

# 'Summit' scheduled to tackle youth crime surge

By Chris Sykes  
Staff Writer

City Councilman Elroy Corbitt said that there are good reasons why he has organized the "Summit on Violence."

"In May 2009, my nephew, Christopher Knox, was shot once in the head and once in the torso out on South Orange Avenue in Newark," said Corbitt. "It's not about politics; its personal. Chris was my brother Eugene's son. He was a kid who came from a broken family and got himself involved in gang activity."

The summit is scheduled May 14 at 10:30 a.m. in St. Matthew AME Church on Oakwood Avenue.

Even though Corbitt's description of his slain nephew seemed to put him in the "usual suspects" category when it came to the unfortunately predictable outcome of too many other African American and minority youths in cities, he said it also comes with an

ironic twist that makes his death even more senseless and tragic.

The irony, said Corbitt, is that the refrains of "he was just starting to get his life together," and "he had turned his life around," have also become cliches and epitaphs uttered all too often.

"At the time that he was killed, he had a fiancée, a 2-year-old son and a newborn baby girl, and he was turning his life around," Corbitt said. "His death was a tragedy and it hurts and we're still trying to recover from that. No one was ever arrested or prosecuted for Chris' murder. When it happened to my nephew it was a very difficult time for my family."

Corbitt said his nephew's death had such an impact on him that he vowed to do everything he could to ensure that no other family had to suffer the same pain. It also served as the impetus for next week's program.

"There has to be something that we can

do as a community to slow this violence down," said Corbitt. "We have to start doing something. I don't ever want another family to go through the experience of losing a loved one to gun violence."

Corbitt said he has invited local elected officials and community activists to participate in an event organized in response to the "a rash of gun violence in Orange and the surrounding cities over the last several months." He said residents can contact him at 862-252-3092 for additional information.

"The Summit on Violence brings together elected officials, police, prosecutors, residents, and young people to discuss the violence and develop concrete solutions," Corbitt said. "We are in the midst of a serious recession, and when jobs are lost, crime gets worse. Across America, cities are experiencing a surge in crime and gang activity. I am organizing this Summit on Violence because reducing crime is a community-wide effort."

"Fighting crime will take more than law enforcement alone," Corbitt said. "We need jobs for our young people, after-school programs, parent education, school involvement and more. I am hopeful that by bringing together leaders, law enforcement officials and residents, we can develop better strategies to reduce violence."

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. said the need to do something about the recent crimes is what motivated him to join forces with Corbitt.

"Community policing is the heart of our work in Orange to fight crime," Hawkins said. "Community policing means enlisting citizens in law enforcement in many different ways, including encouraging citizens to report what they know about criminal activity, organizing block watch programs, cooperation between the police and the Board of Education, and finding productive activities for our youth."

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