

The Power of a Grandmother's Heart by Huffington Post

□ Amid rampant gang violence in a Chicago South Side neighborhood, a grandmother has an open door policy.

□ Roseland resident Diane Latiker, 54, started a nonprofit community with 10 kids in her living room in 2003. The program, Kids Off The Block, has grown to become a successful mentoring site and haven for Chicago's youth, serving 300 kids last year, CNN reports.

□ Latiker, who has eight kids and 13 grandkids of her own, has been recognized as a CNN Hero. She talks about her work with the young people who count on Kids Off The Block:

□ "It doesn't matter where they come from, what they've done," Latiker said. "We've had six gangs in my living room at one time...But that was the safe place. And you know what? They respected that."

□ On any given day, 30 to 50 young people show up at the center for tutoring sessions with teachers and retired educators, job interview training and field trips to museums or the movies.

□ Last year, Latiker was able to move the program into a building next-door to her house -- but not before making her share of personal sacrifices. She sold the family television for program funds and gave away her dining room set to make room for a computer station.

□ Maurice Gilchrist, 15, tells CNN how grateful he is to Latiker.

□ "I was 12 when I got in a gang -- robbing people, stealing. Miss Diane, she just changed my life. I love her for that."

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