

## PROJECT SPIRIT

The Saint Paul Area Council of Churches' Project SPIRIT program provides after-school enrichment for K-6th grade African-American students at no cost to parents or guardians. S.P.I.R.I.T. is an acronym for *strength, perseverance, imagination, responsibility, integrity and talent* — all traits we strive to build up in our scholars. Character and leadership values are promoted by a staff of highly qualified, experienced and nurturing role models of color.

### *A program that strengthens hearts and minds*

Project SPIRIT is a fun environment where children can complete their homework and participate in a culturally specific curriculum. Project SPIRIT:

- teaches children about their history and culture.
- helps children improve their academic skills.
- builds children's self-esteem and gives encouragement.
- provides a safe and fun after-school environment.
- helps children learn non-violent conflict resolution skills.
- assists children with homework.
- provides an outlet for children through creative activities.

*"Where children believe they can achieve and gain the skills to make it real!"*

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

A crucial component of Project SPIRIT, parental involvement allows greater educational and social success for children. A bridge of communication is developed between parents, scholars, teachers and Project SPIRIT staff. Special family events are held throughout the year to further foster parental engagement.

### PRINCIPLES

Project SPIRIT follows the principles of Kwanzaa to encourage African-American children to take pride in their heritage and develop attitudes and skills to make them successful.

### BACKGROUND

The first Project SPIRIT programs began in 1986 and were sponsored by the Congress of National Black Churches (CNBC). At the urging of a group of local African-American pastors, the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches followed the CNBC lead and began our program in 1994. Today there are more than 50 Project SPIRIT sites nationally.



The Saint Paul Area Council of Churches' Freedom School is a summer enrichment program for K-8th grade African-American students. Character and leadership values are promoted by a staff of highly qualified, experienced and nurturing role models of color.

## FREEDOM SCHOOL

### *Training a generation of leaders*

Freedom School operates from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily for six weeks. Inspired by the 1964 "Freedom Summer" African-American voter registration effort, the school embraces an educational vision for African-American students and strengthens parent and community involvement.

Freedom School offers parents a free and safe environment for their children during the summer months. The school strives to help young people gain a sense of their own history and culture as well as discover and develop their individual identities and talents.

The Freedom School's curriculum is based on books that reflect students' own images and help strengthen self-esteem. The school helps students:

- develop a love for reading.
- improve their academic skills.
- understand the value of social action.
- promote their character-building skills.
- gain access to nutritious meals.

OUR SCHOLARS ADOPT THE MOTTO:

*"I can make a difference: in myself,  
in my family, in my community,  
in my country, and in my world."*

### BACKGROUND

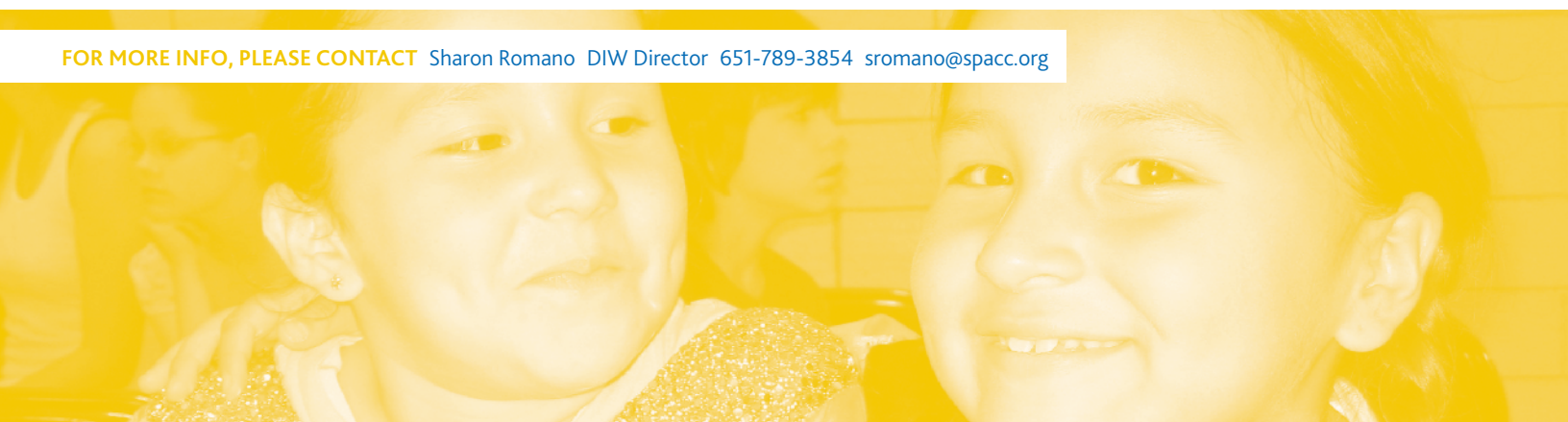
Freedom Schools operate nationwide. The Saint Paul Freedom School is sponsored by the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches in partnership with the Children's Defense Fund.

### STAFF

Freedom Schools are headed by young African-American role models, or "Servant Leaders." National training of these leaders by the Children's Defense Fund focuses on leadership, culture, community service and links between effective programs and public policy.

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

We believe a child can be more successful when his or her parents participate in the educational process. Enrollment in Freedom School is free. Instead of expressing a commitment by paying tuition, parents or an adult family representative are required to be actively involved by attending parent empowerment workshops and volunteering.



The Saint Paul Area Council of Churches' Department of Indian Work (DIW) supports and empowers Native Americans working together through four program areas:

#### DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN WORK

##### *American Indian Parenting: The Learning Circle*

The Learning Circle assists families with basic parenting skills and opportunities to visit area museums, zoos, and performances. Parents build awareness of the growth, development, and academic readiness of their children, resulting in more stable, supportive family relationships.

*"It's the consistent support and discipline I receive at FEDS. They really care. This disease links us (American Indians) all together."*

—WAYNE OLIVER, FEDS PARTICIPANT

##### *Family Diabetes Education Series (FEDS)*

A staggering 50% of the American-Indian population will be diagnosed with diabetes. But small measures can make a big difference in controlling the disease. FEDS sessions offer: diabetes screening; a delicious, healthy meal prepared by a professional chef; and fitness advice and motivation.

DIW creates a greater cultural understanding of American Indians through public events and by providing educational presentations at congregations or organizations.

#### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

You can help DIW, here's how:

- » **Emergency Services:** Organize a food drive, sort and organize items in the clothing room, or volunteer during the holidays packaging food baskets.
- » **Family Education Diabetes Services:** Medical volunteers are needed to provide diabetes screening.
- » **Parenting Program:** Organize a rotating schedule of volunteers to provide childcare for participants during parenting classes. Tutors are also needed for school-aged children.
- » **Youth Enrichment After-School and Summer Program:** Help students succeed in school and aim for a bright future by being a tutor. Chaperones are needed year-round for field trips.

##### *Youth Enrichment Program*

An after-school and summer program, Youth Enrichment teaches cultural awareness, life skills and basic self-care.

##### *Emergency Services*

Congregations and individuals help DIW in serving the needs of low-income individuals who are American Indian. Emergency services include: a clothing closet; emergency transportation; food shelf; funeral assistance; layettes for infants; student assistance; and prescriptions.



### *Providing emergency shelter in Ramsey County for children and their parents*

Working with dozens of area churches, synagogues and schools, the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches' Project Home provides 40–60 beds of emergency shelter for children and their parents in Ramsey County each night. In 2009, our shelter beds were slept in a record 14,018 times — this reflects a 41% increase in family shelter usage over just three years.

### *Want to help?*

Over 450 families, including nearly 900 children, called church social halls, synagogue classrooms and school cafeterias “home” as a part of the Project Home family shelter program last year. Before entering emergency shelter, these families all struggled with choosing to pay the rent or put food on the table. Donations of simple items help us meet our families' most basic needs as they begin to piece together their lives again.

Donation drive ideas:

- **New Underclothes and Pajama Drive**  
New socks, underwear, undershirts, pajamas, etc.
- **Baby and Toddler Needs Drive**  
Bottles, sippy cups, pacifiers, bibs, etc.
- **Smiling, Shiny Faces Drive**  
Toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss, etc.

For complete lists of needed items and other drive ideas, please visit our website: [www.spacc.org/ProjectHome](http://www.spacc.org/ProjectHome).

## PROJECT HOME

*“I understand so much more than I did just 24 hours ago. I heard people talking about shelter and thought I understood, but I didn't. Now I know.”*

— PROJECT HOME VOLUNTEER, GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- » **Volunteer as an Evening Shelter Host:** main responsibilities include greeting shelter guests, serving a healthy evening snack, playing and reading with teens and children, conversing with guests, and orienting the overnight shelter hosts.
- » **Volunteer as an Overnight Shelter Host:** main duties include playing and reading with teens and children, conversing with guests, securing the facility before bedtime, waking up guests, serving a light breakfast, and securing the facility after guests have left for the day.
- » **Sleep Out! Rock Out Knock Out Homelessness:** area youth groups make a difference for families facing homelessness by participating in the annual Cardboard Box City. They set up their makeshift home of cardboard and tarps for the night, line up for the soup kitchen supper, then as the October chill sets in, get ready to rock to live music. After the empowering entertainment, it's time to get down to the reality of sleeping out, on the ground, on a cold October night.



# About the Council

The Saint Paul Area Council of Churches builds a more just and compassionate society. Guided by Christ's example, we connect congregations, faith communities and civic organizations to overcome poverty, promote peace and dismantle racism and other barriers that divide our community.

*Saint Paul Area Council of Churches' programs include:*

- **Department of Indian Work (DIW)** supports and empowers Native Americans working together through four program areas: youth enrichment, parenting education, diabetes education, foodshelf and emergency assistance.
- **Interfaith Youth Leadership Coalition** empowers religiously diverse youth leaders through service learning opportunities across faith and ethnic communities.
- **Minnesota Collaborative Anti-Racism Initiative (MCARI)** provides anti-racism consultation and training for the faith community, nonprofit institutions, government, business and community organizations, and institutions of higher education.
- **Project Home** works with dozens of area churches, synagogues and schools to provide 40–60 emergency shelter beds for homeless children and their parents in Ramsey County each night.
- **Project Spirit & Freedom School** provide educational enrichment activities for African-American children in grades K-9 to improve academic confidence and achievement, inspire social responsibility and leadership, and enhance positive life outcomes.

## SAINT PAUL AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

*"There is a basic need to be met. It seems like a responsibility that I need to do."*

— JERI GLICK ANDERSON, VOLUNTEER

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Some of our ongoing volunteer opportunities:

- » join an organizing team for the MLK Holiday Breakfast Celebrations
- » participate in the CROP Hunger Walk
- » schedule an MCARI anti-racism workshop for your congregation or organization
- » help our children succeed by volunteering with Project SPIRIT or Freedom School
- » dedicate your congregation to helping homeless families through Project Home
- » help restock the DIW food shelf
- » participate in the Interfaith Youth Day of Service through the Interfaith Youth Leadership Coalition
- » ask your congregation or organization to hold a poverty simulation event

## HOW TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION

Visit [www.spacc.org](http://www.spacc.org) to make a donation. The Saint Paul Area Council of Churches is a 501(c)(3) organization and meets all standards of the Charities Review Council. All gifts are tax deductible.