



Our vision is that youth who have suffered trauma can become our future leaders.

The following editorial by UCAN CEO Tom Vanden Berk was printed in the July 21st edition of The Chicago Tribune.

Chicago Tribune

NEARLY HALF
OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN
TEENS KNOW SOMEONE
WHO HAS **BEEN SHOT.**

34% OF TEENS SAY
THAT THEY **COULD GET**
A **HANDGUN** IF THEY
REALLY WANTED TO.

MORE THAN
ONE IN THREE TEENS
FEAR BEING SHOT
SOMEDAY.

These stats are all from UCAN's 2009 Teen Gun Survey, conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited. To view the full results, visit www.ucanchicago.org.

Violence in our communities

Chicago police Superintendent Garry McCarthy was right about lax gun laws harming black teens

"Let's see if we can make a connection here. Slavery. Segregation. Black codes. Jim Crow. What do they all have in common? Government-sponsored racism. Now, I want you to connect one more dot on that chain of the African-American history in this country, and tell me if I'm crazy: Federal gun laws that facilitate the flow of illegal firearms into our urban centers, across this country, that are killing our black and brown children."

Chicago police Superintendent Garry McCarthy set off a firestorm recently when he said those words, when he equated lax federal gun laws to racism. He got a lot of criticism from the right and the left.

I think he hit the mark.

We all fail to acknowledge that children—and, yes, mostly African-American children—are dying disproportionately because of our failure to take action.

As the father of a biracial son, Tommy, who was tragically killed in the crossfire of a gang shootout 19 years ago, I know the complicated intersection of race and guns.

I will never forget the night my son was killed. Our family was living in Evanston, and Tommy had asked permission to go to a party in Rogers Park. I did everything I thought a good parent should do. I drove him there, and even went inside the house to say hello to the kids. As always, I gave him a curfew, which he convinced me to extend by one hour to reward him for being on the honor roll. Does this sound like the beginning of a gang shootout to you?

When I returned to take him home, the scene was every parent's nightmare—there were police and ambulances everywhere. As I desperately looked for Tommy, I learned that a group of teenage gang members found a flier about the party, showed up at the house and started shooting at each other with guns they obtained on the illegal market. Tommy was caught in the crossfire as he was trying to leave the party. The bullet pierced his heart and he died instantly.

I read daily articles about the shootings of young people. We all know what the problem is and where to focus our solutions: The shootings are primarily in low-income, African-American communities where illegal gun traffickers all too readily put guns in the hands of black teenagers, who are shooting each other in gang fights. Innocent children get killed.

The University of Chicago Crime Lab issued a report in 2009 stating that African-Americans comprise 36 percent of Chicago's population, yet 67 percent of its

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Violence in our communities

(continued from cover story)

homicide victims. In 2005, there were 448 homicides and 90 percent of the victims were African-American. The report said “no Chicago youth is entirely safe,” and that one out of every five youths killed by gunfire in Chicago was an innocent bystander, not the intended target of the shooter.

I have moved to Highland Park. I will say something that, like Superintendent McCarthy, I am not supposed to say. It has crossed my mind that if my son were white, like me, or if the shooting that took his life in Rogers Park occurred with regularity in Highland Park, public outrage would inspire more action to save young lives. Sometimes I think that if I had raised him here, perhaps he would be alive today.

Do I believe the government has a secret, racist conspiracy? Absolutely not. I believe that, because there are so many safe communities, such as Highland Park, our society has overlooked the devastating impact that weak federal gun laws have had on low-income black communities. As a result, there has been a shocking lack of urgency to make the changes necessary to save the lives of so many African-American youths.

No one seems to have heard past McCarthy's use of the word “racism.” I believe his point was that weak federal gun laws facilitate a form of institutionalized racism, the unregulated flow of guns into the hands of young, black teenagers, and that we have a moral responsibility to strengthen these laws.

We know that the law could require licensing, registration and background checks on all gun purchases to save lives. Yet, we also know that it is tough to pass these lifesaving measures because the gun lobby complains that such laws hinder their rights to protect themselves.

Everyone lost Superintendent McCarthy's point. And young people keep dying.



UCAN: Leading the way in violence prevention

UCAN has a variety of violence prevention programming designed to empower and guide youth toward a future that is free of the fear and pain caused by violence. Our goals are for youth to take personal responsibility for their development, to help them heal from their trauma, to teach them non-violent conflict resolution strategies which ensure safer futures, and to support families in order to resolve the barriers to their children's success.

Last year, 93% of UCAN's U-LEAD participants improved their school attendance, while 89% improved their grades.

U-LEAD is UCAN's Leadership, Education, Advocacy & Development program, which is comprised of the following:

Hands Without Guns (HWG) provides classroom-based workshops to help students increase non-violent problem solving strategies and decrease violence and aggressive behaviors. This service also aims to influence Illinois legislation regarding gun violence prevention through public awareness and increased dialogue between youth and adults. HWG executes the national Teen Gun Survey each year, generously funded by The Joyce Foundation.

Project Visible Man and Phenomenal Woman are after-school group mentoring services for young men and women of color designed to encourage self-respect and transform dysfunctional behaviors through the exercise of will power, positive reinforcement and real-life role models.

Our **Young Leadership Development Institute** consists of aspiring young leaders who are trained to become change agents through the development of community service projects and community outreach events. These projects and events focus on educating peers on the dangers of gun violence, risky behaviors and unhealthy relationships.

Mentoring and Advocacy utilizes a trauma-informed approach to mentoring which works in collaboration with Chicago Public Schools. The service strives to reduce the likelihood that high-risk CPS students will become victims of violence through the creation of a safe, secure and supportive school environment to increase students' attendance, behavior and academic performance.

UCAN's school-based **360° Model** combines the violence prevention services above with youth and family clinical counseling. The 360° Model works with elementary and high school students, teachers and families to recognize the impact of violence and trauma in order to create safety and healing so that students are able to succeed. By using a holistic approach, we are able to tackle risk factors from various angles and empower youth. Our multi-pronged approach aims to teach students non-violent strategies, engage students to take personal responsibility for self-development, support families to resolve risks of academic dropout and achieve consistent school attendance, and intervene with students and families impacted by violence and/or trauma to support students' engagement in education.

“This is the third year that UCAN is providing 360° Model services at our school, including violence prevention programming during and after school, group mentoring, counseling, family support, and teacher training. I have seen many benefits including improved anger management and coping skills, improved conflict resolution skills, improved school attendance and academic performance, and even decreased bullying. Our teachers and administration also have an increased understanding of how to recognize trauma symptoms and how to support our students.”

*—Ms. Zipporah Hightower
Principal, Bethune School of Excellence*

Chase Larkin, Illinois State Senator Donne Trotter and Eddie Bland



Shakina Thompson, Stacey Barr, LeeAnn Trotter, Tom Vanden Berk, Kara Bland, and Keith Byrd



Colleen Bradley with award winner Anthony Holloman

AN EVENING TO HONOR OUR FUTURE LEADERS

UCAN's 2011 Youth Leadership Awards

"For twelve years, UCAN has been hosting the annual Youth Leadership Awards Dinner for one reason—these kids up on this stage. These outstanding youth realized that they had an opportunity to make a better life for themselves, and they took it. That is why we're here," said LeeAnn Trotter of NBC 5 Chicago, event emcee.

MEET THIS YEAR'S AWARD WINNERS:

ANTHONY HOLLOMAN, our John E. Rooney Dynamic Scholar, was the first client to participate in UCAN's new **LGBTQ Host Home** program. Tony faced immense challenges growing up, from being asked to leave his home at the age of 17 because of his sexual orientation to having to switch high schools three times. Not only did Anthony graduate from high school, but he recently earned

his Associate's Degree from Harold Washington College with a cumulative GPA of 3.5. In addition to working and studying, Anthony also recognizes the importance of giving back, whether it be to UCAN or to other community organizations. When asked what leadership means to him, Anthony stated that, "Leadership begins when a person directs him or herself through struggles and on journeys past dreadful emotions, driving oneself to reach great achievements." He is currently attending Illinois Institute of Technology and is majoring in computer science.

STACEY BARR lives in a Chicago Housing Authority development with her mother and younger siblings, and has participated in UCAN's **FamilyWorks** program since 1998. Over the past year, she has been involved in FamilyWorks' Growing Power green gardening project, where she has learned the importance of working hard to receive earnings. She also participated in and graduated from UCAN's **Learn & Earn** program in the summer of 2009. During high school, she achieved perfect attendance for four years and honor roll for three. Stacey is attending Chicago State and is majoring in forensic science; her dream is to become a homicide detective.

KARA BLAND participated in UCAN's **Partners in Parenting** program and graduated from Kenwood Academy High School with a cumulative 4.25 GPA (on a 6 point scale). In high school, Kara studied Spanish, ran track and cross country, and was a member of the National Honor Society. Kara states that, "being a leader means that you influence people in a good way," and she strives to achieve this daily while raising her daughter. Kara is attending the University of Illinois at Chicago where she is majoring in biology. She plans to continue on to medical school and become a general physician.

KEITH BYRD is one of seven children in a single parent household. He was introduced to UCAN at the tender age of eleven, becoming one of the first members of UCAN's **Project Visible Man** program. While in high school at Al Raby, Keith actively sought out and engaged in additional UCAN programs such as the **Mentoring Program**. Further, he is a strong advocate for both young people and UCAN, actively recruiting classmates to join Project Visible Man. Keith is currently attending Kishwaukee College in the hopes of continuing his growth and development in business and accounting; he also aspires to one day have his own social service agency to serve disadvantaged youth.

SHAKINA THOMPSON resides in a Chicago Housing Authority development with her mother, and participates in UCAN's **FamilyWorks** program there. She recently graduated from Chicago Vocational Career Academy High School, where she was ranked 12/237. In July, she obtained her Licensed Practical Nurse certification. Today, Shakina is pursuing her degree in nursing with a minor in criminal justice at Eastern Illinois University.



UCAN Board members James O'Neal and Jeff & Toni Palan



Chicago Bear J'Marcus Webb with UCAN youth



Keynote speaker Mellody Hobson, Ariel Investments

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 14th

Signature Leaders Society Breakfast with Senator Dan Kotowski

October 26th

3rd Annual Baubles, Bangles, and Bubbles jewelry fundraiser, hosted by Alper Services

November

94.7 WLS-FM Dick Biondi Holiday Toy Drive Stratford Square Mall

December

3rd Annual Auxiliary Board Ugly Sweater Holiday Party

For more information on any of these events, please visit www.ucanchicago.org.

EVENING HIGHLIGHTS

- Thank you to BMO Harris Bank for partnering with us for this fabulous event! We were pleased with the chance to honor BMO Harris Bank as this year's Corporate Honoree, for they are a great champion of UCAN and are committed to giving back to the Chicago community.
- Our esteemed vice chairs included Keith Cardoza, Jeff and Julie Diermeier, Christopher Gardner, Ron Gidwitz, Judith C. Rice, John E. Rooney, Peter Q. Thompson, and David Vitale.
- Thank you to UCAN Advisory Board member Colleen Bradley from The PrivateBank for presenting the John E. Rooney Dynamic Scholar Award on behalf of her family.
- Mellody Hobson of Ariel Investments inspired us all with her keynote speech with a theme of financial literacy and challenging yourself to achieve your full potential. She captured the crowd by sharing some of her life experiences growing up and was inspired herself by the stories of our award winners.
- Thank you to all who helped raise \$600,000 for UCAN! Your participation has helped make it possible for us to provide quality programming for the 12,000 children, youth, and families we serve.

WELCOME!

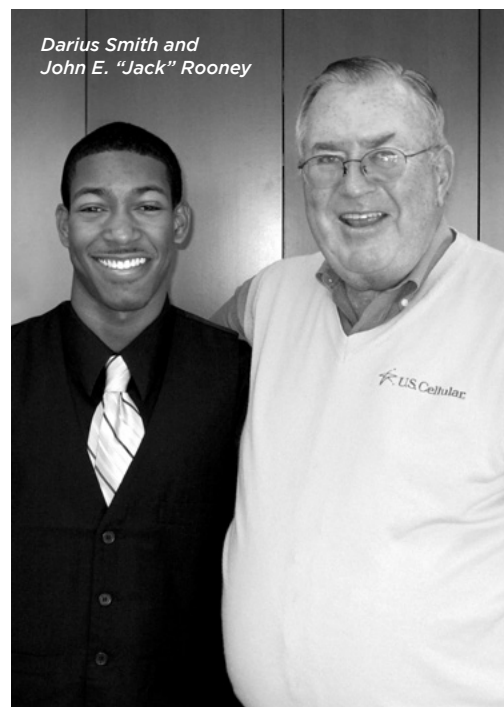
UCAN would like to recognize the following people as our newest Board members! Thank you for your commitment.

President's Board

Reverend Otis Moss III
Steve Pemberton
Buzz Ruttenberg

Auxiliary Board

Kelly McGraw
David Moore



Darius Smith and John E. "Jack" Rooney

President's Board Corner

UCAN believes in the potential of young people and so did John E. "Jack" Rooney III, retired President and Chief Executive Officer of U.S. Cellular Corporation, who sadly passed away on July 22, 2011. Jack believed everyone, especially young people, should have the opportunity to succeed despite personal challenges they face in life. Jack's support for UCAN went beyond just making a corporate contribution each year. He served on our President's Board and also inspired his family to get involved in support of UCAN's mission. In 2004, U.S. Cellular established the John E. Rooney Dynamic Scholarship at UCAN in Jack's name. To date, the scholarship has given seven young people the chance to pursue their dreams of a college education and the opportunity to become successful leaders of tomorrow.

The UCAN family is greatly saddened by the loss of Jack Rooney. We will always admire Jack for remembering the stories of adversity and accomplishment that so many young people shared with him; he forever cherished their tenacity and courage to succeed. Jack's involvement with UCAN enabled him to play a role in helping to positively affect the futures of young people. It is a legacy, he said, that made his journey with UCAN truly rewarding, memorable and one that so many others are now continuing to support.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Auxiliary Board members Samantha Frost, Rob Vicencio, Matt DeFano, Walt Grauer, and Joe Gallitano

There are many ways in which you can give to UCAN. We could not accomplish all that we do without the partnership of our generous donors, funders, mentors, foster parents and volunteers—to name a few. Thank you very much for your continued support and for everything that you do to help us realize our vision! Read below to learn about some of the ways you can help support UCAN's youth.

Joe Friedman is a **volunteer** who owns his own corporate training business and who has been working with UCAN youth for over eight years. He works with UCAN's STARS internship program, teaching interns presentation skills and helping them tell their story. He also coaches the annual Youth Leadership Award winners, helping them prepare their acceptance speeches. Joe says, "UCAN is a phenomenal organization; there is an ongoing need for what UCAN does that will not go away. I'm honored to continue my relationship with UCAN and the many UCAN youth I have met over the years—for me it's all about giving the youth their opportunity to shine. The youth I have worked with have all the fundamentals; it's easy and fun for me to help them present their stories the way they want them to be told."

Shannon is a **volunteer host** for our LGBTQ Host Home program, an innovative housing model that helps provide temporary housing and stability for homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth ages 17-21. Involved with social work for over 20 years, Shannon decided to become a host because,

"being a lesbian, I felt fortunate to be able to open my home to a youth—I wanted them to know that they are not outcasts in our society and that there are people in our community that care about our LGBTQ youth and their well-being." After just over a year in Shannon's home, the youth placed in her home is continuing her college education, has found a job, and will be moving out shortly to live on her own.

Robert Vicencio has sat on our **Auxiliary Board** for over a year. Always looking for an opportunity to give back, upon moving to Chicago Rob searched for a charity with which he could connect. Rob feels that "UCAN is greatly focused on the people they serve—yet also really embraces their supporters. The organization makes sure clients do not fall through the cracks by offering a range of services. I am happy to be a part of the Board; I have had a lot of blessings of my own, and am happy to be able to give back by using any talents I may have that will help." Rob has served as co-chair on both the Board's Annual Ugly Sweater Holiday Fundraiser and its Trivia Night event, and has assisted on other Auxiliary Board efforts throughout the year as well.

Don and Meredith have been **foster parents** for over five years to four different youth, one of whom they adopted. Meredith says, "This whole foster care experience is unreal; we feel so fortunate and honored that these families and the state trust us with caring for these children. These kids are amazing, and I can't imagine what's going through their minds as they are pulled from their home and placed in this new home with unfamiliar people. We only want to provide a safe home and the best care for these kids." Alicia and Liz, also part of UCAN's Professional Foster Parenting Program, are relatively new to the system and have found real joy with their first foster child. Liz says, "I have quickly learned that in order to be successful we just need to be parents, not foster parents. We will continue to treat each foster child as a member of our family, just the same as we treat our daughter."

UCAN is always looking for new foster parents, LGBTQ Host Home volunteers, youth mentors, volunteers, and board members—we appreciate any support you are able to provide! Please visit our website to learn more about these and other opportunities at www.ucanchicago.org.

**Please note, some names have been changed in order to protect the identities of our youth.*



The Signature Leaders Society recognizes individuals contributing \$1,000 or more annually to support the mission of UCAN. We greatly appreciate the partnership of those who support us on this exemplary level and who are committed to investing in our future.

The Signature Leaders Society is designed to acknowledge generous annual gifts with the following benefits:

- An invitation to the Annual "State of the State" Breakfast with Illinois State Senator Dan Kotowski
- A tour of UCAN Academy, our therapeutic day school
- An invitation to our Annual Meeting & Donor Recognition Reception in March of 2012
- An invitation to the Lead Sponsor Reception at the 13th annual Youth Leadership Awards dinner in June of 2012
- Monthly email updates on UCAN news, and semi-annual newsletters mailed to your preferred address
- Recognition in UCAN's Annual Report and on our website www.ucanchicago.org

UCAN counts on supporters such as those in our Signature Leaders Society to ensure we are meeting the unique needs of the thousands of children, youth, and families we serve. These critical services are needed to help heal trauma, educate children and families, and prevent violence.

Thank you to all of our current Signature Leader's Society members—your commitment to our vision that youth who have suffered trauma can become our future leaders helps to ensure a future of promise for Chicagoland's at-risk youth.

For more information, please contact Rebecca Faulk, Director of Development at 773.290.5086 or faulkkr@ucanchicago.org.



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UCAN is a member of the Council of Health and Human Service Ministries of the United Church of Christ and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation.

Support UCAN's 2011 Toy Drive

The UCAN Toy Drive is up and running and we're looking for donors for the 2011 Holiday Season! Each year UCAN's children fill out wish lists for the holiday season. We are currently seeking donors to help fulfill these lists so we can ensure all of our youth have a wonderful holiday season.

You can choose how many wish lists you would like to fulfill. You will receive your lists via fax or e-mail the week of October 10th. From each list, you are asked to buy one to three items. Once you have finished your shopping, we ask that you return your unwrapped gifts with the list attached to us by Monday, December 5th. We will distribute them to our children at holiday parties in early December.

Many congregations or offices request lists and distribute them to various people and families to fulfill; this is a fun way to help those in need this holiday season! We are also requesting gift cards for our youth: please visit www.ucanchicago.org/toydrive for a list of stores. For more information or to request wish lists, please contact Nina Kobilca Yung at 773.290.5867 or kobilcan@ucanchicago.org.

Thank you very much for your support this holiday season!



Toy Drive donors from the Monarch Awards Foundation, members of Xi Nu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

