

The Rainbow Project's 2021 Extra Mile Award

**Focused Interruption Coalition**

*Accepted by Anthony Cooper, Sr. and Aaron Hicks*

How very, very fortunate we all are to have the vital, exceptional and incredible team of Focused Interruption Coalition (FIC) right here in our community. Truly, they are a gifted community treasure...no, actually, a national treasure. As a community human service provider, we, at the Rainbow Project, advocate for children, youth and families to receive the right service at the right time. There is no better example of why this is so essential when Anthony Cooper, Sr., Aaron Hicks and their team are involved. We had no difficulty finding resounding support from the community for the staff of FIC receiving this award.

UW Health has praised their partnership with FIC, when FIC staff appear — immediately — in the Emergency Room or Trauma Center to work with patients and their family members. The work of FIC staff does not stop there. Their presence and impact extends beyond the hospital to the community, for the purpose of interrupting future retaliatory or ongoing violence and dismantling the root causes of violence. FIC staff help the community and its leaders understand causes of violence, contributing factors, and consequences of gun and community violence, as well as the solutions. Anthony, Aaron and their team help us understand that we have work to do, alone and together, to address racial injustice and disparities, racism and trauma that feeds violence and perpetuates the inequities.

From the Madison Police Department, another community collaborator, much appreciation was expressed in valuing their relationship with FIC staff over the years. They observe the countless times the benefits and positive impacts that FIC staff have had on the community, often at times of extreme stress and emotion following a violent incident. Whether a response in a neighborhood, or a hospital, the members of FIC demonstrate dedication, commitment and compassion to our community.

Words are difficult to come by in thanking Anthony Cooper, Sr., Aaron Hicks and their staff for their wisdom, leadership, teaching, paradigm-shifting perspectives, genuineness, authenticity and humanity at a time when we need them more than ever.

On behalf of the Rainbow Project Board of Directors and Staff, and especially on behalf of the young children and families we work with, we extend our enthusiastic appreciation.

