

SOUTH CHICAGO READIES RESIDENTS TO TAKE ON TRAUMA

SUCCESS STORY

As a young boy growing up on the South Side of Chicago, Rasheed Sami faced struggles that no child should. Some days, there wasn't food on his table. For weeks, he and his friends stayed inside after they witnessed police shoot a neighbor. Other times, he watched his father battle an addiction that rattled his household.

Today, Rasheed, who's almost 30, uses those struggles to empower others who face similar circumstances. Most recently in his journey to healing, Rasheed attended an educational symposium designed to teach South Chicago residents about trauma, how it can manifest in your life and tips to better respond to its effects.

The symposium, hosted by the South Chicago Neighborhood Network, is just one effort the collaboration is taking to foster a trauma-informed community.

"Our Neighborhood Network wants to make sure people can identify trauma and find ways to heal from it," said Tevonne Ellis, the South Chicago Neighborhood Network coordinator.

During the day's workshops, some attendees learned first aid to respond to physical trauma and lessons about identifying and responding to domestic violence, while others explored how one's spirituality can be impacted by trauma. The group also brainstormed tangible ways to improve the culture of empathy and support in South Chicago.

Through the event, Rasheed learned to see trauma differently. "Trauma never leaves you," he said. "You just learn to be more aware of it and what triggers it. You learn to cope with it better."

Now, Rasheed shares these lessons with the next generation. A youth counselor with Becoming a Man and motivational speaker, he delivers a message of resilience to his community.

"My job is to empower through my story," Rasheed said. Not to say, 'I know what you're going through,' but to express that others have experienced hardships and they can triumph over them." ■



Rasheed Sami

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