



Jackson County
COMBAT
Community • Prevention • Treatment • Justice

2024
COMMUNITY IMPACT



PEOPLE OF GRACE

3,808

Real People
Real Problems
Real Assistance



COMBAT'S STRIVIN' Referral Program Making A Real Difference

The social services referral program COMBAT introduced in mid-2021 reached, in early 2025, 3,808 referrals submitted. The program connects people like Sasha, a Kansas City mother of three, with community resources offering what can be life-changing, even life-saving assistance. Sasha has found not only treatment for her substance use disorder but genuine inspiration through being connected to the Greater Recovery program at the Greater Metropolitan Church of Christ in Midtown KC. "I'm not some important, rich person, but I have my sobriety," says Sasha. "I have love. I feel good today. I have these people to help and encourage me. I have God. I am alive and getting better."

From The Prosecutor & From The Director	Page 3
Sebastian's Story: Thankful To Be Alive	Page 4
STRiVIN' Referrals: Numbers Don't Tell The Whole Story	Page 5
STRiVIN' To Serve Their Neighbors	Page 8
Gun Switches: 'This Is What We're Up Against Now'	Page 10
Just The Facts & The Stats: High Firearm Fatality Rates	Page 11
COMBAT Funding: A Little Change Makes A Big Difference	Page 13
Prevention Funding	Page 15
Law Enforcement School-Based Initiative Funding	Page 17
Treatment & STRiVIN' Funding	Page 18
Healing The Healer Secondary Trauma Retreat	Page 19



What Is COMBAT?

Community literally comes first in COMBAT. The acronym stands for the **COMM**unity **B**acked **Anti-crime Tax**. The Jackson County Code (Chapter 93: Anti-Crime Tax) states funding from COMBAT is to be utilized "for the purpose of promoting and providing public safety within Jackson County, including the prevention and treatment of drug abuse and addiction and prevention, investigation, prosecution and detention of violent criminals and drug dealers."



COMBAT's Mission Statement

COMBAT's mission is to identify the root causes of violence and substance abuse in order to empower Jackson County through essential resources and guidance to achieve safer communities.



COMBAT's Vision

Empowering the community to improve public safety through providing resources that affect true change by addressing the trauma-related root causes of violence and illegal drug use.



COMBAT's Core Values

Strengthening the community through transparency, collaboration and compassion by providing resources to aid in the reduction of violence and drug abuse.



Follow Jackson County COMBAT

 jacksoncountycombat.com
 facebook.com/JacksonCoCOMBAT
 [@JacksonCoCombat](https://twitter.com/JacksonCoCombat)



Commission

Jackson County COMBAT Commission

Theresa Grado

District 1

Arimeta DuPree

District 2

Vacant

District 3

John Sharp

District 4

Lanna Ultican

District 5

Larry Beaty

District 6

Dr. Kelvin L. Walls

At-Large (Public Health Care Professional)

Katherine Baker

At-Large (Legal Professional Member)

Dr. Susan M. Wilson

At-Large



Staff

COMBAT Administration

Vince Ortega

Executive Director

Dawna J. Shumate

Deputy Director

Tammie Jordan

Program Administrator

Earline L. Lawrie

Budget Supervisor

Joe Loudon

Communications Coordinator

Vacant

Crime Analyst

Elle Larson

Office Administrator

Evelyn Owens-Taylor

Program Monitor



From The Prosecutor

Not Just Responding To Crime But Preventing Future Crime

By Melesa Johnson • Jackson County Prosecutor

Every day across Jackson County, hundreds of people are making the brave choice to break cycles of violence, trauma and substance abuse. COMBAT is a lifeline making those positive transformations possible.

As Jackson County Prosecutor, I have seen how COMBAT's interventions save lives. Our STRiVIN' referral program has connected thousands in Jackson County to critical resources—housing, jobs with quality pay, treatment services and mental health counseling.



But what makes COMBAT STRiVIN' truly effective is the close working relationship we have with local agencies around Jackson County—service providers, health care workers, school leaders and law enforcement.

During the Kansas City Police Department's weekly shoot review, detectives refer surviving gunshot victims and families of homicide victims to our STRiVIN' referral program to be connected to support. School leaders may refer to us a family they notice struggling with housing security. Health care workers may send someone to us who has been repeatedly experiencing drug overdoses.

Because of our close collaboration, victims are connected to services within hours. The rapid connection to life-changing resources addresses immediate needs and prevents escalation or retaliation violence, which we see happen so often in our community.

When we meet people's basic needs—housing, food, employment with living wages—we create communities where crime and violence decrease.

Through COMBAT, we are not just responding to crime, we are preventing future crime at the same time. ■



From The Director

There's A Reason D.C. Is Now Replicating Our STRiVIN' Referral Program

By Vince Ortega • COMBAT Executive Director

Throughout my 16 years with COMBAT, I've been frequently asked, "How does COMBAT prevent crime?" The answer is not found in statistics alone but in the stories of real people like Sebastian, Sasha and Frank, all of whom you will meet in this report. They are, in Sasha's words, "alive and getting better," because someone took the time to connect them to social services, tailored to their individual needs.

Since mid-2021, our STRiVIN' program has received 3,808 referrals. Behind each of those 3,808 referrals is a story of devastation but potential transformation. While we have not been able to follow up on every single one of those referrals—contact information changes and some are not ready for help—our success rate in making that crucial first connection has climbed to 81% in early 2025.

What I have learned over the years is the key to violence prevention must include meeting basic human needs. The data we have is clear: housing instability, unemployment and unaddressed trauma are some of the leading factors behind the referrals we receive. That must change for us to fulfill our STRiVIN' goal to make Jackson County a safe place where we can all proudly call home.

And our approach is gaining national attention. After presenting our STRiVIN' model at the 2023 National Research Conference for the Prevention of Firearm-Related Harm in Chicago, officials from Washington D.C. approached me. They understood why the STRiVIN' model works. Public safety is not just about eliminating crime. We must provide opportunities and support to achieve a truly safe community long-term. The D.C. officials brought the idea back to their city and today they have their own version of COMBAT STRiVIN—DC Striving. ■



Sebastian's Story

'I'm thankful for my life—to just be alive.'

Sebastian is a pseudonym being used to protect the identity of this teen. COMBAT and the Mattie Rhodes Center also received his mother's permission to share his story.

He looked out at the Grand Canyon, one of the “Seven Natural Wonders of the World,” and had an epiphany: “I want to see more. I want there to be more views in my life.”

Sebastian—he chose that as his alias for this article—realizes as a teenager he ought to have a whole lot of life left ahead of him. But he also seems to understand how much “more” he’ll have depends on the choices he makes.

He’s lucky, at 16, to still be alive, and he knows it: “I trusted the guy I got the pills from. He showed me a script, and I thought they were only [Percocet].”

The day before his 14th birthday, Sebastian overdosed after ingesting one fentanyl-laced pill and half of another. First responders spent 45 minutes reviving him; they found another six pills in his possession.

A Kansas City Police officer submitted a social services referral for Sebastian through COMBAT’s Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods (STRiVIN’) initiative. That submission led to him receiving counseling at the Mattie Rhodes Center, the STRiVIN’ hub in Kansas City’s historic Northeast.

“That police officer saw that NARCAN might have saved his life, but that [Sebastian] was going to need help to change his life,” points out Mattie Rhodes Center Manager of Public Safety Molly Manske. “That referral brought us into his life, and he needed us even more than ever at the end of 2023.”

Sebastian nearly lost his life again in 2023 when he survived a gunshot wound to the leg. His best friend wasn’t as fortunate.

“I only heard one shot,” Sebastian recalls. “I don’t know if the same bullet that hit me killed my friend.”

That trauma led to Sebastian relapsing: “I popped Xanax—one pill then three. I kept blacking out and coming back. I didn’t want to feel any pain—just be high forever.”

Now as he starts 2025 working to maintain his sobriety, Sebastian talks about his goals—perhaps becoming an electrician, having a family—and thinking about two views he’ll never forget, one being the Grand Canyon he saw as part of a youth group Mattie Rhodes took



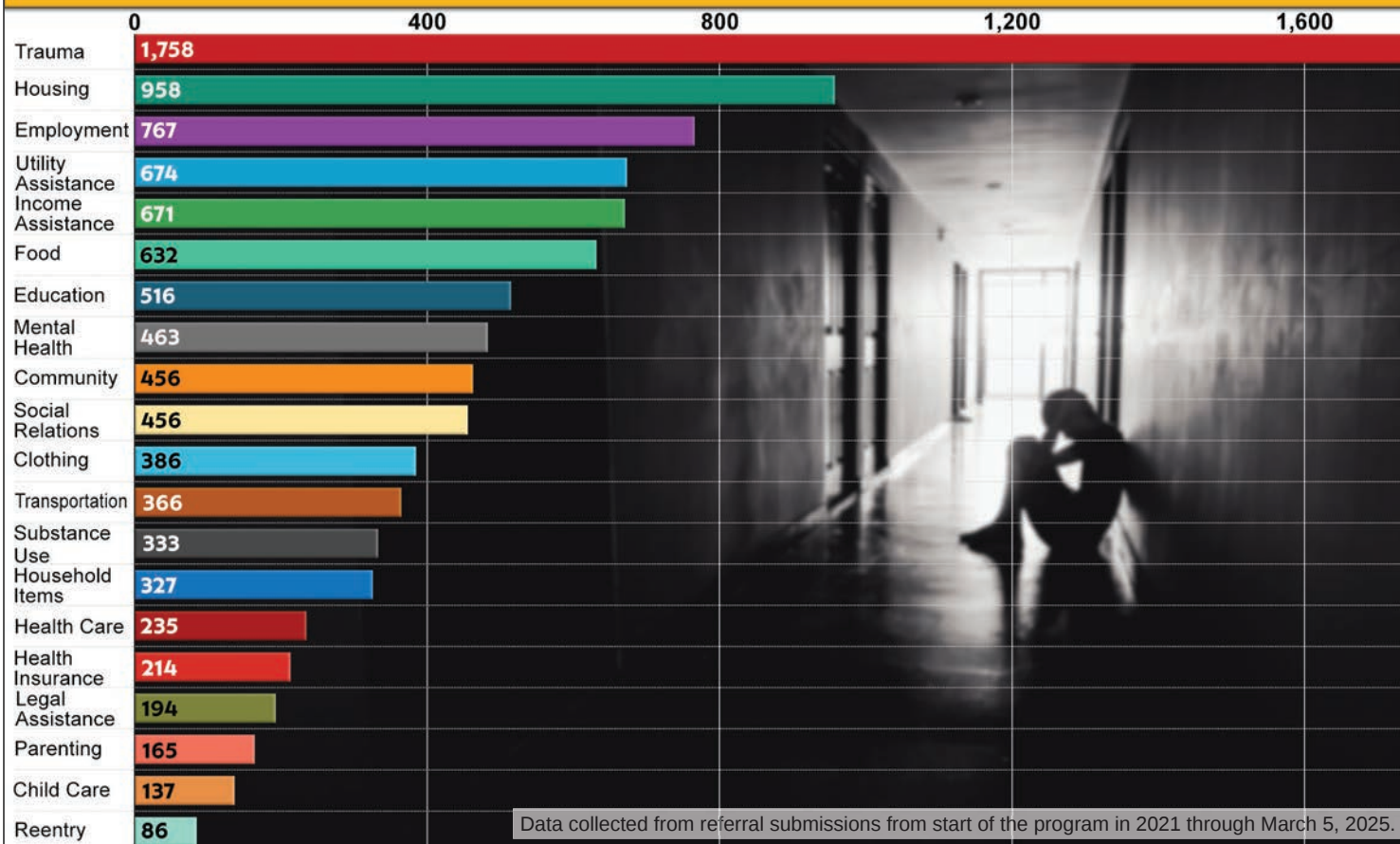
After two near-death experiences before turning 16, Sebastian has a greater appreciation for views like the mural on the Mattie Rhodes Center in Kansas City’s Northeast. He has received counseling at the center from Molly Manske, Mattie Rhodes Center Manager of Public Safety, who recently gave him a one-month sobriety chip as he resumed his recovery despite relapses.

on a trip last summer. “[Sebastian] was one of the kids who’d never been on a plane,” says Manske. “We wanted them all to see there’s more to the world than just where they’ve lived most of their lives.”

The other view is equally powerful: his mom’s face after his overdose. “I don’t want to see my mom like that again,” Sebastian says.

His past has taught Sebastian “to triple-think things through.” He understands for him to have a future he must first get through today: “When you first come back after overdosing, everything’s blurry. You don’t know if you’re dead or not. I’m thankful for my life—to just be alive. I’m thankful people care about me.” ■

Social Services Area Of Need



Numbers Don't Tell The Whole Story

Sasha was scared. Traumatized from spending her teenage years in multiple foster homes, the Kansas City mother of three feared losing her own kids “to the system.”

But last fall Sasha knew, without treatment, she risked losing everything to addiction.

“When I moved to Kansas City from New York in 2019, I was sober for the first time in a long time,” she says. “But I was like an inactive volcano that was getting ready to erupt.

“By December of 2022, I was using drugs again. Weed was now legal, which didn’t help me, and I started drinking again. Last fall, my hair started falling out. I was going through so much.”

Still, she was hesitant to seek help. Then an helping hand was extended to her in the form of a STRiVIN’ social services referral.

“I was so afraid if I tried to get help my kids would be taken away from me.” Sasha has three sons. “I guess you could say I needed help to start getting help.”

UNMET NEEDS & HIGH CRIME

Since being referred, Sasha has been participating in the Greater Recovery program at the Greater Metropolitan Church of Christ in Kansas City.

“Here I’ve learned *you* have to actively be the change,” she says, sitting in a conference room at the church, which serves as the headquarters for Greater

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 →

‘Death was creeping up on me.’



ONLINE: visit jacksoncountycombat.com/strivin

Learn More About COMBAT’s Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhood’s Initiative (STRiVIN’)

Impact, the Midtown Kansas City STRiVIN' hub agency. "I want my one-year sobriety chip but will have to get there one day at a time. I want to make it for my kids."

Sasha's referral is only one of 3,808 made from the inception of the referral program in 2021 through March 5, 2025.

"We used crime statistics to identify neighborhoods where the STRiVIN' initiative was needed most," COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega points out.

"Through the referral program we've been able to col-

ally Midtown Kansas City (Greater Impact). The number of referrals has grown exponentially every year:

2021	57 Referrals
2022	567 Referrals
2023	953 Referrals
2024	1,902 Referrals

That first summer, Raytown Police Chief Robert Kuehl praised the program for "bridging the gap" between law enforcement and social services. Sisters

In Christ Executive Director Carolyn Whitney, meanwhile, explained the process: "What we are able to do if we get a referral from the police is to do a more intimate assessment, try to get to the root cause of the situation. Then we refer the person to all the resources out there so that they can get the help they need—mental health services, addiction treatment, maybe help just getting enough food in the house. Then maybe the police officer never has to come back knocking on that door again."

Whitney added, "One of the best ways to reduce crime in the community is to reduce the despair in people's lives."

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Frank Stokes reached such a point of despair last fall that he literally laid down in the middle of the street at 12th & Prospect in Kansas City. Better the police take him to jail, he thought, than returning to the tent he'd been living in—his only company being a frightened rabbit and the coyote "that had his eyes on the rabbit."

Instead, the police transported Frank to the hospital, where Greater Impact's staff visited him after a STRiVIN' referral was made on his behalf. Where would the 57-year-old be today if not for that referral?

"Probably dead," he says. "I'd lost everything. Death was creeping up on me."

Greater Impact's assessment led to Frank receiving services through two other agencies that COMBAT provides funding, ReDiscover and reStart. His fresh start has included housing assistance, meeting a most basic need, so that he could concentrate more completely on his substance use disorder treatment.

"I'm taking classes, in rehab and anger management, and now have a roof over my head," Frank says. "This gives me another chance at life."

"We're talking about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, here," stresses Sharee Mims, Greater Impact's Clinical

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Frank Stokes (left) and Greater Impact Community Outreach Specialist Chalmers Richardson.

lect a different kind of data. We're finding out what the needs are of the people living in these neighborhoods. People are struggling. Look at the needs of those being referred (page 5). Our objective is to get them assistance before their circumstances worsen."

PILOT PROGRAM TAKES OFF

COMBAT began accepting referrals as part of a pilot program it launched in Raytown during the summer of 2021. The initial focus was on police officers using their phones to complete a simple online form and clicking SUBMIT. Those referrals were directed to the Raytown STRiVIN' hub agency, Sisters In Christ, for the crucial follow-up assessments.

What started with 57 referrals in 2021 quickly expanded throughout Jackson County, with hub agencies in Independence (Community Services League), Northeast Kansas City (Mattie Rhodes Center), South Kansas City (Hickman Mills Prevention Coalition) and eventu-

Director. “It starts with the basic need for survival. When people aren’t getting those needs met, they can lose hope. They begin to look at themselves as being lost causes. Sometimes the starting point is helping a person feel safe, get fed, find housing.

“You have to show them there is compassion and empathy for them in their community.”

FOCUSING ON VICTIMS

Today, the STRiVIN’ hub agencies receive referrals from police officers, school administrators, COMBAT staff and others—in addition to occasional self-referrals. Save KC and the Kansas City Police Department’s Shoot Review committee submit referrals for every victim of a non-fatal shooting and each homicide victim’s surviving family.

All of those referrals are submitted to Greater Impact, which will then route them, if needed, to other hub agencies.

“This is something most other communities in this country can’t do,” Ortega says. “They might give victims a list of resources or a counselor’s phone number. We can do more in Jackson County, our community, because we have COMBAT.”

When initially contacting shooting victims or grieving families, the Greater Impact staff “leads with our humanness,” according to Mims.

“It really starts with letting people know we’ll be there for them,” she says. “Our shooting survivors and, of course, homicide families have been through such a traumatic event. Like a lot of our clients, asking them, ‘How are you really doing?’ can lead to a 25-minute conversation that gives us a better understanding of what they need. We earn their trust and keep it by continually following up with them.

“The impact of a program like this might not show up in the crime stats for five years or more, but we know there are people alive today because of their STRiVIN’ referral.” ■

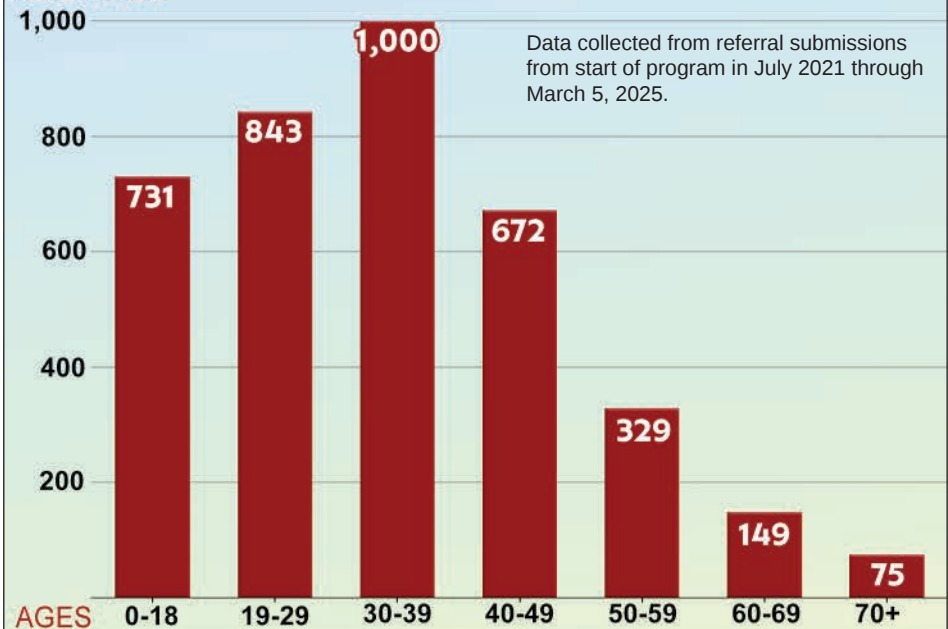
STRiVIN’ Referrals

July 1, 2021 - March 5, 2025

Striving Together to Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods

Age of People Referred (3,808 Total Referrals)

REFERRALS



Gender of People Referred (3,808 Total Referrals)



Race of People Referred (3,808 Total Referrals)



STRiVIN' To Serve Their Neighbors

The objective of the Striving To Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods (STRiVIN') initiative is to make each and every neighborhood in Jackson County a safe and healthy place anyone would be proud to call home. In this open letter, the staff of the Mattie Rhodes Center, which serves as the Northeast Kansas City STRiVIN' hub, describe how they are "committed to serving our community and working together to break of the cycle of violence."

Dear Neighbors/Queridos Vecinos:

Mattie Rhodes Center (MRC) has served the Kansas City community, primarily the Westside and the Historic Northeast, for over 130 years. MRC provides essential services and support to a diverse and vulnerable population, with a particular focus on Spanish-speaking individuals. By employing bilingual staff, the organization ensures that all our clients can access services without language barriers, fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment. MRC is dedicated to meeting the needs of various communities, offering resources such as health services, victim support assistance, educational programs and social support, while prioritizing the well-being and empowerment of those who are most in need. MRC's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion extends beyond language. We want to make sure everyone feels safe, supported and valued in their community.

Every month, our Public Safety team receives an average of 20 STRiVIN' referrals for individuals and families close to violence. Our focus is to ensure they have the resources and support they need in order to thrive in their community. Some of the work of our Public Safety team is to support victims of violence, specifically non-fatal shooting victims, with connection to support services, relocation and food assis-

tance. When an individual is shot or loses their life to violence in the Northeast, MRC is here to support the family through the most difficult time in their life.

Our Public Safety team responds to locations where violence has occurred to provide mediations or increased presence at the scene, bring warm meals to grieving families, connect STRiVIN' referrals to victim supports or crime compensation, and connect with local organizations to relocate individuals or families to ensure safety.



Members of the Mattie Rhodes staff outside the organization's Cultural Center in Kansas City.

Last year, through a new podcast project called "My Pain My Power" with *Northeast News*, our team interviewed two individuals referred by STRiVIN' who had experienced several traumatic events. They shed light on violence and drug issues in the community and described how their resiliency and connection to resources led them to change their lives. These youth received support from COMBAT programs and are thriving in school and at home. MRC received these STRiVIN' referrals from a local school and connected with several entities in order to serve these youth, including law enforcement, the courts, food pantries and more.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 



ONLINE: visit jacksoncountycombat.com/strivinbrochures

Download Copies Of The STRiVIN' Referral Brochures



Usted No Está Solo

Más de 3500 referencias (y contando) enviadas

Toda la información personal que usted pueda proporcionar permanecerá estrictamente confidencial.

¡En línea ahora mismo!
Haga una recomendación en línea para usted o en nombre de alguien que conoce o ama:
jacksoncountycombat.com/referrals

¡Llame hoy!
COMBAT se ha asociado con una organización sin fines de lucro en cada uno de sus vecindarios STRiVIN' para procesar referencias y conectarse con otras agencias comunitarias que pueden brindarle los servicios que necesita.

Solo escanea El QR para Acceso rápido
No te preocupes por elegir el centro "correcto". Cualquiera El centro STRiVIN' al que envía una referencia en línea o llama puede brindarle asistencia.

Estos no son números de línea de crisis. Dependiendo de cuándo llame, es posible que deba dejar un mensaje. Su llamada será devuelta lo antes posible para comenzar el proceso de referencia.

24/7 Crisis Linea
988
SUICIDIO Y CRISIS LINEA

Las llamadas y los mensajes de texto a la línea nacional de crisis 988, para todas las crisis de salud mental, uso de sustancias y suicidio, se envían a especialistas en crisis. Otras líneas de crisis se enumeran en nuestro sitio web:
jacksoncountycombat.com/crisislines

buena gente Ayudando a la gente
▲ El personal del Centro Mattie Rhodes ► Carolyn Whitney de Sisters In Christ en Raytown, donde se inició el programa de referencias en 2021.

Podemos conectarte Al recurso adecuado
Hacer una referencia se puede hacer fácil y rápidamente desde un teléfono (o computadora). Los centros de STRiVIN' realizarán un seguimiento con una evaluación de necesidades en profundidad y luego pedirá conectar a la persona o familia remitida con literalmente miles de recursos comunitarios.

Asistencia que cambia vidas, tal vez incluso salva vidas

COMBAT's STRiVIN' referral brochure comes in both a Spanish ▲ and English version ▼.

The brochures are distributed during neighborhood canvassing events but also given to individuals who initially decline to have a referral made on their behalf, so they can later call a STRiVIN' hub agency or even make a self-referral online.

STRiVIN' To Serve Their Neighbors • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

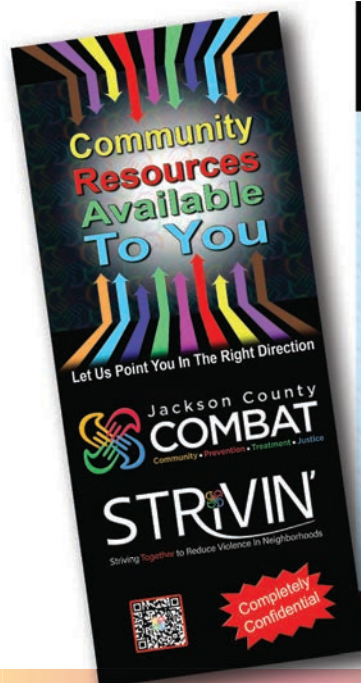
There is a mural painted on the wall of a building in the Northeast that reads, "A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." This is the case for MRC and the Northeast community. We are united, working with other organizations to make sure people are provided the support they need and deserve.

During 2024, MRC hosted several events to promote violence prevention efforts and community development. Our team held pop-up BBQ events at hot spot gas stations to provide violence prevention materials and hot dogs to residents. MRC hosted two honorary cemeteries to honor the lives of individuals lost to

violence. MRC received \$4,000 in donations to purchase unwrapped Christmas gifts that the team drove around and delivered to the Northeast community. MRC opened a satellite office on Independence Avenue, a hot-spot location for violence in the Northeast, to improve visibility and resource deployment to an area that sees the effects of violence on a daily basis. As your Northeast Hub, we are committed to serving our community and working together to break the cycle of violence.

Sincerely,

Your Northeast STRiVIN' Hub – Mattie Rhodes Center ■



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

More Than 3,500 Referrals (& Counting) Submitted

All personal information you may provide will remain strictly confidential.

Online Right Now!
Make a referral for yourself or on behalf of someone you know or love online:
jacksoncountycombat.com/referrals

Call Today!
COMBAT has partnered with a non-profit organization in each of its STRiVIN' neighborhoods to process referrals and connect with other community agencies that can provide the services you need.

Just Scan The QR For Quick Access
Don't worry about picking the "right" hub. Any STRiVIN' hub you submit an online referral to or call can provide assistance.

These are not crisis line numbers. Depending on when you call you may need to leave a message. Your call will be returned as soon as possible to begin the referral process.

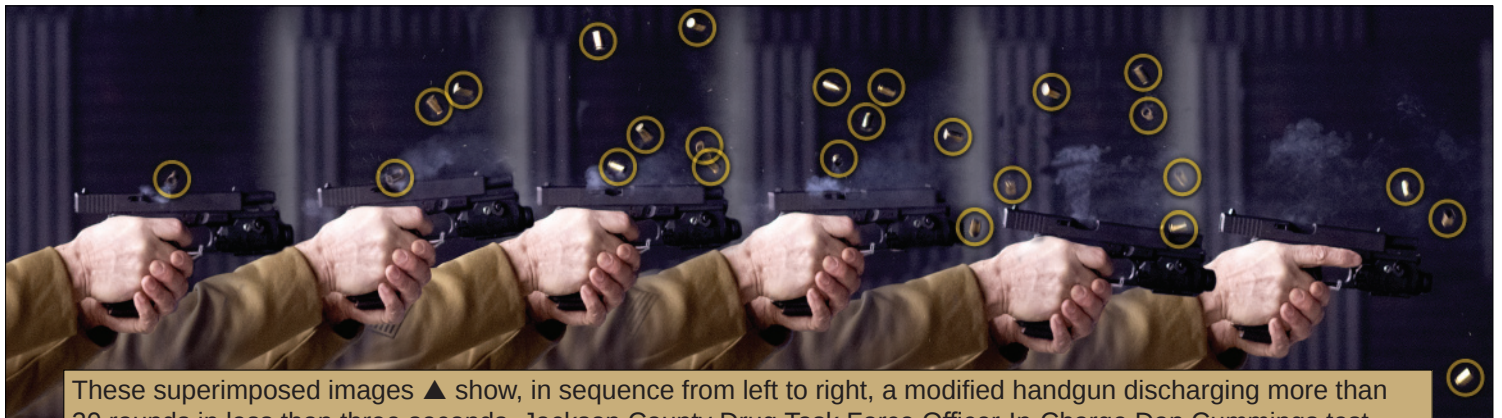
24/7 Crisis Line
988
SUICIDIO Y CRISIS LINEA

Calls and texts to the national (888) Crisis Line—for all mental health, substance use and suicide crises—are routed to crisis specialists. Other crisis lines are listed on our website:
jacksoncountycombat.com/crisislines

Good People Helping People
▲ Brandon Mims (holding sign) with the Greater Impact staff and ► Carolyn Whitney of Sisters In Christ. Their organizations operate two of the five STRiVIN' hubs that process referrals.

We Can Connect You To The Right Resource
Making a referral can easily and quickly be done on a phone (or computer). The STRiVIN' hubs will follow up with an in-depth needs assessment, and can then connect the person or family being referred to literally thousands of community resources.

Life-Changing, Maybe Even Life-Saving, Assistance!



These superimposed images ▲ show, in sequence from left to right, a modified handgun discharging more than 20 rounds in less than three seconds. Jackson County Drug Task Force Officer-In-Charge Dan Cummings test-fired the weapon, which was converted from semi-automatic to fully-automatic using an illegal switch like this one ▼ that the Task Force seized during a search last year.

Dan Cummings has worked in law enforcement for more than four decades. After a distinguished career with the Independence Police Department, he became the Jackson County Drug Task Force (JCDF) officer-in-charge in 2010. COMBAT provides more than 90% of the funding for the JCDF, which in 2024 was named the Missouri Narcotics Officers Association's Law Enforcement Unit of the Year for the seventh time in 13 years.



'This Is What We're Up Against Now'

By Dan Cummings • JCDF Officer-In-Charge

During my 40-plus years in law enforcement, I've seen a lot, enough to know better than to ever say, "I've seen it all."

Drug trafficking took what I thought would be its deadliest turn when dealers started lacing just about everything with fentanyl. I remember thinking, the first time I read about it in a DEA bulletin, "This is what we're up against now."

Of course, that was a few years ago, and now there are new synthetic opioids being developed that are resistant to Naloxone, the overdose antidote. The objective is to make drugs that are more potent and, therefore, more addictive, even if that means they're more deadly.

Also, there's the ever-evolving arms race that has some people seeking access to illegal weapons that are increasingly more dangerous.

I became a police officer at a time when semi-automatics were replacing revolvers as the standard-issued sidearm. With a revolver, you had six shots before

reloading and you had to "make them count." Today, a tiny switch, not much bigger than the SD card you'd insert into a digital camera, can convert a semi-auto gun into a full-automatic able to fire about 10 rounds per second. Such a weapon meets the definition of a "machine gun," with bullets being shot automatically as long as the trigger is being held or until the clip is emptied.

After local police departments and the Jackson County Drug Task Force began confiscating these devices—or guns that had already been modified—I saw a Glock test-fired with a switch inserted. I had that same "This is what we're up against now" thought, with an added twist: "And this is too easy."

Seriously, it is awfully easy for people with a wanton disregard for others' lives to spray a lot of bullets around.

For the record, last year the Task Force also seized 17 IEDs (a.k.a. improvised explosive devices) during the search of one Kansas City house, and we also had a dealer offer to sell us, during an uncover drug buy, hand grenades. We hadn't even asked about purchasing weapons from this person. He just offered us these bombs as a sort-of add-on.

As absurd as this sounds, let's set these explosives aside. Thankfully, it's still relatively rare for us to encounter that kind of weaponry.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

But these switches... They are illegal. Unfortunately, they're also relatively inexpensive, especially "home-made" plastic variants, and we've seen their price tag trending downward. The growing prevalence of automatic gunfire in our community is obvious, too. We can count the shell casings left behind at shooting scenes, and in the last couple of years, it hasn't been uncommon for there to be dozens.

Firing a fully automatic weapon gives some people a rush. Pulling a trigger once and emptying a 30-round extended clip in three seconds will cause just about anyone's adrenaline to surge. *Rat-a-tat-tat* and it's over just like that.

The military primarily uses automatic fire to suppress enemy soldiers. Machine guns are hardly meant to be precise but to, instead, obliterate everything that happens to be in their field of fire.

Our community isn't a war zone.

My training with the Independence PD's tactical team convinced me that, outside the controlled environment of a firing range where you are only shooting at paper targets, I would never want to fire any weapon set on full auto. When the tactical team had to be deployed, I always kept my assault gun on semi-auto. I wanted the control, the reduced risk, the precision that comes with one shot per each pull of the trigger.

The margin for error when firing fully automatic is too small. A lot can happen in one Mississippi... two Mississippi... three... The initial recoil might force the muzzle to rare up ever so slightly, causing bullets to go above or all around your intended target—and to strike unintended targets.

Even expert marksman, including police officers assigned to train their colleagues, will struggle to control a full-automatic, especially a handgun altered with one of these switches. Trying to ease up on the trigger is especially difficult. You really don't want to empty your clip in one burst and be left holding an unloaded gun, when you aren't sure—because it's all happening so fast—whether or not you've hit your target. Even worse would be hitting the wrong target and contemplating the real-world risk full-automatic poses by-standers.

There are those with no training and who care little about the harm they might inflict using these switches to spray bullets around. This is what we're up against. The Task Force and all our law enforcement partners in Jackson County are committed to pursuing those who've already pulled the trigger and to preventing more violence by seizing as many of these switches and illegally modified firearms before they can be used. ■

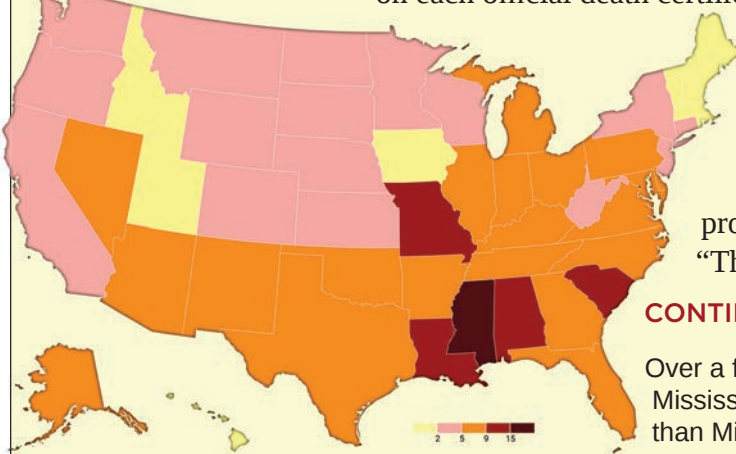


ONLINE: visit jacksoncountycombat.com/expandedmission

Drug Task Force Using Unique Skills & Resources To Assist Local Police With Violent Crimes

Just The Facts & The Stats: High Firearm Fatality Rates

There are rankings you don't want the state you call "home" topping. A COMBAT analysis of Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) data revealed that our state had—over the span of a half-decade, 2018-2022—among the highest firearm-related fatality rates in the United States. Missouri and New Mexico shared the unenviable status of being the only states ranked among the "Top 10" for highest rates of homicides, suicides and all deaths involving a firearm. The CDC enters the "underlying cause of death" listed on each official death certificate into the National Center for Health Statistics. 2022



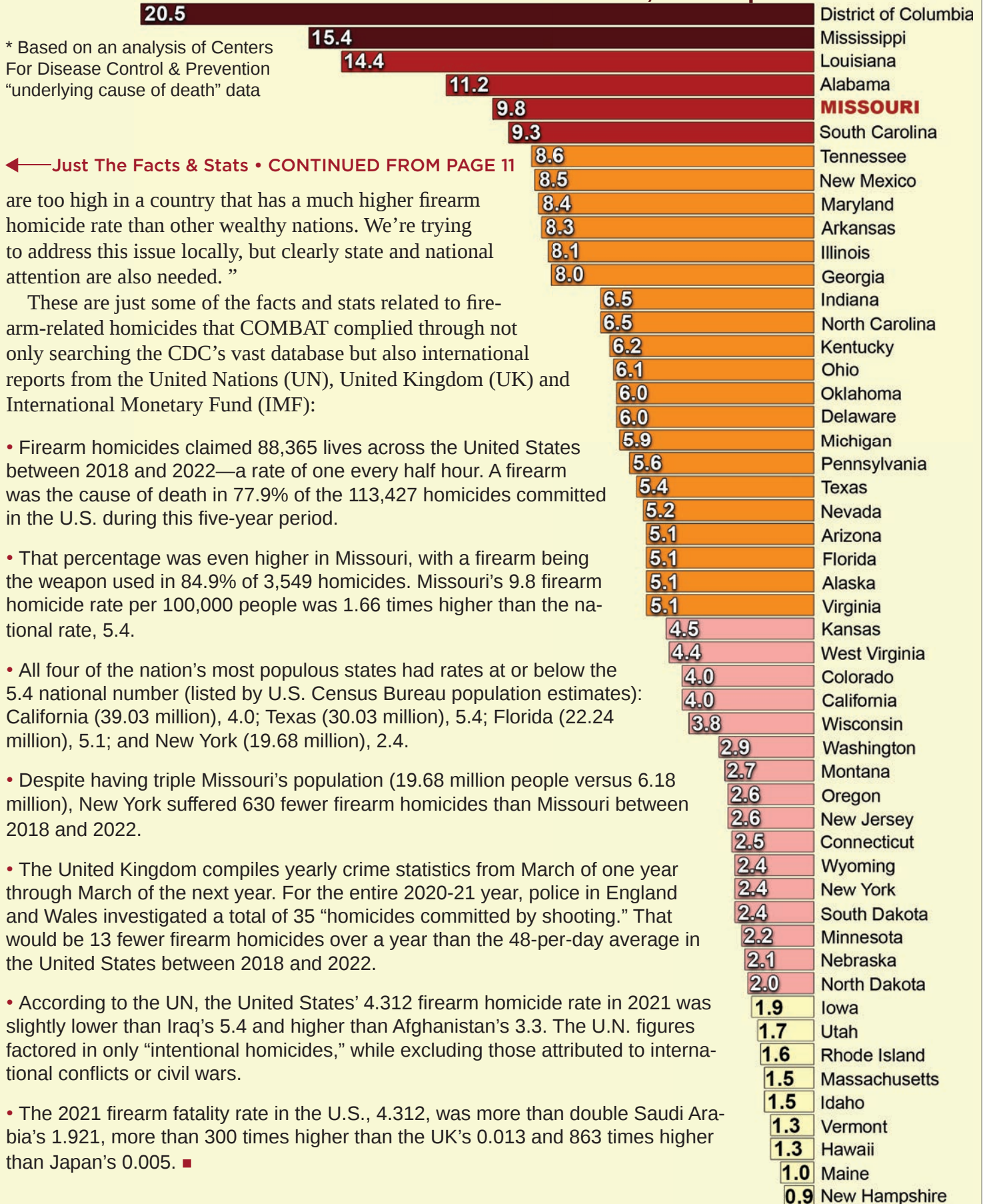
was the final year for which complete stats were available late last summer, when COMBAT compiled data for a new "Just The Facts & The Stats" gun violence section on jacksoncountycombat.com.

"Five years of data demonstrates the extent of the problem," COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega said. "The firearm fatality rates in Jackson County and Missouri

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 →

Over a five-year period (2018-2022) only the District of Columbia, Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama had higher firearm homicide rates than Missouri.

2018-2022 Firearm Homicide Rates In The U.S. Per 100,000 People*



ONLINE: visit jacksoncountycombat.com/justthefacts

Missouri Too Often Appears Near The Top Of Charts Related To Firearm Fatalities

A Little Change Making A **BIG** Difference

Essential Funding Source

COMBAT continues to be an essential source of funding for the courts and local law enforcement. About two-thirds of the revenue generated from the sales tax in 2024 was budgeted for the courts, Drug Task Force, Jackson County Corrections Department or the Prosecutor's Office, and the Kansas City Police.

	2023 Budget	2024 Budget
16th Circuit Court	\$1,115,391	\$1,837,633
Family Court	\$3,106,475	\$2,484,407
Jackson County Corrections	\$5,277,132	\$5,402,551
Jackson County Drug Task Force	\$3,342,311	\$3,421,616
Kansas City Police Department*	\$3,342,311	\$3,421,616
Jackson County Prosecutor's Office Criminal Prosecution	\$3,342,311	\$3,421,616
Jackson County Prosecutor's Office Deferred Prosecution	\$2,110,933	\$2,161,020
COMBAT Administration	\$1,267,871	\$1,337,806
TOTAL	\$22,904,735	\$23,488,265

* Does not include funding for KCPD Law Enforcement School-Based initiative

The budget for COMBAT's administrative costs was just 4.0% in 2024.

2024 COMBAT Revenue
\$33,695,152

The quarter-cent **COM**munity **B**acked **A**nti-crime **T**ax (COMBAT) supports life-changing—and oftentimes life-saving—services throughout all of Jackson County. Chapter 93 of the Jackson County Code requires that the anti-crime sales tax be utilized “solely for the purpose of promoting and providing public safety.”

At just a quarter-cent, the COMBAT tax equates to just 25 cents per \$100 spent. But all that change really adds up to make a BIG difference in our community.

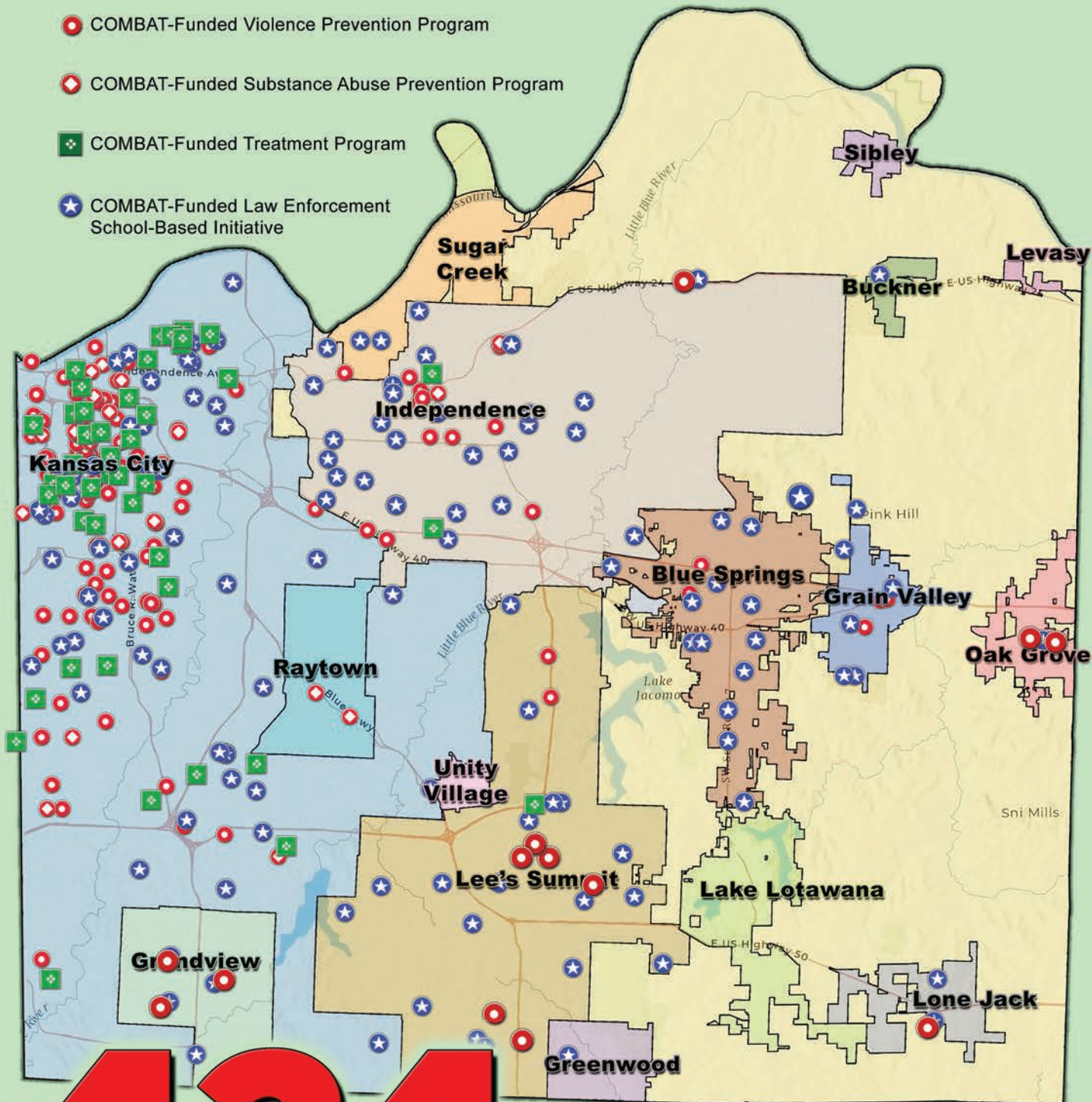
Prevention Grants
\$4,898,692 (Pages 15-16)

Law Enforcement School-Based Grants
\$1,440,867 (Page 17)

Treatment Grants
\$4,501,318 (Page 18)

STRiVIN' Grants
\$1,687,866 (Page 18)





424

Locations Throughout Jackson County

No community—urban, suburban or rural—is entirely immune from violence, and drug overdoses have been reported in every corner of Jackson County. COMBAT serves Jackson County as one community, with the goal of making every neighborhood safer and healthier for everyone. In 2024 COMBAT funding supported 95 different programs providing services at 424 different locations across Jackson County.



ONLINE: visit jacksoncountycombat.com/fundedprograms

Program Directory Includes Location Maps For Each COMBAT-Funded Program

62

Agencies Awarded Grants

66,363

People Being Served

\$4,898,692

AdHoc Group Against Crime

Crisis Support For Victims
\$160,000 • 320 People

Amethyst Place

Preventing Multi-Generational
Substance Use
\$80,000 • 170 People

Artists Helping the Homeless

Be The Change
\$67,200 • 275 People

ArtsTech

Violence Prevention
\$140,000 • 600 People

Blue Springs School District

EJC Schools Collaborative
\$46,698 • 7,953 People

Boys & Girls Clubs

SMART MOVES
\$140,000 • 1,736 People

Bridge Leadership Academy

Bridge Youth Violence Prevention
\$119,000 • 75 People

**Calvary Community
Outreach Network**

HYPE
\$78,045 • 4,000 People

Center for Conflict Resolution

Transforming Reentry:
Going Home For Good
\$80,000 • 525 People

**Child Abuse Prevention
Association (CAPA)**

CAPA Prevention Services
\$41,950 • 80 People

Child Protection Center, Inc.

Child Protection Center Program
\$109,086 • 850 People

Community Assistance Council

"Next Steps" Case Management
\$33,814 • 1,500 People

Community LINC

Homeless & At-Risk Families In KC
\$70,000 • 500 People

Community Services League

Wellness & Resiliency
\$120,000 • 2,600 People

**Comprehensive Mental
Health Services**

PUSH Diversion Program
\$70,000 • 200 People

Crossroads Charter Schools

CCS Restorative Justice
\$70,000 • 604 People

De La Salle Education Center

Block37
\$160,000 • 220 People

**Eastern Jackson County
Youth Court**

EJC Youth Court Peer Diversion
\$80,800 • 400 People

**Emmanuel Family & Child
Development Center**

Youth 4 Change
\$96,000 • 196 People

First Call

Safe & Healthy Schools
\$29,316 • 600 People

Footprints, Inc.

Footprints Prevention
\$80,000 • 420 People

FosterAdopt Connect

Community Connections
Youth Project (CCYP)
\$49,920 • 150 People

Full Employment Council, Inc.

Career Systems Of Support
\$120,000 • 100 People

**Girl Scouts Of NE Kansas
& NW Missouri**

Girl Scouts Outreach Program
\$8,000 • 1,000 People

**Goodwill of Western Missouri
& Eastern Kansas**

Goodwill Violence Prevention
\$80,000 • 100 People

Guadalupe Centers Inc.

Life Skills Prevention Program
\$62,446 • 200 People

Healing House, Inc

Non-Residential Aftercare Program
\$153,224 • 5,000 People

(HAC) Boy Scouts of America

Be Prepared Program
\$128,699 • 3,500 People

Hickman Mills C-1 Schools

Restorative Practices
\$80,000 • 1,818 People

High Aspirations

High Aspirations Prevention
\$120,000 • 174 People

Hope House, Inc.

Domestic Violence
Prevention Project
\$76,800 • 200 People

Housing Authority of Kansas City

Pemberton Park For Grandfamilies
\$41,238 • 125 Clients

**Independence Health
& Animal Services**

City of Independence Prevention
\$90,000 • N/A



ONLINE: visit jacksoncountycombat.com/fundedprograms

Program Descriptions, Contact Information & Location Maps

Independence Youth Court

Peer Diversion
\$91,200 • 600 People

Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council

Healing While We Grow
\$48,000 • 600 People

Jackson County CASA

Family Drug Court
Advocacy Program
\$78,271 • 230 People

Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey

AileyCamp & AileyCamp The Group
\$43,019 • 130 People

Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission

Second Chance Program
\$67,056 • 50 People

Kansas City Mothers In Charge

Survivors Will Heal
\$100,000 • 60 People

Kansas City Municipal Court Division

Truancy Intervention Program
(KC TIP)
\$92,020 • 350 People

Kansas City Youth Court

Youth Court Prevention
\$72,653 • 150 People

Jackson County CASA

CASA Prevention
\$62,617 • 188 People

Journey To New Life, Inc.

Journey To New Life Reentry
\$80,000 • 80 People

KC Common Good

KC Common Good 2024
\$100,000 • 830 People

Kansas City Friends Of Alvin Ailey

KCFAA Prevention
\$34,415 • 120 People

Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission

Second Chance Program
\$53,645 • 50 People

Kansas City Mothers In Charge

Survivors Will Heal
\$80,000 • 100 People

Kansas City Municipal Court

KCMC Truancy Intervention
\$64,414 • 300 People

Kansas City Youth Court

Youth Court
\$58,122 • 150 People

Lee's Summit CARES

Building A Safe & Caring Community
\$35,000 • N/A

Legal Aid of Western Missouri

Adopt-A-Neighborhood Project
\$32,085 • 20 People

Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA)

Comprehensive Sexual Violence
Prevention In Jackson County
\$113,738 • 5,175 People

Newhouse

Expanding Hotline Services
\$35,053 • 16,400 People

Northeast Community Center

Harmony Project KC
\$16,800 • 350 People

Operation Breakthrough

Opportunity Internships
For Ignition Labs
\$64,000 • 100 People

Reconciliation Services

REVEAL
\$28,000 • 2,200 People

reStart, Inc.

reStart Prevention
\$128,958 • 250 People

Rose Brooks Center

Project SAFE
\$40,000 • 400 People

**All agencies
receiving COMBAT
funding must provide services
to Jackson County residents
in Jackson County!**

Saint Luke's Hospital (Crittenton)

Saint Luke's Hospital Residential
Substance Abuse Prevention
\$87,818 • 100 People

Sisters in Christ

Dahomey Training Center
\$134,847 • 50 People

Synergy Services, Inc.

BIP & Peaceful Path Diversion
\$72,000 • 70 People

True Light Family Resource Center

Women's Safe Shelter
\$35,000 • 1,000 People

Truman Medical Centers

Project RISE
\$200,000 • 150 People

Twelfth Street Heritage Development Corporation

Prison-To-Workforce
\$160,000 • 50 People

United Inner City Services (Early Start)

EarlystART
\$20,000 • 124 People

Urban Ranger Corps

Urban Rangers Corps Prevention
\$32,000 • 100 People

Whatsoever Community Center

Whatsoever Youth Services
\$36,000 • 100 People

Youth Ambassadors, Inc.

Youth Ambassadors
\$60,652 • 300 People

Youth Guidance

Becoming A Man (BAM) &
Working On Womanhood (WOW)
\$100,000 • 315 People



Reaching More Than
13,500
 Students Across Jackson County

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office and every police department in the county, except Raytown's, participated in COMBAT's Law Enforcement School-Based Initiative program in 2024. COMBAT funding allows the police departments to assign school resources officers and supports their law enforcement anti-drug and anti-violence educational programs, which—in 2024—were offered at 126 different schools across Jackson County. To be eligible for COMBAT funding, the police departments must provide educational programs that expand upon standard D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) curriculum, with an emphasis on continuing education as students advance from elementary to middle school, then high school.

2024 COMMUNITY PARTNERS Law Enforcement School-Based Initiatives

Students served based on grant application projections

11
 Agencies Awarded Grants
13,757
 Students Being Served
\$1,440,867

Blue Springs Police Dept.
 \$225,000 • 980 Students

Buckner Police Dept.
 \$80,000 • 330 Students

Grain Valley Police Dept.
 \$85,867 • 677 Students

Grandview Police Dept.
 \$10,000 • 265 Students

Independence Police Dept.
 \$225,000 • 3,990 Students

Jackson County Sheriff
 \$150,000 • 600 Students

Kansas City Police Dept.
 \$225,000 • 3,600 Students

Lee's Summit Police Dept.
 \$225,000 • 2,779 Students

Lone Jack Police Dept.
 \$65,000 • 155 Students

Oak Grove Police Dept.
 \$75,000 • 305 Students

Sugar Creek Police Dept.
 \$75,000 • 76 Students

22

Agencies Awarded Grants

6,668

People Being Served

\$4,501,318

Amethyst Place

Preventing Multi-Generational
Substance Use
\$116,095 • 170 People

Benilde Hall

Substance Abuse
Treatment Program
\$468,261 • 500 People

Children's Mercy's TIES Program

Treatment for Infants Exposed to
Substance Abuse
\$65,000 • 200 People

Cornerstones of Care

SUD Treatment
\$256,756 • 200 People

First Call

Recovery Support Navigation
\$78,443 • 800 People

Footprints, Inc.

Footprints Treatment Program
\$410,234 • 250 People

Guadalupe Centers

Outpatient Treatment Program
\$116,630 • 75 People

Healing House, Inc.

Transitional Living
\$436,266 • 570 People

**Heartland Center
for Behavioral Change**

SUD Treatment
\$419,239 • 212 People

Journey To New Life, Inc.

Recovery Houses
\$100,000 • 100 People

**KVC Behavioral
Healthcare Missouri**

Substance Use Treatment For
Children, Teens & Families
\$100,000 • 150 People

Mattie Rhodes Center

Nuevo Amanecer (New Dawn)
Treatment Program
\$121,000 • 120 People

Plaza Academy

Treatment For At-Risk Adolescents
\$25,000 • 75 People

ReDiscover

Substance Use Disorder Treatment
\$449,919 • 1,764 People

reStart

Drug Counseling
\$90,995 • 30 People

Rose Brooks Center

Supported Recovery Program
\$90,995 • 30 People

Saint Luke's Hospital (Crittenton)

Adolescent Treatment Program
\$93,500 • 30 People

Sheffield Place

Sheffield Treatment For
Homeless Mothers
\$158,253 • 160 People

Sisters In Christ

Recovery Housing
\$300,000 • 27 People

Swope Health Services

Imani House
\$142,500 • 450 People

**University Health –
Truman Medical Centers**

Recovery Health Services
\$116,000 • 35 People

Welcome House, Inc.

Sober Living Recovery Program
\$355,736 • 500 People

STRiVIN'
Striving Together to Reduce Violence In Neighborhoods

8

Agencies Awarded Grants

\$1,687,866

**Bridge Leadership Academy
(Hickman Mills)**

\$170,000

Center for Conflict Resolution

\$137,154

Community Services League

\$274,392

Greater Impact

\$312,000

Hope House

\$144,084

**Kansas City Metropolitan
Crime Commission**

\$75,000

Mattie Rhodes Center

\$280,236

Sisters In Christ

\$295,000



COMBAT Event Focuses On Recognizing & Addressing Secondary Traumatic Stress

Trauma-informed Care (TIC) stresses developing a more detailed picture of a person's life before offering them assistance. The trauma that person has experienced, TIC emphasizes, should inform the care a medical professional or social worker provides them.

COMBAT requires all agencies receiving prevention and treatment funding to undergo TIC training.

"A lot of the issues related to violent crime and substance use disorders can be traced to unresolved trauma," stated COMBAT Executive Director Vince Ortega, citing the social needs identified through the STRiVIN' referral program—with trauma being the most common need indicated (page 5).

But in 2024 COMBAT recognized the need to also address, among its many community partners, STS. Secondary Traumatic Stress can afflict first responders, counselors and others whose daily work involves helping others who've experienced trauma first-hand. Last fall COMBAT hosted a day-long *Heal The Healer* retreat to raise awareness about STS because those who help others too often neglect to take care of themselves.

"We wanted all of our agencies to participate, including police officers, treatment counselors, social workers," said COMBAT Program Administrator Tammie Jordan, "because it is true that they will tend to always put others' wellbeing first and their own last. They

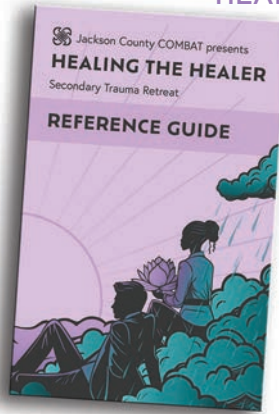
CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

COMBAT's *Healing The Healer* event featured presentations from 1) Scott Kerby, clinical trainer with Burrell Behavioral Health; 2) Sharee Mims, Clinical Director for Greater Impact, the STRiVIN' hub organization for Midtown Kansas City; and 3) Ken Vick, Program Director with Burrell Behavioral Health. The event kicked off with 4) trainer Estelle Brooks getting participants on their feet for a brief aerobics session. Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) often manifests itself in a person's physical wellbeing as lower energy causes them to become more sedentary.

work with a lot of victims and see a lot of people in crises. That takes a physical and emotional toll that can really sneak up on any person.”

The reference guide COMBAT staff created for the retreat listed warning signs of STS:

- **Emotional:** Increased irritability, hopelessness, detachment, or an overwhelming sense of guilt.
- **Behavioral:** Withdrawal from colleagues or family, reluctance to engage in work-related tasks, or substance use as a coping mechanism.
- **Cognitive:** Difficulty concentrating, intrusive thoughts about traumatic events, or preoccupation with clients' issues outside of work.
- **Physical:** Fatigue, sleep, disturbances, or changes in appetite and physical health.



The guide listed “other indicators,” such as being hyper-vigilant, feeling disconnected or emotionally numb, and avoiding situations that might remind you of trauma.

COMBAT’s staff opened the guide with a letter of support for the community partners who serve tens of thousands of people each year: “We want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for the incredible work our funded agencies do every day in violence prevention, substance use prevention, treatment, and law enforcement. Your unwavering commitment to serving our communities is truly inspiring. It does not go unnoticed. We also recognize the emotional and psychological—perhaps even physical—toll this work can take on you.... If we are to keep being there to take care of others, we must also take care of ourselves.” ■



ONLINE: visit jacksoncountycombat.com/healthehealer

Download The COMBAT Secondary Trauma Retreat Reference Guide PDF

**Making A
Difference**



Community • Prevention • Treatment • Justice

**Takes All
Hands In**



Jackson County Courthouse
415 E. 12th St. • 9th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64106

816-881-1416
combat@jacksongov.org

jacksoncountycombat.com

