

Mosaic

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The gathering was also able to agree that schools should offer curriculums that teach character development and the difference between right and wrong.

BROTHERS is made up of about 40 men of various ages, backgrounds and religions who want to develop, strengthen and increase the positive things in the community.

To that end it holds summit meetings and issue-oriented forums for men. The most recent examined the enormous social impact of hip-hop.

An earlier forum featured Earvin "Magic" Johnson and discussed how to make a difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

At the end of the summer, the group hosted a cookout and gave out school supplies.

BROTHERS hands out food baskets at Thanksgiving and sponsors debates before municipal and school board elections. In addition, members of BROTHERS serve as mentors to youngsters.

The group was founded in 2001 and is composed of educators, business executives and some men with criminal records.

Founding member Zatiti Moody says, "We want to build on our success and be a positive force in the community."

"The BROTHERS organization consists of men of all walks of life who came together to have a serious sincere impact on our community in a positive way," says Moody, 33, of Paterson, who heads the Great Falls Academy, located in the Alabama Avenue housing development.

"We have created a think tank to pull people together."

The academy offers a one-year program for students expelled from the Paterson School District.

"We try and help the most challenged students in the city," he explains. Because of a good ratio of teachers and counselors to students the school has some successes. Moody says a good result is achieved if the student returns and completes school or gets a job.

The goal of the school dovetails with the mission of BROTHERS.

In December 2001, the city housing authority called together several men and suggested that they hold a men's conference. The authority held a successful women's conference and thought that one for men could lead to a continuing dialogue.

The event on March 23, 2002, at Passaic County Community College attracted 400 men. About 40 are actively involved in BROTHERS and some attend weekly meetings at the Great Falls Academy.

Kenneth McDaniel of Paterson, a vice principal at the Passaic County Technical Institute in Wayne, says he joined the group "to learn from and grow with the members of the organization as we strive toward effectively enhancing our surroundings and making life better for the generations behind us."

McDaniel, 38, who serves on the Passaic County Committee on Minority Concerns, says members try to become role models for boys 14 to 18 who may not have a father figure in their lives.

He says that to get the word out about the organization they have to be visible and can often be spotted wearing a BROTHERS T-shirt or buttons.

The group is seeking members. Applicants are expected to attend three consecutive Sunday meetings and support its dedication to improving and rebuilding the community.

Reach Diane Haines at 973-569-7046 or haines@northjersey.com.

They're 40 'brothers' with a single cause

In the view of many people, hip-hop music and videos degrade women, are full of violence and reinforce racial stereotypes. Women are portrayed as sexually promiscuous and money-hungry. The language is dredged up from the gutter.

Should anything be done about the companies producing the materials that offend so many?

A Paterson community improvement group called BROTHERS (Brothers

JERSEY MOSAIC

Reaching Out To Help Everyone Rebuild Self) explores ways to combat such expressions. The suggestions discussed by the participants range from boycotting the music and the companies producing it to urging performers not to participate.

A group of teenage girls at a recent forum suggested that women should

turn down roles in the videos. They say women who appear in such displays are "selling themselves out." The teenage boys attending the conference agreed.

The teenagers candidly addressed the issues in small groups with men of assorted ages. In all 150 people attended the forum, called "Is Hip-Hop Dead, Alive or Killing Us?" at the Christopher Hope Community Center in Paterson.

BROTHERS

To contact the BROTHERS organization and help in the community, call 973-689-3322, fax 314-689-3328 or go to the Web site at www.brothersofpaterson.com.

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