

From the desk of Michael J. Henderson

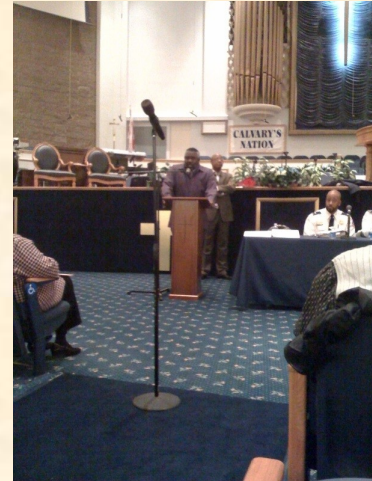
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Forum on Youth Safety

Greater Mt. Calvary Holiness Church

Tuesday March 31st, 2009

7 – 9 pm



Introductions – Commissioner Phillips was a kind of Master of Ceremonies; Robert Brannum spoke about a personal story involving a young person; we who live in the community, we don't know when someone may call and say "I need you". We are not immune; Marshall spoke about poverty and jobs, and violence. We are trying to have a plan of action; we will have more meetings like this

Chief Lanier – thanked Marshall for his encouraging emails; Commander Greene received the crime reduction award for the entire city for 2008; MPD has many programs that support youth; kids are most vulnerable in summer when out of school; do Summer of Safety each year (reduced violent crimes against juveniles by 10%); MPD is as we all know reactive, but there are many programs that are also proactive (the Chief named several); they do home visits for example; 40% of kids murdered in DC last year were killed by a caregiver; we all need to intervene when early, when we see lack of guidance or parental supervision, involvement; look out for the behaviors we all know lead to bad things – sometimes it is just needing a responsible adult giving them guidance; there are 2 very clear predictors – one is 50% of males in jail today suffered domestic violence by a caregiver; the second was already stated, that 40% of kids killed lost life to caregiver; also, the younger you are when you first have contact with the justice system, the more likely you are to carry out a homicide; we should be alarmed by these stats

Terri Odom, Director of Court Social Services; responsible for pretrial and post trial supervision/ disposition; their role is to screen and assess the level of risk to public safety of the referral; recommend if a case should go forward or not; make initial detention/release decision following arrest; decision about public safety included everyone including the youth who is engaged in the alleged offense, and a lot of factors must be taken into account; a lot of times victim knows offender; she acknowledged Chief Judge Satterfield as doing great work, a visionary; they also looked at girls, to fit their needs; they have used one judge one family as a model for success; do a lot of games, tutoring, staff cooks meals for kids, many other things; intensive supervision unit called U-Turn; completing drop in center that will have large game rooms, kitchen to prepare nutritious meals for kids; they cannot do it alone, they work with community, MPD, etc; in other words it takes a very comprehensive approach, but innovative and creative

Vinny Shiraldi, Director of Youth Rehabilitation Services; there were a lot of areas that needed a lot of improvement when he came on board, including basic things like mice, roaches where the kids were

being housed, etc; we want to have the kids buy in to the process and not just be OK but thrive; at Oak Hill kids are now performing plays, performed for the mayor, have a football team, debate team, helped out after hurricane Katrina; the better they do here the less likely they are to deal drugs steal cars, etc; there is a sea change – kids now want to be in same building as probation officer; one example of positive experiences is that the kids got to work with the K9 teams, see the dogs train, etc; so working with MPD in a positive way is growing a lot; but he is not satisfied just because it was so bad before; wants things still much better; the new facility is a definite improvement however

Ron Hildum – Deputy Attorney General representing the Attorney General today; Vinny made a good argument for speedy trial so kids understand exactly what is going on; many prosecutors object to that, but he doesn't; good thing is that the victims see that crime/case resolved one way or another in 30 days; this was a positive change in the juvenile justice system; also there are many kids under 12 who come through the system; on any given day can have from 4 to 20 juvenile arrests; attorneys are very compassionate and thorough; attorneys work hard to get to know kids as well

Chief Judge Satterfield – pleased to be in this house of worship; his mom and sister attend this church regularly; he is Chief Judge of the Superior Court of DC started in September last year; he agrees with a lot of what he has heard; Chief Lanier has your public safety interest in mind at all times; but we cannot lock up our way out of crime; DC in No. 1 per capita for number of people incarcerated; what we need to think about is programs available for kids before they come into the system; things have improved recently in summertime; you may know a kid who might be in that stolen car, what do you do?; we don't want kids in "the system" but they should be in rec centers, etc; truancy is a clear sign that child needs intervention; crack came in the 90's and destroyed a lot of families; there are still a lot of young folks who need help because of abuse, but also the stats show that progress is definitely occurring; the number of kids being removed from families has clearly gone down (you may not see the progress, but the numbers are clear)

Mr. Brannum said all kids make mistakes, but they can grow out of them and grow up to be productive adults

Questions were then posed to the panel by residents, ANC Commissioners, officers of civic associations; there were as many people "holding office" as there were residents at the meeting.

I asked if they could work with the **Edgewood Recreation Center**, and was there anything they could do to get it renovated beyond its basic "little hut" layout. The Chief Judge on the panel suggested I speak to my Councilmember; Alice Harper (CSOSA) said she would relay that information as well.



I left at that point, but there were many folks lining up to ask questions.

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