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CRIMEWATCH | BY CARMEN CALDWELL

We can help our students stop the violence

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BY CARMEN CALDWELL
Special to The Miami Herald

All children have the right to be educated in a safe environment. Research shows that they cannot learn in an atmosphere of fear. Administrators, law enforcement officers, teachers and elected officials working together can create safer school environments so learning can occur.

Youth Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County and the Miami-Dade Schools police department, in conjunction with the National Stop The Violence Week, is coordinating a YCW "Stop The Violence" Blue Ribbon Week campaign for all grade levels April 21-25. The blue ribbon symbolizes a commitment to living a violence-free lifestyle by doing our part to stop the violence in our community.

There is no doubt that Miami-Dade has had its share of violence this past year and there are many who are spearheading efforts to help put a stop to it, not only here but across the nation. We started with Columbine and across the country there have been dozens of violent acts that have affected thousands of students. Having our students, the future of this county, take an active role is important, for they are the eyes and ears in their schools. The relationship that they foster with the school police is commendable and we recognize the commitment of those who are taking a leading role in their schools, along with their advisors.

Parents can be part of the events by contacting their children's schools and offering assistance. What a great way to get involved. Let's all get on board this week so that the deaths of many students due to acts of violence are not forgotten and recognize that only we, as a whole community working together, can "stop the violence."

We at Citizens' Crime Watch want to thank our School Board members, the school superintendent, schools police chief and officers, YCW school advisors and all the principals for their support in helping to give our students another tool to help promote safety.

I would also like to recognize our Education Director Joel Mesa and our Youth Crime Watch coordinators for their efforts in helping to organize some of the events, limited though we were due to funding issues. (At the time of this writing, our funding had not yet been resolved).

On another note, since last week's column regarding our funding, some donations were sent to us. No, I did not hear from Oprah Winfrey or Donald Trump, but we did receive a donation from the Point East Condo Association, our long-time crime watcher Vito Trippi and from Sissy Shute of North Bay Village. We thank them very much.

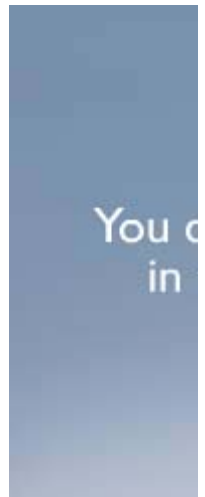
I would also like to congratulate a group of new homeowners from Habitat for Humanity in the Northside District for implementing a Neighborhood Watch program. What a great way to be pro-active instead of reactive!

Until next week, be safe and be involved.

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Carmen Caldwell is executive director of the Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade. Send feedback and news for this column to her at cmcwatch@aol.com, or call her, 305-470-1670.

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