



**Stephanie Rawlings-Blake**

*Mayor,*

Baltimore City

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***Better Schools. Safer Streets. Stronger Neighborhoods.***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Mayor Rawlings-Blake Kicks Off Youth Violence Prevention Week***

*Announces \$1 million grant for Safe Streets.*

**BALTIMORE, MD. (March 22, 2010)** – Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake called on Baltimoreans to promote peace, respect and tolerance at a gathering of community, religious and city agency leaders to kick off Youth Violence Prevention Week and announce a \$1 million grant for Safe Streets. The celebration – held March 22-28, 2010 – is a national public education initiative featuring activities that demonstrate the positive role young people can have in making their school and community safer.

While for the past two years, homicides were reduced to the lowest level since the 1980s, youth violence is a serious issue facing Baltimore City. It will remain at the forefront of discussions about prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts because violence carries considerable costs.

“Reducing youth violence requires a collaborative approach between law enforcement, juvenile justice partners and core service agencies,” said Mayor Rawlings-Blake. “We must work together to make positive opportunities in all communities available to all young people.”

Much progress has been made to reduce juvenile violence in Baltimore. In 2009, Baltimore had a 45% reduction in juvenile homicides and a 39% reduction in juvenile shootings. So far this year, there has been one infant killed in a child abuse incident and 6 juvenile shootings compared to last year when at this time there had been 7 juvenile homicides and 13 juvenile shootings. This progress is due to stronger collaboration between agencies, focusing on juveniles at high risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of violence and better information sharing.

“We have made progress, but we still have a lot of work to do. We must continue to increase communication between our child-serving agencies and law enforcement to identify troubled youth and get them the help they need before they become victims or perpetrators of violence,” the Mayor added.

Mayor Rawlings-Blake concluded her opening remarks by announcing Governor Martin O'Malley's Office on Crime Control & Prevention has awarded \$1 million to the Health Department's Safe Streets initiative. Safe Streets is a public health campaign to reduce shootings and homicides within targeted communities in Baltimore City that have historically experienced high rates of violence. The grant will keep the initiative going and allow expansion to an additional site.

"This program, which brings together city agencies, faith leaders, community groups and outreach workers, has proven to be an effective strategy for reducing and preventing shootings and homicides," said Interim Health Commissioner Olivia D. Farrow.

The primary goal of Youth Violence Prevention Week is to raise awareness and to educate the public on effective ways to prevent or reduce youth violence. This year's theme is "Peace – Respect – Tolerance." More than 90 events for youths and adults have been scheduled by the departments of Health and Recreation and Parks, as well as community organizations, including several peace rallies, a basketball tournament, and dance and poster contests. To see a full list of activities, visit <http://www.baltimorehealth.org/yvpweek.html>.

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