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Mayor, Community Foundation announce 4th round of MVP grants

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Published by Emily Hopkins

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The passion for the people of Macon-Bibb County and their safety was on full display as Mayor Lester Miller addressed a crowd of more than 75 people in Commission Chambers at City Hall about the decrease in the homicide rate and efforts to continue that progress.

“We’re talking about people’s ***lives***,” he vehemently pointed out. “Every life is valuable... it matters not only to you. It matters to me, and it matters to everyone who woke up this morning and didn’t have that person in their lives.”

At the start of the year – as has been done before – he addressed the homicide rate for the previous years, and this year it was done at same time as the announcement of the the round of Macon Violence Prevention (MVP) grant recipients.

He pointed out Macon-Bibb has the lowest level in homicide numbers in a decade, dropping from a high of 72 in 2022 to 29 in 2025, a 60% decrease. Homicides by youths under 18 decreased from 87% in that same time. Despite pointing out the decrease in the numbers, the Mayor made it clear he’s focused on the person lost, about the families impacted.

“It’s about the people behind those numbers that matter. There is a person...a name...a family...a neighborhood tied with it all. And that person was important to someone, to their family,” he said loudly and with fire in his voice. “We must ***never*** lose sight of that.”

The assembled group in Chambers was made up of Department Heads, elected officials, and local organizations that would be announced as recipients of the fourth round of MVP grant funds. And to them, the Mayor and all speakers thanked them for sticking with the program over time in order to make an impact on people’s lives.

“I’ve never met a press conference that stopped a bullet. It’s the work that we do,” the Mayor told them. “Yes, we still have our challenges. But you can NOT ignore the work that our community has done. We have more work to do...which is why we’re here today.”

The Mayor then turned the podium over to Kathryn Dennis, President of the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, to announce the most recent grant recipients. 16 community organizations were called out to receive a total of \$400,000 in the areas of literacy, mentorship, supervised activities for children, and camps and programs when schools are not in session, like afterschool, holiday breaks, and summertime.

“Those are critical hours,” said Dennis. “They are the moments when young people need safe spaces, positive relationships, structure, supervision, mentorship and access to opportunities that keep them connected to their community and focused on a positive future.”

The 16 funded organizations include: 100 Black Men of Macon-Middle Georgia, Inc., Lead With Literacy, Men About Change, Inc., Next Level Community Development Center Inc., Appleton Episcopal Ministries, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia, Campus Clubs, Inc., Central Georgia Council (Boy Scouts of America #096), Crisis Line – Safe House of Central Georgia, Diamonds On Our Mind Foundation, Epsilon Beta Lambda Foundation Inc, Family Counseling Center of Central Georgia, Girls Dig Deeper Initiative, Living Bread Restoration Outreach, Inc., Macon Hope, Inc- First Tee Middle Georgia, and PACE Center for Girls, Inc.

[Descriptions for each funded organization are included here.](#)

Kizzie Lott, Bruce Elementary School Principal, talked about the partnership with the 100 Black Men of Central Georgia, who have been funded to work directly with students on skills not offered in school, provide opportunities and trips they may not have otherwise, assist with improving literacy, and more.

“The entire school climate is stronger because our students know they are supported, not just by a school, but by a village,” she said. “This work matters because education alone is not enough. They need exposure... they need access...they need relationships...the need examples of excellence that believe in them.”

“If we want safer neighborhoods long-term, we must invest in the emotional and mental well-being of young people and the adults who care for them,” Christy Henry, Director of the Family Counseling Center of Central Georgia. It’s MVP-funded program provides coordinated mentoring and supportive services to families facing persistent challenges. “This is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Services are tailored, trauma-informed and designed to meet families where they are.”

Since the inception of MVP in 2021, \$2,941,000 has been awarded to 53 different organizations’ missions to help transform the lives of children, families, and entire neighborhoods. This money has supported

afterschool programs, camps, mentor programs, family development sessions, literacy outreach, and more.

By investing in prevention and support, these programs helped reduce violent crime and build safer neighborhoods. From 2022 to 2025, Macon-Bibb County saw a 60% decrease in the homicide rate and an 87% decrease in homicides among those under the age of 18.

“We want zero deaths in our community. We want to eliminate domestic violence. We want the shootings to stop,” Mayor Miller said. “But we have to start somewhere, so we announced this program in 2021.”

“When we invest in youth, in families, in mental health, in mentorship and in community-led solutions — we are investing in a safer Macon-Bibb for everyone,” said Dennis.

“When young people have mentors, emotional support and consistent guidance, they are less likely to engage in risky or harmful behavior,” says Henry. “When caregivers have access to counseling and tools for stability, families are better equipped to weather challenges without crisis.”

Macon-Bibb County has spent more than \$21 million on Macon Violence Prevention programs, grants, initiatives, personnel, equipment, and more to help reduce the homicide rate and have fewer people suffer in this way. In addition to the grants through the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, there has been \$1.7 million for no cost / low barrier mental health services, nearly \$8,000,000 for public safety incentive pay, public safety salary increases, nearly \$4.5 million for camera systems (ShotSpotter, Flock, Verkada), \$1.65 million for violence interruption organizations, and more.

“This is not something any one organization, or any one grant cycle, can solve alone. It’s a long game — and it requires a long-term strategy,” added Dennis.

“Gentlemen, what you have done cannot be measured solely in numbers. You have changed mindsets. You have opened doors. You have planted seeds that will grow long after students leave Bruce,” Lott told them. “Thank you for investing your time, your resources, and your heart into our children.”

“The goal is real, lasting change that improves outcomes for families and contributes to a safer Macon-Bibb County,” added Henry.

About Macon Violence Prevention

Macon Violence Prevention is an evidence-based, multifaceted program created to address public safety in Macon-Bibb County. Supported and funded by the consolidated government, MVP is a community-wide effort that brings together elected officials, community leaders and representatives from more than 20 agencies, organizations and departments.

“Nearly four years ago, on a blistering hot day, hundreds of us stood in Rosa Parks Square to affirm in one voice that we must work together to fight back against the plague of violent crime affecting every neighborhood in our community,” Mayor Miller said at an annual presentation of the program. “Since then, we have engaged with thousands of people in our community on what is needed and where are our resources. We heard that public safety was the **most** important issue people were facing...that they were tired of feeling scared. And that they were willing to help make a change.”

Since MVP’s full implementation in 2022, our community has seen significant reductions in both overall and youth homicides, outpacing the declines reported in other U.S. cities during the same period. From 2022 to 2025, Macon-Bibb cut homicides by 60%, dropping from 71 to 39. Even more striking, youth homicides (among those under 18) fell from 15 in 2022 to just 2 in 2025 — an 87% reduction in only two years.

The MVP program operates under the guidance of the MVP [Strategic Plan](#), which was introduced in June of 2021. Created by community stakeholders and violent crime experts, this strategic plan combines data and research with community feedback to implement proven solutions that reduce violent crime and strengthen the community over time.

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