



The Thomas Connection

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Building Bridges, Finding Solutions

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The Newsletter of Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr.

THOMAS GAINS SUPPORT FOR DEFIBRILLATORS IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

In response to the February 10, 2008 death of a 10-year-old LaSalle Elementary School student from a heart attack, Councilmember Thomas secured a commitment from his colleagues at the April 15, 2008 legislative session to consider a bill requiring the installation of automated external defibrillators in public buildings.

Councilmember Thomas had introduced legislation on February 5, 2008 requiring the installation and maintenance of automated external defibrillators in Department of Parks and Recreation facilities. The bill also mandated an assessment of defibrillator placement in all public buildings. Thomas had planned to move a similar bill as emergency legislation at the April 15, 2008 legislative session, but withdrew it after his fellow council members agreed to comprehensive legislation regarding the installation of automated external defibrillators in public buildings.

"The cardiac arrest and subsequent death of one of our public school students highlights the urgency of installing defibrillators in our public buildings," stated Councilmember Thomas. "Locating defibrillators in schools, recreation facilities, and other public spaces—combined with training personnel to operate and maintain the devices—will raise the bar on the level of public health and safety we provide to District residents," said Thomas.



Councilmember Thomas discussed the need for automated external defibrillators in public buildings at an April 15, 2008 press conference.

THOMAS HOLDS MEETING ON REUSE OF WARD 5 SCHOOLS SLATED FOR CLOSURE

Councilmember Thomas held a community meeting on April 7, 2008 at Bertie Backus Middle School to capture the ideas of a wide range of residents regarding how the Ward 5 schools slated for closure can be reused. More than 150 residents attended the meeting. The ideas raised were presented to the DC Office of Planning on April 10, 2008.

Residents broke into groups according to the schools in their neighborhoods or the schools they were most interested in discussing. Each discussion group generated a number of creative ideas. Residents who live near Bertie Backus Middle School, for example, suggested that the school be transformed into a mini-municipal center. Such a use, residents noted, would take advantage of Bertie Backus' proximity to a Metro station and several major arterial roadways.

Residents suggested that Young Elementary School be used to provide recreation activities for the surrounding Langston Carver neighborhood, as well as health and social services, such as a fatherhood initiative, job readiness training, and life skills classes.

Taft Elementary School was considered a possible location for DC government agencies currently leasing space or as a location for vocational training and continuing education programs.



Ward 5 resident Carol Fleming participated in Councilmember Thomas' April 7, 2008 meeting on reuse alternatives for Ward schools slated for closure.

THOMAS ANNOUNCES 10-POINT PLAN TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF YOUTH

Councilmember Thomas outlined a 10-point action plan on April 30, 2008 to address the needs of teens and young adults in response to a recent spike in homicides across Ward 5. Councilmember Thomas developed his action plan after listening to comments and concerns raised at Yo Listen Up, a teen town hall meeting he hosted with WPGC and the DC Department of Parks and Recreation on April 28, 2008.

To provide a safe alternative to the streets for teens and young adults, Councilmember Thomas also kicked-off a late night basketball program on April 11, 2008 at the Langdon Park Recreation Center. Langdon Park, Turkey Thicket, and Trinidad Recreation Centers in Ward 5 will each offer late night basketball on Fridays through May 23, 2008.

Similarly, Councilmember Thomas is working with civic leaders to bring conflict resolution, employment, and prevention services to Ward 5 teens. Peaceaholics, for example, will coordinate mediation to resolve neighborhood conflicts.

COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS' 10-POINT PLAN FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

- 1) Actively link teens and young adults to local job opportunities.
- 2) Expand job training and apprenticeship opportunities for young adults; increase awareness of these programs through grassroots marketing initiatives.
- 3) Open adult education and career center with programs targeting young adults, such as Phelps.
- 4) Expand GED programs and aggressively market them to teens and young adults.
- 5) Increase number of mentoring programs and target them in neighborhoods experiencing spikes of violence.
- 6) Offer mental health screening and mediation services at libraries, recreation centers, and schools; connect teens and young adults with follow-up services.
- 7) Expand access to drug and alcohol counseling services.
- 8) Offer physical health screenings at schools, neighborhood clinics, and other public locations.
- 9) Establish, fund, and promote youth outreach centers through faith-based organizations and youth-oriented nonprofits.
- 10) Increase programming at recreation centers in "hot spots" and underserved neighborhoods.

THOMAS DEDICATES TREE TO HONOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME

Councilmember Thomas, joined by Glenn Ivey, Prince George's County State's Attorney, planted a tree to honor the victims of violent crime on April 8, 2008 in a pocket park located adjacent to the 1300 block of Rhode Island Avenue, NE. The park is near the site of a January 8, 2008 homicide of a 17 year-old boy. The tree planting acknowledged Crime Victims' Awareness Month and a cross-border initiative that Thomas and Ivey are sponsoring to heighten awareness of the needs of crime victims.

"Crime Victims Awareness Month is an opportunity to bring attention to victims who are often invisible to everyone except those who have been victimized," said State's Attorney Ivey. "I am pleased to partner with Councilmember Thomas to help increase support to victims of crime and their families. A jail sentence does not always bring closure to the devastation of being attacked, of losing a loved one, of being a victim of a home invasion," said Ivey.

"As a community, we need to acknowledge the victims of crime and their families, and improve our assistance to them," said Councilmember Thomas. "We also need to acknowledge that crime does not stop at the jurisdictional border between DC and Prince George's County. The cross-border initiative Mr. Ivey and I are undertaking is an important step in that direction. Planting the tree to commemorate District and Prince George's County crime victims is a symbol of that partnership," said Thomas.



On April 8, 2008, Councilmember Thomas planted a tree in the pocket park in the 1300 block of Rhode Island Ave, NE to honor victims of violent crime.

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