

For Immediate Release  
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## PEACE OVER VIOLENCE LEADS 12TH ANNUAL PEACE PROCESSION IN PICO-UNION

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Community Walk at Berendo Middle School



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LOS ANGELES (Dec. 15, 2009) — More than 500 youth, parents, and community members of Pico-Union participated in the 12th annual “Noche de Paz” (Night of Peace) Peace Procession to raise awareness on violence prevention and to promote a safe holiday season.

“Every member of our community is entitled to safe relationships, safe homes, and safe neighborhoods, not just during the holidays but throughout the year,” said Patti Giggans, executive director of Peace Over Violence. “This peace walk shows the community’s solidarity and hope for a violence-free neighborhood.”

The event began with musical performances at Berendo Middle School, followed by the procession around the school, during which children, teens, and adults sang songs of peace. Los Angeles police officers escorted the participants during the evening walk, which ended back on school grounds with food, dancing, and gifts for the children.

“Noche de Paz” is an interpretation of the traditional Las Posadas event, which commemorates the journey of Mary and Joseph into Bethlehem and their search for lodging.

Participating organizations include Peace Over Violence and Start Strong Los Angeles; Children’s Institute, Inc.; Rampart Gang Reduction and Youth Development; LAPD; Healthy Start Collaborative; Berendo Middle School; School Community Policing Partnership Program; and Heart of Los Angeles.



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**About Peace Over Violence**

Formerly known as the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women, Peace Over Violence is a social service agency dedicated to building healthy relationships, families, and communities free from sexual, domestic, and interpersonal violence. For more information visit [www.peaceoverviolence.org](http://www.peaceoverviolence.org).

**About Start Strong Los Angeles**

Launched in June 2009, Start Strong Los Angeles, led by Peace Over Violence, is part of the largest national initiative aimed at 11-to 14- year-olds to promote safe and healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence and abuse. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Blue Shield of California Foundation\* are investing \$18 million in 11 communities across the country to identify and evaluate the most promising pathways to stop dating violence and abuse before it starts. The program concentrates in and around Berendo and Virgil middle schools and aims to impact students and their families, 85 percent of whom can be defined as very-low income and chronically exposed to violence.

*(\* Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is funding ten sites around the country and Blue Shield of California Foundation is funding one site in California.)*

**About CII**

Children’s Institute, Inc. helps children who have been traumatized by violence in their homes or communities. Celebrating its 103rd year of service, Children’s Institute provides help to at-risk children and families in some of Los Angeles’ most devastated neighborhoods. The agency provides healing and support through clinical, early childhood, family support and child enrichment services. The organization now serves more than 17,000 children and families, and trains an estimated 6,000 professionals in the child welfare field annually.

**About Rampart GRYD**

The mission of the Rampart GRYD is to address the risk factors that lead to gang involvement with the goal of limiting the number of youth that become involved in are street gangs, reducing the number of gang related criminal and violent behavior, increasing positive youth development opportunities, and establishing safe, clearly identified places in every community where youth and their families can receive unconditional supportive services. The Rampart GRYD serves youth ages 10-15 years of age who reside within the Rampart GRYD zone designated by the Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development of the City of Los Angeles. The Rampart GRYD is comprised of El Centro Del Pueblo (ECDP), Children’s Institute Inc. (CII), The Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA), Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC), Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA), Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund (SALEF), LAPD Juvenile Intervention Prevention Program (JIPP), and Chinatown Service Center (CSC).

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