

STOP SIGNS: YOUNG ARTISTS TACKLING VIOLENCE



In 1997, the Oakland Domestic Violence Prevention Collaborative recognized it needed to get its messages out to teenagers, a key population in preventing and reporting violence. So the group approached Fern Tiger Associates about a youth art contest, with the winner's art posted on billboards. FTA used the client's initial concept as a basis for a more layered approach, which promised to empower youth themselves to challenge violence.

FTA first assessed teens' knowledge of domestic violence, leading a series of youth focus groups and testing potential messages. Students were then recruited to participate in hands-on art workshops, where they could create submissions for the contest, either working amongst themselves or with a professional muralist from Oakland's Museum of Children's Art (another FTA client). At the workshops, peer educators led discussions about domestic violence, using the messages selected by the focus groups.

Three pieces of art were deemed winners in the contest and were converted to billboards with the identified messages and a streamlined, eye-catching layout developed by FTA. Letterhead and an identity to match the billboards were developed for community and media relations, and all materials paired the students' art with controlled, professional design. Widespread news coverage and a spike in teen calls to the local domestic violence hotline were among the outcomes.

OAKLAND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE is a consortium of domestic violence agencies partnering under the umbrella of California's Department of Health Services.

Launched in conjunction with Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the three billboard designs developed by youth were strategically placed at 15 locations around Oakland, near middle and high schools. In the public eye for nearly 12 weeks, the messages and images were estimated to have reached 85% of Oakland's teenagers and 200,000 residents citywide.

