

Be Safe and Sound

By Dr. Steven W. Edwards, National Crime Prevention Council

With increased attention on terrorism and the establishment of the federal Department of Homeland Security, safety and security have become a top priority on the national agenda. Recognizing the importance of safety and security in all aspects of American life, the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), best known for McGuffey the Crime Dog® and its "Take A Bite Out Of Crime" public service advertising campaign, in partnership with ASSA ABLOY, Security Industry Association (SIA), The Allstate Foundation, and Verify Systems, has established a national initiative around the all important topic of safety and security.

In September 2000, the founding partners came together to develop a comprehensive and replicable safety and security program model for schools, homes, businesses, and public places. As a result of this collaboration, the partners established the National Safety and Security Council (NSSC). The goal of this initiative is to educate people regarding safety and security, advocate improvements in safety and security, and challenge those environments where people are potentially at greatest risk. It is the belief of the NSSC partners that everyone has the right to be safe and secure.

In September 2002, NSSC launched the *Be Safe & Sound* campaign, which focuses on the safety and security of America's schools. In the mid- to late 90s, school safety was brought to the forefront of the nation's attention with the number of tragic school shootings. As recently as this past spring, school shootings in Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC again sent a clear message that schools remain a target for safety and security issues. Beyond these high profile events in our country's schools, however, there exists an array of other safety- and security-related problems on campuses, such as incidences of bullying on school grounds and outdated school buildings and

facilities. Because of these and other safety and security-related issues, the campaign seeks to target parents, parent-serving agencies, school administrators, and elected officials to create a sense of urgency among these key stakeholders, with parents leading the charge. NSSC has worked with local, state, and national organizations to disseminate information to specific target audiences through web-based informa-



tion, public service advertising, and partner organizations.

To kick off the *Be Safe & Sound* campaign in schools, NSSC selected two pilot sites: a rural high school in Kentucky and an urban elementary school in Pennsylvania. This spring, key stakeholders at each of these schools conducted safety and security audits and, based on the results of those audits, developed action plans to address identified safety and security concerns. The work conducted at the pilot sites has provided valuable evaluative information that will assist in expanding the campaign nationwide.

Currently, NSSC is recruiting the support of the nation's state school safety centers (of which there are 20) to create a national platform for the campaign. In conjunction with the school safety centers, NSSC is conducting outreach to parent groups, school administrators, and elected officials in the same 20 states across the country. As part of the outreach, NSSC has published the *Caregivers' Guide to School Safety and Security*. The guide highlights four key steps parents and caregivers can take toward improving school safety and security:



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1. Listen to a child's concerns
2. Become educated about school safety and security
3. Become involved with the school, other parents, and local businesses
4. Advocate for and affect change

Developed in collaboration with experts in the field of safety and security, the *Caregivers' Guide* also includes an overview of school safety and security principles, along with a basic checklist to help stakeholders evaluate safety and security in their community's schools.

The *School Safety and Security Toolkit*, designed to help parents, schools, and communities work together to create safe and secure schools, is scheduled for release this month. The *Toolkit* will provide interested parties with an easy-to-use guide to assessing a school's safety and security, mobilizing community stakeholders, and designing and implementing an action plan. The *Toolkit* will also provide additional information that will benefit parents, administrators, and policy makers as they work together to make their community's schools more safe and secure.

The future goals of the *Be Safe & Sound* campaign include expanding political outreach to larger arenas, securing a national spokesperson, and continuing to engage organizations that specialize in the areas of safety and security. To learn more or to become part of the NSSC or its *Be Safe & Sound* campaign, contact NCPC at 202-466-6272, or visit our website at www.ncpc.org/besafe. ♦