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Outlook

C-SECTIONS INCREASING

Florida has third-highest rate in nation

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STOPPING THE VIOLENCE

TODAY'S OUTLOOK

In light of some horrific incidents of youth-on-youth violence in recent years, can kids, and their parents, do more than cross their fingers and hope they'll be safe at schools, parks, or even their own neighborhoods? Can anything be done to stem further attacks?

You bet. And the two essays in today's Outlook tell us exactly what we can do to help.

The first is by Maureen Brewer, the grandmother of Michael Brewer, who was badly burned last year in an attack by other middle-school students. Maureen Brewer makes a compelling case that parents can start by being role models themselves. And in the companion piece, Laurie Sallarulo from 2-1-1 Broward explains how social service agencies and local government can work together to help "choose peace." Give both a read and let us know what you think at letters@sun-sentinel.com.

On Page 5, Stephen Goldstein writes about the fallacy of the sales tax holidays and Noelle Nikpour asks whether celebrities are getting special treatment.

Antonio Fins
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR



NURI DUCASSI/SUN SENTINEL ILLUSTRATION

ADULTS: BE LEADERS, ROLE MODELS

By Maureen Brewer

I am making lemonade out of lemons. It's my intent to open up all of us. The leaders. All the grown ups. All the adults. Everybody needs to do this individually. You can't have teams until you get individuals. You can't have groups until you've got committed people. Nothing works unless we're all on the same page and we all want the same thing.

Today there are all kinds of causes: let's save the seals, let's save the whales, let's save the lions, let's save the ocelots.

Let's save everything.

Let's save us. Let's start with us. This is where it begins and this is really where it ends: with us.

We're the leaders. I'm a leader in my home. You better believe I'm a leader in my home. So when I talk, they listen. And when I act, they're paying attention.

Please turn to **YOUTHS, 3F**

"The overall theme of the summit was to focus on positive actions that can be taken to move the community toward creating a violence-free South Florida."

Laurie Sallarulo

SUMMIT SPARKED PEACE CAMPAIGN

By Laurie Sallarulo

"What can we do to bring the community together to foster peace and overcome violence in our community?"

This was the question that initiated last May's Broward County Youth Anti-Violence Summit. The one-day event was organized by the Broward County Children's Services Board, Children's Services Council of Broward County, Broward County School Board, Project Bridge and the Florida Panthers Foundation.

It was a time for elected officials, youth, parents, educators, law enforcement, youth service organizations, faith-based organizations, the business community, funding organizations, the media, judicial officials and other stakeholders to come together and take a unified approach to ending youth violence.

Since then, the summit has worked to develop strategies and incorporate them

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STOPPING THE VIOLENCE



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And when I do something, they pass judgment on me, the little people. They know when I am doing something that is right or wrong, and they watch me to see how many times I do things right. And this doesn't just go for parents or grandparents or teachers.

It's all of us. They watch every adult in a room. Especially when they're three to five.

I want to lead and let them follow us.

Step one is to be a better leader. Walk the walk with integrity, respect for yourself and for others. The kids will follow us.

Step two is to be a better teacher. Show by example. Teach more about life than just academics. Teach social graces. Language. Let's teach some respectable language.

Step three is to remember even if you are not a parent, you're an adult. Act like one. They're watching you.

I want to put more physical activity in the schools; I can't see where that would cost a whole lot more money. It's about putting the kids on a playground and letting them run off some of that steam.

I'd also like the opportunity for morning exercise. Do you all know about things like endorphins and the frustrations that are worked off when you exercise? Most of you that are in the business world, I'll bet you if you're successful you exercise every morning. The kids should be doing that as well, to get rid of everything so that their days start fresh



Reenie Brewer

"Years ago someone came up with the saying, 'Let's save the children.' I want to know today: when are we gonna start?"

I also want us to talk about the differences. I want us to teach that we're all different: colors, sizes, beliefs, economics — all of that. Teenagers, for years, have been struggling to be individuals. That's how we got bikinis and bell-bottoms. That's how we got Afros and Mohawks. That's even how we got purple hair and black lipstick; because they want to be individuals. It's okay for them to be individuals, but you're supposed to be guiding them. You're supposed to be saying, "It's okay to be an individual, but be an individual with good thoughts, caring and personal strength."

Years ago someone came up with the saying, "Let's save the children." I want to know today: when are we gonna start?

Is today the day?
I'm ready.

Maureen Brewer is the grandmother of Michael Brewer; the Deerfield Beach student badly burned by other youths in an attack last year.

and clean, without all the junk up there that they're dealing with.

They also — the teenagers in my life — have suggested that we have venting buddies. Not peer counselors. There is some kind of connotation with a "peer counselor": it means that they are smarter than you, they have more money than you do, they wear nicer clothes than you do.

The just want a venting buddy. They want somebody that they can go in to say, "Mom wouldn't let me wear the skirt that we were all going to wear today because it is too short." No counsel, just a, "Yeah, that sucks." Then it can be done, it's finished.

They've gotten rid of it. Now their day is better, just like for us. When we complain to our spouse, our best friend, the day gets better. They need that as well.

I also would like you to reevaluate how you get your child's attention. If you are saying something to your child when his back is turned walking out the door, trust me, he didn't hear a word that you said. You must get eye contact. You must look at them, they must look at you, and you talk. You might even make a difference by doing that. They might even see in your eyes how much you care about how they are doing.



Undated family photo of Michael Brewer prior to the October 2009 attack.



Michael Brewer in the UM/JM Burn Center



A recovering Michael Brewer in a March 21, 2010, photo taken at a family picnic.

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into real-life action. One area we are currently working on is the establishment of youth advisory councils. A morning training session is planned for later this month. And through 2-1-1 Broward, we are rolling out the "Choose Peace/Stop Violence" campaign.

The overall theme of the summit was to focus on positive actions that can be taken to move the community toward creating a violence-free South Florida. The goals were to share information about local programming and activities and identify strategies and define common action steps that promote community-wide engagement.

Before day's end, workgroups organized by geographic areas identified the top three action steps they agreed to execute. For example, one common action step identified by each group was to create "youth advisory councils" to engage youths in strategic conversations, provide youth leadership opportunities and empower youth to be role models.

To provide support to municipalities and agencies interested in forming a youth advisory council, the Children's Services Council has organized a free half-day session on Tuesday, Aug. 31. This training will address objectives that include the importance of youth advisory councils, the role of an adult facilitator, identifying youth to participate and establishing youth advisory council goals.

"Today's youth inherited violence, not invented it. Youth advisory councils will give youth a chance to participate in the conversation and be part of the solution," said Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer, president and CEO of Children's Services Council of Broward County.

The summit was successful in laying the foundation upon which a community-wide approach to reducing the rate of youth violence is being built. The approach is based on three key strategies that are being put into practice simultaneously. The strategies are awareness, engagement and empowerment, each of which have specific action steps for implementation. Some of these steps include: to provide the community with opportunities to participate in events and activities that promote choosing peace, to align and integrate the efforts of municipalities, providers, schools, faith-based organizations, parent groups and businesses, implement specific targeted community-wide and local initiatives, track and measure the results of



Laurie Sallarulo

campaign is intended to engage and empower youth, families, leaders, and the entire community by getting them to look at violence prevention in a new and different way. It asks them to take responsibility and choose peace rather than violence every day — in every choice they make and in every action they take.

Laurie Sallarulo is vice president for development and marketing for 2-1-1 Broward and chair, public/media relations for the Anti-Youth Violence Summit Committee. To learn more about the organization's anti-youth violence program, go to www.teenspace211.org.

initiatives. These strategies are supported by Broward Children's Strategic Planning Committee, which is comprised of community stakeholders committed to improving child well-being and child outcomes.

"Violence affects everyone in our community: youth, families, educators, businesses, and others. Stopping the violence begins with the awareness that one person can and does make a difference. Your individual choices and actions or your organization's or municipality's commitment, when multiplied by those of others throughout Broward County, can help to bring peace to our community," said Broward County Commissioner Lois Wexler. She asked participants what each member of this community can do to make peace a priority. The answer, she said, is to "start by embracing the Choose Peace/Stop Violence campaign." The campaign logo was then unveiled to summit participants and is now being announced to the community.

Choose Peace/Stop Violence campaign is a grass roots movement created to send one message to every individual, every household, every school, every organization, every neighborhood and every city. The

If you go...

Who: The Children's Services Council of Broward County is holding a free workshop on forming youth advisory councils.

What: The workshop will offer assistance to municipalities and agencies that want to participate.

When: Tuesday, Aug. 31, 9 a.m.

Where: The CSC offices at 6600 West Commercial Blvd. in Lauderhill.

How To Join the Choose Peace/Stop Violence campaign



1. Sign a pledge to "Choose Peace/Stop Violence" campaign and make the commitment to do your part. Find pledge at www.teenspace211.org
2. Stand-up for "peace" on Sept. 21, International Day of Peace, by planning an activity in your organization or city.
3. Take time for regular family dinners which encourage family bonding. Start with Sept. 27 — Family Day — "A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children."
4. Offer intern or shadowing opportunities to high school

5. Submit positive youth stories to local media outlets so they can begin to highlight model behavior.

Where Can You Turn for Help or More Information?

If you suspect that someone's safety is being threatened, there is a place to turn 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can call 2-1-1 and speak to a counselor confidentially who will help the caller assess the situation and determine the best course of action. Or you can visit the new teen website www.teenspace211.org.

The site is designed for teens but can be used by parents and providers to access information about youth violence and how to get involved. Information from the summit, ways to get involved, more information on upcoming events and the "Choose Peace" pledge are available on the teenspace211.org website.

Laurie Sallarulo

Groups launch community-wide appeal for peace



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