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JUSTICE COALITION'S VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

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Ted Hires, Jacksonville's Original Victim's Advocate



Ask the Mayor
 by Mayor John Peyton

In December, the Jacksonville community suffered the loss of a friend of mine, Ted Hires. As you probably know, in 1995 Ted founded the Justice Coalition and has served this community as a tireless advocate for victims' rights ever since. He had an unending love for this city and those victimized by crime.

Ted Hires was his own brand. He knew who he was, and the people around him always knew where he stood. We knew what he believed. And, we know what he did to make this community and our world better. Ted truly made a difference.

When I first met Ted, he had not yet started the journey that would take him from anonymity to something of a superman for crime victims and an icon for law enforcement. But, I knew right away that he was a special person. The glint in his eye, the set of his jaw, and his sincerity and easy way of making the truth so simple to understand, all made a lasting impression on me.

That was the beginning of years of deep respect, even awe, over how he lived his life for others. That's why it was such an easy decision—and honor—for me to become an early member of the Justice Coalition board when he first founded it.

When I first announced my candidacy for mayor, I was fortunate to have Ted as one of my earliest supporters. He brought to the table an energy, urgency and a commitment to making sure that we, as a community, did everything the right way.

Ted had been sounding the alarm about violence in our city long before anyone ever thought it was a major problem. And, his commitment to law enforcement was evident with the attendance of so many of the city's police officers and firefighters at his funeral. He was their friend.

I have lost a very close friend. But, more than that, Jacksonville has lost one of its best citizens. Although we will miss him greatly, we can honor him by carrying on his fight for Jacksonville's victims.

Ted Hires: Champion for Victims' Rights

By Stephen W. Holland

When three robbers held up Ted Hires' restaurant in Feb. 1995, little did they realize they would unleash a powerful ally for the victims of crime. The victim of a robbery, Hires founded the Justice Coalition in 1995 to help crime victims.

Hires, who tragically died Dec. 17, was modest and a man of faith. In an Oct. 27 interview he talked about the early beginnings of the Justice Coalition, what it was like to be a victim and why the organization was founded.

He was quick to credit the Coalition's small staff and cadre of volunteers for any success they achieved. He said among the types of people volunteering their help over the years were police, lawyers and social workers. He said even former Gov. Jeb Bush's office helped the Coalition.

"If it wasn't for volunteers, we would have never been able to become what we did because we don't accept government money [with strings attached that would affect or change

our mission]," Hires said. "We go strictly off of donations. The biggest contribution we've made is the fact that we took victims off the back burner and put them in the forefront of the system."

Hires said he was angry at the way the criminal justice system treated victims. "I was so outraged at the way a victim was treated, like you had no standing," he said. "As a matter-of-fact, I was told, 'Mr. Hires, this crime is not against you; it's against the state.' You have no say so whatsoever."

The catalyst for his becoming a victim's advocate was another robbery to one of his Sonny's restaurants. Hires said enough was enough. He recalled his restaurants had been robbed six times with no one being arrested for the crime. He said they got hit again Feb. 24, 1995; this time it was the restaurant's office.

"I really thought I understood what it was to go through a robbery," Hires said. "I found out I didn't have any idea. They put a pistol to your head and you're fixin' to die. My restaurant had been robbed several times over the years and my oldest son put into



Ted Malcolm Hires, Sr.
 Sept. 5, 1946 - Dec. 17, 2008

a freezer and pistol-whipped, and nobody had ever been caught."

Hires said his assistant manager unexpectedly came into the restaurant's office [during his last robbery] and spooked the robbers who panicked and fled the office. Hires was not finished with them. He said he got up off the floor to lock the front door to the office, and that is when he saw the robbers.

"I saw them just casually walking across the parking lot and my first thought was, 'they just can't do this and walk away again,' because it

CHAMPION... Continued on page 8



From the Sheriff's Desk
 Sheriff John Rutherford

As many of you know, I enjoy opportunities to address our citizens about issues of crime and public safety. It's a complex topic, with many inter-related issues and facts. So first, let me tell you that if you are a member of a civic or religious or fraternal organization that is interested in having a speaker from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office address your group, please call 630-2538.

My staff members and I are ready to answer your questions and inform you completely about the issues facing our

community. We don't deal in "sound bites" or short news clips; we deal in the whole picture.

To that end, anytime you want to see my comments on an issue in their entirety, view a report produced by this agency or watch a press conference, please go to our website at coj.net/sheriff. We're working very hard to make sure complete information is made available to the public in a timely and very comprehensive way, so you can be fully informed on these important matters.

Police-involved shootings, the issues that drive them

Murder declined in 2008

I've said this each time our crime numbers go down – the numbers are "better," but they are not "good" – this is not cause for celebration. Particularly with murder, because even though we dropped 9 percent (from 123 in 2007 to 112 in 2008), we still had 112 families suffer the agony of losing a loved one to violent crime. We have failed as a community twice in these cases: once because someone needlessly died a violent death and once because a killer grew up

among us. We're left to deal with the underlying societal issues that contribute to these shootings. In the weeks ahead I will be speaking much more in depth about this. But the *Jacksonville Journey* is the RIGHT step toward addressing these issues. It is funding the much-needed police officers who will address the here and now, and the *Journey* has begun funding the critical investments in our youth that must take place if we are to raise a generation of non-violent boys and girls in this city, as

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