

‘Rooftop Pastor’ Scores \$8 Million Donation to Combat Crime

The “Rooftop Pastor” isn’t just fooling around. He’s completely serious about his efforts to end Chicago violence, and he’s gotten a big endorsement—and donation—from a prominent entity in the Windy City this week.

Hoping to raise \$35 million in a year to build a community center that he hopes will transform the South Side of Chicago, Pastor Corey Brooks’ (Helping Others Obtain Destiny Project scored an \$8 million gift from the McCormick Family Foundation this week to bring the total to \$28.5 million.

“What the McCormick Family Foundation has done for our organization has given us the added momentum and credibility needed to continue our fight against violence, foster an environment for economic advancement, implement impactful community programs and raise the remaining \$6.5 [million] to build the Leadership & Economic Opportunity Center,” Brooks said in a statement.

Brooks was dubbed “The Rooftop Pastor” in an effort to raise awareness for his cause to eliminate violent crime in Chicago. In Nov. 2021, Brooks made a commitment to camp out on the roof of his building for 100 days, but he stayed there for 345 days. And in the ensuing months, and after enduring the harsh Chicago winter, Brooks and the Project had procured \$20 million from generous benefactors.

A total of \$5 million was from an individual donor, Ken Griffin, WTTW News reported.

Brooks left the rooftop in Oct. 2022, and this week, the McCormick Family Foundation came through with a big check to

support Brooks' worthy cause and lay the foundation to build Brooks' proposed Woodlawn Community Center.

In an interview with WTTW News, Brooks says he wanted to bring as much attention to the violence in his neighborhood because he felt like the neighborhood "was lacking opportunities and the things we need to transform it."

"I wanted to make sure that I raised enough money so that we would not have a dependence on government to build a facility that would be life-changing and that would be a catalyst for transformation of our neighborhood. So, those two reasons were the overarching reasons for me going on top of the roof. It was one of the most dramatic things that I could think of to accomplish those two things."

Brooks told WTTV News that he hopes to raise another \$6.5 million to complete the project, and they hope to begin building the Woodlawn Community Center in April. He says the center should take 18 months to build, and that they will have a "big celebration" afterward.

"We want to make sure that we're still able to pay everything and be debt-free, along with creating an endowment so that our programs continue in the midst of whatever happens," Brooks says.

Brooks says that he hopes the Woodlawn Community Center will be a "catalyst" for transformation and impact the community in a major way."

 "We already see the work that we're doing working. Violence in our immediate area is down 50%, while you can see other parts of the city still going up," he told WTTW News. "We believe that with the building of this center that we can build capacity and scale to help more people and when we do that, it's going to have a drastic impact on the violence and it's going to have a drastic impact on the poverty."

“People are going to be skilled, people are going to be trained and they’re going to be inspired. And when that happens, we believe that they take not just ownership, but they begin to build pride and self-worth. And you need those things along with opportunities for community to really experience transformation.”

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