

**Grant Request  
To  
Brother International Corporation  
From  
The Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety  
In Support of our Democracy in Action Program**

**Organizational History**

The Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS) began in 1981 as the Urban Crime Prevention Program of the Citizens Information Service. In 1983, we became an independent non-profit corporation known as the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety. Since our inception, we have helped community organizations throughout the city of Chicago identify and tackle problems that jeopardize neighborhood safety.

We provide leadership development training, community organizing, education and information, and technical support to grass roots organizations, community groups and citywide coalitions. We increase public awareness of safety issues. We also work with other organizations to change the policies that make it difficult for individuals and community groups to improve neighborhood safety. In addition, we help youth take action against the problems that threaten their safety.

**Program Description**

We are requesting \$2,500 in support of our newest initiative, the Democracy in Action Youth Leadership Program. The program, which is a part of our Youth Task Force, will help youth gain leadership development skills. The Youth Task Force consists of a group of high school students and young adults who work on safety issues of concern to them.

In April 2003, the Youth Task Force will hold a conference called *Democracy in Action: Chicago Hear Your Youth*. At the conference, representatives from 25 youth organizations will discuss various safety issues affecting Chicago's youth and choose the issue that is most important to them. They will also learn about the social change process and discuss the kinds of actions they can take to bring about social change.

The conference will end with a rally and press conference in which attendees will publicly announce the youth safety issue of the year; discuss their plans for addressing the issue; and ask for the public's help with tackling the issue.

Once the conference is over, the youth representatives will take what they have learned back to their groups so that the groups can develop plans of action for addressing the issue. Each group will submit proposals detailing their plans to the Youth Task Force.

The Youth Task Force will make grants (\$500 to \$1,000) to at least 10 groups so they can carry out their plans of action. The groups will work with adults from other organizations to implement their plans and raise awareness of the issue. They will complete their plans of action by the end of the year, at which time preparation for the 2004 conference will begin. Their projects and successes will be posted on our website.

To ensure that the groups receive the support and assistance that they will need to complete their projects, the Youth Task Force and our Youth Development Coordinator will meet with them once a month.

The goals of the program are to: 1) teach youth leadership skills including communication, organizational, research, analytical, writing, conflict resolution and public speaking skills; 2) give youth a positive, creative, educational experience; 3) empower youth by giving them the opportunity to contribute to society; and 4) encourage youth to take social action against the safety issues that jeopardize their well being.

The program is important because it enables youth to have an integral part in planning, organizing and implementing the conference and program. The Youth Task Force is helping to raise funding for the program by writing grant proposals. They are looking for a location to hold the conference. They will create and mail the invitations. They will contact and invite the media to the conference. On the day of the conference, they will register attendees, set-up the rooms, act as group leaders and run the press conference. Our role is to provide them with support, guidance and assistance.

The program will also give youth hands-on experience with the social change process and the opportunity to work with youth of diverse backgrounds.

## **Conclusion**

Approximately 95% of the Youth Task Force's members are at-risk youth. They live in low income, high crime neighborhoods and are being raised in non-traditional families. Many of them have witnessed or directly experienced violence. During a recent meeting, they identified gangs, drugs and poor police services as the main issues that impact their safety. Many of the Democracy in Action program participants have similar backgrounds and deal with the same safety issues.

Our youth need educational and after-school activities that are fun and creative. They need to know that they can make a difference and that their voices count. The Youth Task Force and the Democracy in Action program gives youth the opportunity to learn, grow and achieve success.

A \$2,500 contribution from Brother International Corporation will help us create a program that will help young people in Chicago gain leadership skills; meet youth from diverse backgrounds; and work collaboratively with adults.