

'Mothers in Charge' comes to Broward County

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Teah Wimberly of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., was just 15 when she was charged with first-degree murder and discharging a weapon at Dillard High School in November of 2008. She said she accidentally shot her friend, Amanda Collette who was also 15 because she really liked her, but the feelings went unreturned.

Just last week at Coral Gables Senior High, Andy Rodriguez, pulled a blade on Juan Carlos and stabbed him three times — once in the chest, once in the collarbone and once near the stomach— all over the affection of a girl.

Based on FBI data, Fort Lauderdale and Miami rate a seven on a scale of one to 10 in crime and violence (a higher number indicating a higher crime rate). As violence continues to rise among youth in South Florida, local mothers say they have had enough.

Rose-Marie Smith of Broward County is leading the way in tackling violence in her own backyard by bringing a national organization, 'Mothers in Charge,' to the streets of Fort Lauderdale.

'Mothers in Charge' was founded by Dorothy Johnson-Speight in Philadelphia, Pa., as a community advocacy and support organization for families affected by violence. Dorothy Johnson-Speight's 24-year-old son was murdered over a parking space in December 2001.

Ever since, the mission of Mothers in Charge has stood firm for violence prevention, education and intervention for youth, young adults, families and community organizations.

Although Smith has never personally lost a child to violence, she says youth violence in South Florida happens all too often and felt the time was right to bring the organization to the sunshine state.

"We treat this as a healing opportunity to help the victims and inform the community."

Smith held her inaugural meeting at the African American Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC) in Broward County, Fla. on Saturday, Sept. 19, 2009. Her aim is to build a strong team of members to take a stand against teen and youth violence in Broward County before eventually expanding to Miami.

One of the newest members includes Ms. Queen Brown. Brown is a community advocate and radio talk show host on WINZ 940 AM. After her experience of losing her innocent son to gun violence, she advocates on behalf of victims and their families.

Brown expressed to Smith that this organization is another way to continue her plight.

"This is not just for victims; this is for people who want to make a change."

For more information on the Broward County Chapter of 'Mothers in Charge,' contact Ms. Rose- Marie Smith at (954) 691-7924 or visit www.mothersincharge.org.