

ST. PAUL: Anti-crime program to reach out to immigrants

Saint Paul Pioneer Press (Minnesota)

December 8, 2002 Sunday

Copyright 2002 **St. Paul** Pioneer Press All Rights Reserved

Section: LOCAL; Pg. 1C

Length: 593 words

Byline: BY TODD NELSON; Pioneer Press

Body

Refugees and **immigrants** living in **St. Paul**'s Frogtown-Thomas-Dale neighborhood often fail to make a report when they are victims of **crime**, raising the risk that they will be targeted again and making their cases harder to solve.

Hoping to break that pattern in the neighborhood with the city's worst violent **crime** rate, officials of Civil Society, a nonprofit agency in **St. Paul**, are launching Freedom From Fear, a **program** aimed at helping people overcome language and other barriers so they will be more likely to report **crime**.

"Some of them don't speak English, some don't have the same cultural values, some don't trust the police, some are from cultures that don't encourage going outside your own group to report **crime**," said Linda Miller, executive director of Civil Society, which provides education and advocacy for **crime** victims from disadvantaged communities. Others fear retaliation or distrust authorities because of problems in their homelands.

The neighborhood had the most auto thefts of any in the city in 2001 and trailed only downtown in the number of calls for service, robberies, aggravated assaults, narcotics and vandalism.

Freedom From Fear is getting started with a four-year, \$460,000 grant from a U.S. Justice Department **program** for **crime** victims. The **program** will have to show progress to continue receiving grant money each year. The money comes from the forfeiture of assets seized in criminal cases and not from tax money, Miller said.

The plan is to bring together community and other organizations to improve services to victims, including those who do not report **crimes** in the Frogtown/Thomas-Dale neighborhood, where increasing numbers of Asian, African and other **immigrants** and refugees have settled.

The **program** will work with agencies to identify victims, provide **crime**-prevention education and training for community leaders in ways to increase **crime** reporting. It will focus on **crimes** that have hit the neighborhood hard, including auto theft, robbery and firearm discharges, as well as **crimes** that have high rates of underreporting and repeat victims, such as sexual assault, domestic abuse, fraud, identity theft and extortion.

Advocates said they would welcome such an effort in the Frogtown neighborhood, which had the highest violent **crime** rate in **St. Paul**, according to federal statistics cited in the **program**'s grant application, with 20 offenses a year for every 1,000 residents.

"With any language barrier or cultural barrier, it's very intimidating to deal with calling 911," said Tait Danielson, community organizer for the city's District 7 Planning Council, which covers the neighborhood. "Contacting the police, contacting any authority to deal with **crime** is difficult because we do have such a high **immigrant** population. It's exactly these kinds of things we've been needing for awhile now."

ST. PAUL: Anti-crime program to reach out to immigrants

Such efforts to **reach out** to **immigrants** and refugees are important when even something seemingly as simple as calling 911 can be daunting, said Rachel Tschida of the Minneapolis-based Center for Victims of Torture. A doctor inadvertently alarmed one of the center's African clients, for example, when he told him -- near the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks -- to call 911 if his new inhaler was not helping his asthma.

"He went back to his interpreter and said, 'I had nothing to do with the terrorist attack. Don't they know I'm a nice man,' " Tschida said. "Sometimes it's just miscommunication that can be the issue."

Todd Nelson can be **reached** at tanelson@pioneerpress.com

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: **CRIME** RATES (90%); VICTIMS RIGHTS (90%); IMMIGRATION (89%); LARCENY & THEFT (89%); CRIMINAL ASSAULT & BATTERY (89%); ROBBERY (89%); VIOLENT **CRIME** STATISTICS (89%); REFUGEES (89%); CRIMINAL OFFENSES (89%); GRANTS & GIFTS (88%); NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (79%); RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS (79%); EXTORTION (78%); CITY LIFE (78%); COMMUNITY ACTIVISM (78%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (78%); FRAUD & FINANCIAL **CRIME** (78%); DOMESTIC OFFENSES (78%); ASSET FORFEITURE (78%); VEHICLE THEFT (78%); SEX OFFENSES (78%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (76%); LANGUAGE & LANGUAGES (75%); CUSTOMS & CULTURAL HERITAGE (75%); **CRIME** PREVENTION (73%); JUSTICE DEPARTMENTS (73%); DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (71%); EXECUTIVES (68%); VANDALISM (68%); IDENTITY THEFT (67%)

Organization: US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (55%); US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (55%)

Load-Date: December 8, 2002