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JUSTICE COALITION'S VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

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Human Trafficking Awareness Week Jan. 21-27



According to the U. S. State Department, **human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal industry** in the country, second in scope only to drug trafficking. Florida ranks second behind California in number of trafficked victims.

But does this really affect us here in Jacksonville?

Because of the complexity and clandestine manner of this crime, detection of victims and prosecution of traffickers is difficult. Recent Florida laws have mandated training for personnel in law enforcement and the judicial system.

To help the general public understand more about trafficking, Jacksonville's Human Trafficking Task Force – comprised of professionals from the federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, non-governmental and faith-based organizations, community groups and other interested individuals – is planning a media blitz the week of January 21-27.

Given Kachepa, a young trafficked victim from Zambia, will be a featured speaker at a press conference and workshop on Monday, films will be shown at local colleges throughout the week, training seminars will be held, and other events will provide information about trafficking and how to recognize victims.

We hope you'll look for upcoming announcements about scheduled events and plan to participate. We can all learn to *Look Beneath the Surface*, and by doing so may save someone's life.

For more information call Shirley Shaw at 783-6312.

"No one deserves to die like this" Five young sisters mourn for their mother

By Shirley Shaw

One of Velma Hill's first memories is sitting, chin in hands, near her sleeping mother, thinking how beautiful she was. Mary Hill was not only a physically beautiful woman, she glowed from within and, working as a cosmetologist, she felt blessed to recognize and bring out the beauty in others.

Today Velma, 25, and her four sisters – Temisha, 22, Tiffany, 21, Crystal, 18, and Angel, 11 – hold on to those precious images of their mother, because memories are all they have. On June 27, 2006, she was found, mercilessly murdered in her home at 9011 4th Ave. by an unknown assailant.

Velma and her two small children had recently moved to a Northside apartment complex to be closer to her mother and look out for her. Shortly afterward, Shenice Holmes was murdered in that vicinity, and Dreshawna Davis, the other young girl killed by drive-by shooters, lived near her mother's house. Velma remembers mourning over the terrible tragedies, her first awareness of how such a crime shatters a family.



Mary Hill, murdered June 27, 2006

As usual, Velma had spoken with her mom during the week prior to her death, then on Sunday she took her some groceries. She called later that day to make sure Mary had stored the items in the refrigerator, and that, according to information gained by investigators, was the last time anyone talked to Mary Hill.

Tuesday evening, June 27, her sister called, so hysterical and distraught Velma couldn't understand what she was saying. "Come over here right now, Mom is bleeding," were the chilling words she finally comprehended. By the time she arrived, police had already placed crime scene tape around the area and were investigating the homicide.

The detectives told her they would do everything they could to see that this case is solved, because "no matter what anyone could possibly do, no one deserves to die like this." Velma tearfully recalls, "I stayed with my mom until 4 a.m. when the Medical Examiner's van took her away."

The five sisters wonder every day why someone

Mary Hill... Continued on page 6

"The Rest of the Story"



From the Sheriff's Desk

Sheriff John Rutherford

Happy New Year! I hope you had the opportunity to be with friends and loved ones over the Holiday, and to relax and enjoy the season.

My wife, Pat, and I just celebrated the birth of our third grandchild (and third granddaughter) over Thanksgiving. We spent Christmas with our son Michael, daughter-in-law Francesca, and the beautiful new addition to our family, Maria Vittoria.

I like to take time at the start of every year to reflect on the year that has passed. I am grateful for my many blessings, like serving this community as your elected Sheriff. I also give thanks for the opportunities that I have to make a difference by leading the great men and women of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

And this will come as no surprise to those who know me...I make a list – a game plan for all the things that I want to do better and see improved in the year ahead. Naturally, raising awareness about all the facts regarding crime in Jacksonville is at the top of that list.

I have no issue with crime stories being publicized, as long as they are accurate and balanced. But there is good news, too. And that is getting missed. We have a challenge at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office in getting out the rest of the story.

The stories about CRIME GOING DOWN; the stories about SPECIAL POLICE UNITS GOING AFTER DRUGS, GUNS AND PROSTITUTION in the neighborhoods most affected by them; the GRAFITTI ABATEMENT PROGRAM; the DYSLEXIA SCREENINGS we are doing, so children can learn to read and not get frustrated and drop out of school and turn to a life of drugs and crime; OUR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCHES and

SHERIFF'S ADVISORY COUNCILS with more citizens joining us every month to HELP THE POLICE FIGHT CRIME AND CATCH CRIMINALS.

They tell me that when you put something in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, it's the same as shouting. Well, that's what we plan to do in 2007. We're going to find as many ways as possible to let the citizens know "THE REST OF THE STORY," as Paul Harvey would say.

You're going to hear more about our website. It has a wealth of information, and our folks are working hard to make it easy to navigate and understand, so it is a powerful tool for citizens trying to learn more about JSO and the fight against crime.

We're going to be "Pod casting" a regular message from me to you directly – unedited. We'll take questions and calls from the public, and then provide the answers to those questions in a weekly online radio-

The Rest of the Story... Continued on page 4