



Hope Zone RE-LITE NiTE Initiative Launches to Provide Safe Spaces and Positive Activities for Dayton Youth

Dayton, OH – April 8, 2025—In response to a sharp rise in youth violence in 2024—including a fourfold increase in juvenile homicides and a 56% surge in felonious assaults involving young victims—a new community-driven initiative is launching in Northwest Dayton. The Hope Zone RE-LITE NiTE, a pilot project led by the Community Engagement of Religious Organizations (CERO) in partnership with Omega CDC, will offer safe, structured, and engaging evening activities for teens from May through August 2025.

RE-LITE NiTE events will be held weekly from 2-7 pm at:

- Bethesda Temple Apostolic Church (Tuesdays, May–August)
- Northwest Recreation Center (Thursdays, May & August)

Program highlights include:

- Open Gym and Basketball Nights
- STEM, Cooking, and Arts Activities
- Weekly Meals and Live DJs
- Self-Esteem and Mental Health Support
- Teen Ambassador Leadership Program

“This initiative reflects what our churches can do when we come together,” said Pastor Daryl Ward, Project Leader and founder of the CERO network. “Our youth need safe places where they are welcome, and this program is one way we can meet that need.”

Omega CDC, which leads the Hope Zone Promise Neighborhood, will serve as the fiscal agent and coordinating organization—handling staffing, logistics, data collection, and support for program execution. The program is funded through Omega CDC’s Hope Zone Promise Neighborhood grant, with additional support from the City of Dayton and The Dayton Foundation.

“This is a youth-centered effort rooted in faith, community, and listening,” said Vanessa Ward, President of Omega CDC. “Our role is to support CERO’s vision by coordinating resources and removing barriers so this work can flourish.”

The CERO group is a collaborative network of more than ten churches that have been meeting for the past two years to form a united, faith-based response to the needs of families in the Hope Zone. The group was established to strengthen community support through collective action. Rooted in the principles of asset-based community development, CERO focuses on identifying and leveraging the existing strengths, talents, and resources within the community—particularly within faith institutions—to drive sustainable change.

The RE-LITE NiTE project emerged from this collaboration and was shaped by conversations Omega CDC had with local youth who voiced that they needed safe, judgment-free spaces.

CERO congregations will provide volunteer teams, host enrichment activities, and help identify youth participants and Teen Ambassadors through their ministries and neighborhood connections.

Participating churches include:

- Omega Baptist Church
- Bethesda Temple Apostolic Church
- Zion Baptist Church
- Grace United Methodist Church
- Agape Bible Fellowship
- United Baptist Church
- Fort McKinley UMC
- Fellowship Baptist Church
- All Nations Bible Fellowship
- Fairview United Methodist Church

About Omega Community Development Corporation

Omega Community Development Corporation (Omega CDC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded by Omega Baptist Church in 1997, exists to inspire hope and forge pathways to self-sufficiency in Northwest Dayton. Our mission is to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by driving change and empowering families through cradle-to-career, place-based services. Serving thousands of children and adults, Omega CDC partners with public, private, and philanthropic organizations to deliver wrap-around support, building healthy and prosperous communities. For more information, visit www.omegacdc.org.