledge and corporate talent and dollars to sup-

port long-term, mentor-rich youth programs operating in every part of the Chicago region where kids need extra help and where guns and violence are symptoms of a deeper problem.

I propose that companies and professional groups look for ways to build teams of employee volunteers that create new ways of connecting the talent and resources of their companies with youth, in neighborhoods where companies do business or where employees and customers live;

and that Crain's and other media provide regular recognition for companies who do this in innovative ways.

Where to start? Kids go back to school soon. Why not create teams that get to know the more than 150 organizations that offer tutoring and mentoring in the city, and build communications campaigns to encourage volunteer involvement and workplace support?

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