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by Karen South Carpenter

Help put some happier poetry in a child's life

Latest tragedy shows need for adult

I had the privilege last Tuesday afternoon of helping judge North Rowan Middle School's Poetry Slam. Almost 70 students presented their original poetry before judges, parents, school personnel and their peers. I was amazed and impressed by the talent of these awesome young people.

I was also deeply saddened by the number of poems whose subjects were the loss of hope, the absence of love and the anxiety of fear. It reminded me that these children are growing up in a vastly different world from the one I experienced.

Nothing could have reinforced that sentiment more than learning that another of our children has been lost to gun violence. Already, the blogs are filling with those who insist somebody needs to do something about the violence in our community.

I couldn't agree more.

But it isn't somebody. It's everybody. We are failing the children of this community, and it has got to stop.

In the forward to the Children's Defense Fund's recent publication, "America's Cradle to Prison Pipeline," Marian Wright Edelman writes, "It is time for adults of every race and income group to break our silence about the pervasive breakdown of moral, family, community and national values, to place our children first in our lives, and to struggle to model the behavior we want our children to learn. Our 'child and youth problem' is not a child and youth problem, it is a profound adult problem as our children do what they see us adults doing in our personal, professional and public lives. They seek our attention in negative ways when we provide them too few positive ways to communicate and to get the attention and love they need. And we choose to punish and lock them up rather than take the necessary, more cost-effective steps to prevent and intervene early to ensure them the healthy, safe, fair and moral start in life they need to reach successful adulthood."

Many good people in this community are doing wonderful things to help our children. But we need everybody to do something.

At Rowan County Youth Services Bureau, a United Way member agency, we desperately need adult volunteers to work with at-risk young people. Opportunities exist to mentor a child one-on-

one or to assist with our new group mentoring initiative. Training is provided and support is there for volunteers every step of the way.

Please. We need you. We can't afford to lose another child.

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Karen South Carpenter is executive director of Rowan County Youth Services Bureau, Inc. For more information on becoming a mentor with YSB, please call Liz Tennent at 704-633-5636, ext. 104.