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Contact Shirley Shaw at 783-6312

Jacksonville hosts Conference of Mayors Against Illegal Guns



Ask the Mayor

by Mayor John Peyton

In December 2007, I announced the creation of *The Jacksonville Journey*, a comprehensive, citywide initiative to stem – and reverse – the tide of violent crime that continues to make headlines, devastate families and neighborhoods and threaten Jacksonville's future. The *Journey* convened action groups composed of community leaders, educators, clergy, subject matter and law enforcement experts, and others representing every area of the city. Since then, these groups have begun critical implementation and expansion strategies to improve law enforcement and to address crucial prevention, targeted intervention and rehabilitation issues.

I asked the members of *The Jacksonville Journey* to complete the initial phase of these efforts in 120 days, and we are approaching that deadline this

month. Great progress has been made over the last four months as the members of the committee have focused their energies on education, truancy, dropouts and literacy; law enforcement and deterrence; neighborhood safety and stability; positive youth development, and funding for these initiatives.

Among the initial efforts were identifying funding for re-opening the Juvenile Assessment Center, establishing scholarships for low-income students, developing a network of faith leaders who are united in fighting crime, and enhancing lighting in one of Jacksonville's high-crime multi-family housing neighborhoods. But there is still much more work to be done, including opening and fully staffing closed and understaffed community centers, making our schools safe havens, creating more stable neighborhoods, and expanding support for offender re-entry programs, and I am looking forward to receiving the full recommendations of the committee later this month.

One of the most important aspects of reducing violent crime is getting illegal guns off the street, and it is also a top priority of *The Jacksonville Journey*. That is why Jacksonville recently hosted the first-ever Florida Conference of Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a coalition of about 300 mayors created by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino. The focus of this bipartisan group of

mayors is to get illegal guns off the street and out of the hands of the criminals who are causing an unprecedented loss of life in cities across the nation, including Jacksonville.

The focus of the conference was to explore the economic impact of gun violence on communities, the role of state legislatures in addressing illegal guns, funding challenges facing Florida cities and the importance of community involvement. Before the end of the conference, 20 mayors signed on to be a part of the Mayors Against Illegal Guns, and I look forward to working with them to show that cities in Florida are no longer willing to let criminals with illegal guns visit death and destruction on our streets and in our neighborhoods.

It is now more critical than ever that we work together to get illegal guns off the street and save lives. As mayors across Florida took part in the conference, Mayor Lois Frankel of West Palm Beach received a call about a violent incident in her city in which someone walked into a Wendy's restaurant with a gun and started shooting. This tragic event – which made national news – served as a poignant reminder that crime is everywhere, and that we must act now and act together to stop violent crime. *The Jacksonville Journey: Take a Step* – working to create a roadmap for achieving peace and prosperity in every home, on every street, for every citizen.

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3rd Annual

RIDE FOR JUSTICE


Saturday, April 5, 2008

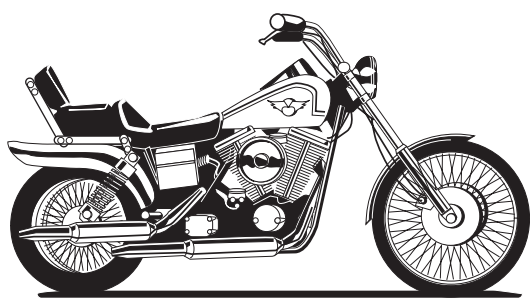
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