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Dateline : Thursday, October 16, 2008

Guns Go Gone!

DA, NYPD & churches hold 3rd successful buyback

There are no gun shows in New York City, and this weekend, there was an event that is the exact antithesis.

The Brooklyn District Attorney's office and the New York Police Department held their third gun buyback of the year, this time in partnership with four North Brooklyn churches, and collected more than 400 guns.

The buybacks, which offer a \$200 bank card in exchange for a functional gun, have been an enormous success for the D.A. and NYPD, which have collected 1,108 illegal guns in the first two buybacks, and 427 at the latest. The total number of guns collected from the buyback program this year is 1,538. Guns were brought wrapped in brown paper bags, and no questions were asked of those that turned them in.

"I'm very happy to bring the Gun Buyback Program to our local communities of Williamsburg and Bushwick," said Assemblyman Vito Lopez. "With the recent surge in violent crime in the area, especially with the youth, it is important to utilize many methods to make our neighborhood safer. This buy back is an important component of that effort."

The first such initiative, which was held in July in partnership with six churches, was an expansion of a successful program that was started by the D.A. and the New York Police Department. The first buybacks were held at police precincts, and while they made headway, the D.A. and the NYPD began working with local churches to get a stronger foothold in the communities that they were trying to protect.

The first church-based buyback was such an enormous success that the DA quickly teamed up with a new group of 10 pastors representing a variety of churches in Southern and Northern Brooklyn in the hopes of replicating the achievements made by the first event in two fall buybacks.

"I want to thank the local churches for opening their doors and helping to facilitate this great program," said State Senator Martin Dilan. "Any opportunity to get guns off the streets is exciting and will go a long way to keep our streets and our children safer."

With more than 1,500 guns taken off New York City streets by way of the gun buyback program, the District Attorney's office is expected to hold more gun buybacks in the future. (Jeffrey Harmatz)

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