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CRIME PREVENTION

Positive power

It wasn't your usual community meeting, the sort where a few true believers show up, practically outnumbered by the news media.

The meeting held by ICARE on Monday evening filled San Jose Catholic Church to overflowing. It was standing room only for a rally to build support for crime prevention, reading instruction and enforcement of illegal immigration laws.

It also was an unusual meeting in that it was tightly scheduled. It started on time, and even ended a bit early. Any speakers who went long were liable to receive a hug from a nun, which was more effective than a gong.

ICARE represents an interfaith group of 24 churches, spanning the city, races and faiths. But one thing they have in common is their mantra: "When we work together, great things happen."

The crowd chanted that phrase repeatedly during the rally, including a Spanish version.

The real impetus for the meeting, though, was Jacksonville's realization that its crime issues are deep.

Sheriff John Rutherford was there and repeated his three keys to crime-fighting success: (1) police presence, (2) massive community response and (3) follow up with aggressive prosecution.

One of the follow-up programs that ICARE supports is the Sheriff Office's Inmate Substance Abuse and Treatment program, referred to as Matrix House.

Through a court order, inmates are sent to this drug treatment program and given a chance to turn around their lives. The problem, like many crime prevention programs in Jacksonville, is a lack of funding to

fill the needs.

ICARE supports an expansion from 135 beds to 300 beds.

Without successful programs like Matrix House, people with substance abuse will continue to move through the revolving door of the jail.

"Stop this crazy incarceration," Rutherford said.

The sheriff, like many in the crowd, was impressed by the turnout. It is clear

that community support is building for crime prevention.

Unfortunately, Jacksonville doesn't have a clear prevention strategy. City Council only recently created a committee to cover the crime issue. Which programs work? Where are the dedicated funds?

Prevention programs should not be begging for scraps of the city's nearly \$1 billion budget.

As Rutherford said, "You can't arrest your way out of a murder problem."

Nor can we ignore it.

FAST FACTS

Drugs and crime

- 40 percent of all murders in Jacksonville are documented as drug-related.
- The Sheriff's Office believes that drugs are involved in another 30 percent.
- Matrix House cites an 83 percent success rate in reducing repeat offenders.
- ICARE proposes expanding Matrix House from 135 beds to 300 beds.

Source: ICARE

ICARE Fact Sheet

What is ICARE?

- ❖ InterFaith Coalition for Action Reconciliation and Empowerment
- ❖ Non-profit 501(C)(3)
- ❖ 21 congregations (see list below)
- ❖ Powerfully addresses neighborhood and city-wide justice issues
- ❖ Takes direct action on issues (that is, face-to-face with community decision makers)

What has ICARE Accomplished?

1. Collaborated with local businesses, nonprofit organizations securing a \$2.5 million commitment from the city, to see passage of the two-year JaxCare Pilot Program, providing health care for potentially 1,600 uninsured workers and their families.
2. ICARE worked with 4 other faith-based organization to obtain a \$ 7.2 million state appropriation (\$ 1.2 million for Duval County) supporting researched-proven reading curriculum in low performing, core-city schools.
3. ICARE worked with the School Board to implement the foundations/CHAMPS Behavior Strategy throughout the district. As of April 7, 2005 the school system has seen a reduction, from 2004, of the number of students receiving Out of School Suspension by nearly 3,000 children and reduced the number of behavioral incidents by over 11,400 or almost 26%. In School Suspensions were reduced from last year by nearly 9,000 incidents or by about 22%, and the number of students receiving In School Suspension dropped by 2,537 incidents.
4. In an effort to connect high unemployment neighborhoods with areas of local job growth ICARE helped secure two \$1million "Reverse Commute" grants to assist the Jacksonville Transportation Authority to add a bus hub at the Gateway Mall.
5. Worked with JSO to implement a "Hot-Spot Card" program, distributing 15,000 postage paid cards throughout Jacksonville to anonymously report criminal activities.
6. Worked with the Property Safety Division and the Mayors office to identify and address major safety concerns in our neighborhoods including abandoned houses, drainage problem, and lack of adequate street lighting.
7. Pressed City Council to pass legislation allowing 500 city employees eligibility for fair access to city health benefits totaling 2 million dollars.
8. Currently working with JSO to increase capacity of the Matrix House Rehabilitation program to lower rates of recidivism.

ICARE Congregations

Arlington Congregational UCC	Mt. Zion United Methodist	St. George Episcopal
Asbury United Methodist	New Bethel AME Church	St. Johns Episcopal Cathedral
Central Metropolitan CME	Peace Presbyterian Church	St. Matthew's Catholic Parish
Crucifixion Catholic Church	Resurrection Catholic Church	St. Paul AME
Greater Grant Memorial AME	Riverside Baptist Church	St. Philip's Episcopal Church
Historic Mt. Zion AME	Riverside Presbyterian	St. Pius V Catholic Church
Most Holy Redeemer Catholic	San Jose Catholic Church	Unitarian Universalist Church of Jax