



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 9, 2026

Subject: Community Partnership of the Ozarks Welcomes Marlon R. Graves as Gun Safety & Violence Reduction Engagement Coordinator

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Community Partnership of the Ozarks (CPO) is pleased to announce the hiring of Marlon R. Graves as the organization's new ***Gun Safety & Violence Reduction Engagement Coordinator***, strengthening CPO's ongoing commitment to creating safer neighborhoods and supporting children, young people and families across the Ozarks.

In this role, Graves will coordinate community engagement efforts for CPO's Gun Safety & Violence Reduction Initiative, helping to connect neighbors, partner organizations and community leaders around strategies that reduce gun violence, promote responsible firearm safety and expand opportunities for youth and young people.

His responsibilities include coordinating community engagement events, supporting collaborative initiatives and partner meetings, coordinating outreach efforts, assisting with grant reporting and implementation, and building relationships with organizations and community members working to improve neighborhood safety.

"As a former educator and active football coach for his alma mater, Central High School, Marlon has a longstanding passion for mentoring young people and serving the community," **said Francine Pratt, Co-Chair for the Gun Safety and Violence Reduction Initiative.** "His extensive experience in reentry services, community engagement, and collaborative leadership makes him a tremendous asset to our Gun Safety and Violence Reduction Initiative."

Since returning to Springfield in 2015 from Miami, Florida; where he served as Instructional Manager for Miami Dade College's Re-Entry Program in partnership with the South Dade County Corrections Facility, Graves established himself as a respected community leader and bridge-builder. Through his service with the NAACP, the Springfield Police Department Chief's Community Advisory Group, the Springfield Police Civilian Review Board, and Good Dads Inc., he helped strengthen relationships between residents, organizations, and public institutions.

The Gun Safety & Violence Reduction Initiative brings together community partners to address the root causes of violence while promoting prevention, education and neighborhood-based solutions that help children and families feel safe where they live, learn and play.

Graves will work closely with the Street Outreach Workers and in the neighborhoods where gunshots are reported the most. He will also work with community organizations, volunteers, schools and residents to strengthen local partnerships, engage youth and families, and support collaborative efforts that build healthier, safer communities throughout Springfield and the Ozarks.

ABOUT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OF THE OZARKS: *Community Partnership of the Ozarks (CPO) is a regional nonprofit organization dedicated to building resilient children, healthy families, and strong neighborhoods and communities. Through collaboration, innovative programming, strategic partnerships, and resource development, CPO brings people and organizations together to address the Ozarks' most pressing challenges and create lasting community impact. Learn more about CPO's programs, partnerships, and initiatives at www.cpozarks.org*

"I'm honored to join CPO and contribute to an initiative focused on prevention, education and strengthening our communities," **said Graves**. "As someone who was born and raised in Springfield, I believe my unique upbringing, community connections and commitment to transparency will help foster meaningful change."

The Gun Safety & Violence Reduction Initiative is part of CPO's broader mission to facilitate and promote the building of resilient children, healthy families, and strong neighborhoods and communities through collaboration, programming and resource development.

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