



Antonio Rivera won a design contest for crime prevention, and his work is displayed on two billboards in town. Standing with Antonio is John Bartkowski, chief executive of the 16th Street Community Health Center.

TOM LYNN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Student posts his anti-violence view

Teen's work was picked as best among entries in poster contest

By KRISTINA M. KNARCIC
of the Journal Sentinel staff

Antonio Rivera did not know he was entering a poster contest when he designed the winning anti-violence poster that was unveiled in a special ceremony before a recent Milwaukee Bucks game.

"I was surprised," he said, when he learned that his poster would be hung on billboards at two Milwaukee locations, and that he had won a basketball autographed by the Bucks and free Bucks tickets.

Antonio said he designed the

poster in his seventh-grade class because the teacher told the students to do so.

The contest was an anti-violence program sponsored by the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, the Bruce Godalupe Community School and the Milwaukee Bucks as part of an initiative to increase crime prevention awareness in a south side Milwaukee neighborhood.

"Far too often in our community we look for the negative," said John Bartkowski, chief executive of the Sixteenth Street center.

The children who live in the neighborhood of the center and the school know about violence all too well, he said.

"We need to work together," Principal Elma Radke said about curbing violence in Milwaukee.

She said her students are very aware of the violence that is going on around them.

"We wanted to get the kids to give us their views of violence in the community," Bartkowski said.

Antonio Rivera's view on violence was intensified when a violent act hit close to home last month. His sister, Sabrina Vega, 19, was stabbed near his aunt's house in the neighborhood of 15th and Becher streets, he said.

He had already drawn the poster but had not yet known he had won when his sister was attacked. He said she was stabbed three times, once in the lower back area and once in each arm.

He said a 56-year-old man stabbed his sister for no reason and then ran away. He said she

was in Froedert Memorial Lutheran Hospital for a while in critical condition and had to have a kidney removed. While she was in the hospital she got pneumonia, but she is now feeling better, he said.

He said he hopes his poster will curb violent acts so he can "stop seeing people get killed in the streets all of the time."

"It is important to stop violence so people can stay alive," he said.

Andrew Lang, the Bucks starting center, unveiled the winning poster with Antonio, 13, who won best poster of the more than 80 entries that were submitted, Bartkowski said. Antonio said he was a big fan of Lang when he played for the Minnesota Timberwolves.