

**Joint Legislative Public Hearing on
2012-2013 Executive Budget Proposal:
Public Protection**

January 30, 2012

Testimony Presented by:

Honorable Barbara Smith, Member, Albany Common Council

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany

Chief Stephen Krokoff, Albany Police Department

Honorable Dominick Calsolaro, Member, Albany Common Council

Reverend Dr. Edward B. Smart, "First" Israel AME Church, Albany, NY

Harris Oberlander, CEO, Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region

Jamel Muhammad, Director, Albany SNUG

Vivian Kornegay, Mother of a Shooting Victim and Albany SNUG Volunteer

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Albany SNUG



**‘SNUG is about CHANGING the THINKING:
CHANGING how people RESPOND to conflicts without Violence’**

Stop the Violence!

Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell, and distinguished members of the Legislature: We appreciate this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of Albany SNUG. I am joined today by Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany; Chief Steven Krokoff, Albany Police Department; Honorable Dominick Calsolaro, Member, Albany Common Council; Reverend Dr. Edward B. Smart, “First” Israel AME Church (Albany, NY); Harris Oberlander, CEO, Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region; Jamel Muhammad, Director, Albany SNUG; and Vivian Kornegay, the mother of a shooting victim and Albany SNUG volunteer.

Since October 2010 SNUG – guns spelled backwards – has successfully engaged in critical life saving work to curtail gun violence in the City of Albany.

Utilizing a public health approach based upon the nationally acclaimed Chicago CeaseFire model, Albany SNUG has had significant impact upon improving public safety during its year of operation.

The five core components of SNUG are:

- Street Level Outreach
- Public Education
- Community Mobilization
- Faith Leader Involvement
- Law Enforcement

An additional unique component of Albany SNUG is hospital-based intervention at Albany Medical Center. SNUG staff members have interacted with shooting victims and their families in the emergency room; intervened among family and associates to reduce retaliation; and offered additional resources to those who expressed an interest. Albany Medical Center Emergency Room staff value SNUG's intervention in the aftermath of violent incidents as key members of their professional team.

SNUG has made a difference where it counts – on the streets of Albany. During the twelve months of SNUG's operation there was only one instance of a retaliatory shooting. Statistics from the Albany Police Department indicate that during the first three quarters of 2011 shootings incidents diminished compared to the same nine-month period in 2010. After SNUG closed in October, 2011 shooting incidents markedly increased. At year's end there were

more shootings in 2011 than in 2010, with a preponderance of them occurring in the last three months of the year when SNUG was not in operation.

Fortunately, in November it was announced that the State would make available a grant of \$150,000 from the FY 2011-2012 State Budget to the Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region for Albany SNUG. The initial state appropriation for the first year of funding of Albany SNUG was \$500,000 which included an evaluation component. Understanding the critical value of SNUG to safety and quality of life in the City of Albany, the Albany Common Council appropriated \$150,000 in the 2012 City's budget to ensure SNUG's continued operation in 2012. It is expected that the program will once again begin operation in February 2012.

SNUG is extremely cost effective. SNUG saves lives. We urge the Legislature to include \$500,000 for Albany SNUG in the FY 2012-2013 New York State Budget to fully fund, sustain and expand this effective program.

Albany SNUG Impact

I. About Albany SNUG:

- SNUG (guns spelled backwards) is modeled on the highly effective Chicago CeaseFire program – which provides a coherent series of interventions to address violence, especially among youth and in economically disenfranchised neighborhoods.
- President Obama has included Chicago CeaseFire in his urban policy agenda and has identified it as a model for ending the “dangerous cycle of youth violence.”
- SNUG/CeaseFire has five core components:
 - Street Level Outreach
 - Public Education
 - Community Mobilization
 - Faith Leader Involvement
 - Law Enforcement
- Law enforcement has a crucial role to play in curtailing violence, but its primary function is to intervene at the point when the incident is already in progress. Often the damage is already done.
- We need to prevent the violence before it occurs.
- A recent report by the US Department of Justice (*Evaluation of CeaseFire-Chicago*, Professor Wes Skogan, Lead Investigator, 2008) validates the CeaseFire model as an evidence-based intervention that reduces shooting and killings and makes communities safer. The report found the program “effective” with “significant” and “moderate to large impact” and with effects that are “immediate.”

II. Why funding is an investment:

- The medical and societal costs of violence are much greater than its prevention or interruption.
- Total annual costs of non-fatal hospital admitted injuries by firearms in New York State (Year 2005 dollars, based on Year 2003 incidence) were over \$424 million (Robert C. Byrd Health Services Center, West Virginia University).
- Total annual costs of non-fatal hospital admitted injuries for all assaults in New York State (Year 2005 dollars, based on Year 2003 incidence) were a staggering \$3.045 billion (Robert C. Byrd Health Services Center, West Virginia University).
- According to NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli (*Cost-Effective Investments in Children At Risk*, Feb. 2011), the enormous costs of incarceration in the juvenile justice system is estimated at \$210,000 per person or a total of \$350 million annually, and even greater costs to victims and communities.¹
- There are additional associated costs for the judicial process and mental health costs for all of the parties affected.
- The best predictor of future violence is past violence. In other words, each shooting or stabbing incident that is not interrupted often results in retaliation, which then can produce a chain reaction of violence.
- Interrupting one single violent incident, therefore, prevents future incidents and not only saves state expenditures, but most significantly saves lives.
- The multiplier effect of prevention translates into a significant return on taxpayer investment in violence interruption.

1. New York State Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice. *Charting a New Course: A Blueprint for Transforming Juvenile Justice in New York State*. December 2009. www.vera.org/download?file=2944/Charting-a-new-course-A-blueprint-for-transforming-juvenile-justice-in-New-York-State.pdf. New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). “Selected Characteristics of Youth Entering and Leaving OCFS Custody Jan. 08-Mar. 08 or In Custody on March 31, 2008 and the Same Periods Last Year.” At age 16, an incarcerated youth may be transferred to an adult prison in New York State at the discretion of a judge.



Albany SNUG

Violence in inner-city communities is generally considered to be part of the urban landscape — unfortunate, but inevitable — a consequence of poverty, joblessness, and disrupted families. Law enforcement, schools, and social service agencies work to address the problem with varying degrees of success, but the tragedy of shootings, stabbings and homicides continues. Gun violence is the leading cause of death nationwide for African-American males between the ages of 16 and 25.

Since 2009, the School of Social Welfare (SSW) has partnered with Albany community members to implement an innovative public health approach to gun violence. In 2010, as part of a statewide anti-violence initiative, the School was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to implement the Albany SNUG program.

SSW provides management, oversight, and assistance in implementing and operating SNUG. Two SSW faculty members, Dr. Eric Hardiman and Dr. Lani Jones, serve as principal investigators and have conducted research to evaluate SNUG's effectiveness during its first year of operation. Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region, a nonprofit, community organization based in Arbor Hill, West Hill, and the South End of Albany, has been contracted to carry out the direct delivery of services for the grant.

SNUG (guns spelled backwards) is based upon the nationally acclaimed CeaseFire Chicago model. SNUG's mission is to eradicate shooting and killing by stopping violence at its source. Specially trained SNUG workers, who have had past involvement in street activities, focus on those who are at the highest risk of becoming involved in violence. They mediate disputes and prevent retaliation. They also provide alternatives to participants who want to get away from a life of violence, connecting them with employment, education, training, and social service resources.

The five core components of SNUG embody a holistic approach that brings together diverse segments of the community, all of which have a stake in curtailing violence. The components are:

- Street Level Outreach
- Public Education
- Community Mobilization
- Faith Leader Involvement
- Law Enforcement

One of SNUG's major goals is to change the cultural acceptance of violence so that it is no longer viewed as normal and inevitable. One way that SNUG builds a culture of peace is to organize shooting responses within 72 hours after an incident occurs. A few hours before a shooting response SNUG workers and volunteers thoroughly canvass the neighborhood where the incident happened. They talk to residents, distribute SNUG literature, and encourage those they meet to join the response.

The response itself takes the form of a brief rally and speak-out. Participants chant, share personal testimony about the impact of violence upon their lives, and have a moment of silence for all those who have been harmed. Simple as this format is, it provides a powerful experience for those who participate, sending a visible message to everyone who passes by that violence is not acceptable and that it is possible to challenge it.

Another significant aspect of SNUG is the hospital-based intervention at Albany Medical Center. In the aftermath of a violent incident, family and associates of the victim often plan retaliation in the emergency room. SNUG has established a signed protocol with Albany Medical Center which allows SNUG staff to be present and to interact with victims and their family and friends to deescalate the situation, reduce retaliation and diminish further violence. Interactions with the victim in the hospital may also lead to the victim expressing a desire to change the behaviors that resulted in injury.

SNUG also works closely with the Albany Police Department, which provides data daily regarding critical incidents and/or suspected hotspots of criminal activity. However, the SNUG program is not a law enforcement model — rather it uses a peer-to-peer delivery system to help individuals on the streets be more conscious about their actions regarding violence and to generate in-depth support for changing the acceptance of violence within the community.

It is obvious that street-level violence results in significant human and financial costs. It has negative impact upon economic development, job creation, and educational success. The people living in communities where violence is rampant find themselves caught up in a cycle of crime, unresolved trauma, fear, and despair that is very difficult if not impossible to overcome. Each violent incident negatively affects hundreds of lives. Albany SNUG provides residents with tools that they need to reduce violence, shift cultural acceptance of violence, and improve the quality of life in their communities.

Vivian Kornegay, mother of a son who was seriously injured as a result of gun violence, is committed to volunteering for SNUG. According to Kornegay, SNUG is the group that is doing something, and no matter how difficult, SNUG will work to help and bring peace to the Albany community.

Bishop's backing starts SNUG drive

Advocates gather to help anti-violence effort as a way to remember King

By JORDAN CARLEO-EVANGELIST, Staff writer

Published 06:01 p.m., Thursday, January 12, 2012; Updated 08:38 p.m., Thursday, January 12, 2012

SOURCE: <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Albany-clerics-call-for-SNUG-support-2493621.php#ixzz1jHyPb1sw>

ALBANY — Bishop Howard Hubbard on Thursday urged "widespread community support" for the resurrection of the SNUG anti-violence program, marking the start of a fundraising campaign in black churches and other faith communities throughout the city this weekend in memory of Martin Luther King Jr.

Hubbard's high-profile endorsement, issued alongside some of the city's black church leaders, comes as the nonprofit Trinity Alliance is working to revive the well-regarded anti-violence program, which closed in October after its state funding lapsed.

While both the state and city have subsequently made one-time \$150,000 commitments to restart SNUG — guns spelled backward — the clergy members said the onus is now on residents to prove they value its work as much as they have claimed.

"The community has come together as a part to say the work of SNUG is invaluable," said the Rev. Edward Smart, pastor of Israel AME Church on Hamilton Street, which hosted the press conference at its God With Us Center in the former home of the Washington Avenue YMCA

Trinity Alliance's CEO, Harris Oberlander, said the most optimistic date for the program to re-launch would be Feb. 15.

Oberlander said the program's staff will be comparable in size to what it was before the fall shutdown, but two big changes will be that the University at Albany's School of Social Welfare will no longer oversee it and SNUG's director during its first year, Lisa Good, won't be returning to her post, having taken up her social welfare studies full time.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo's new state budget, slated to be unveiled Tuesday, may shed light on the program's long-term future. City and state criminal justice officials made clear that their \$150,000 grants could not necessarily be counted on to continue.

Sen. Neil Breslin, who attended Thursday's event, said he had no insight on whether funding for SNUG would be included in Cuomo's budget but said he believed the fact that the state found \$150,000 to keep it running was a good sign.

"That does not come unless the governor interceded," he said.

In the meantime, members of the Albany African-American Clergy United for Empowerment, which comprises some 50 faith communities, will take up special collections for SNUG this weekend to honor the slain civil rights leader's message of nonviolence, said the Rev. Willie Stovall, pastor of Mount Olive Southern Missionary Baptist Church North Pearl Street.

Hubbard, the leader of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, said parishes will also take up collections for the program — though not this weekend.

"I wholeheartedly endorse the efforts of SNUG," Hubbard said, adding later: "I've seen the escalating violence taking place in our streets."

Striking one SNUG's core messages — that gun violence is a disease that plagues the entire city, not just the neighborhoods where it erupts most often — the Rev. Frances Wattman Rosenau of Westminster Presbyterian Church on State Street called for an end to preventable funerals.

"We are committed to the well-being of the entire city," she said, "and that is not just people who look like me, or the majority of white churches."

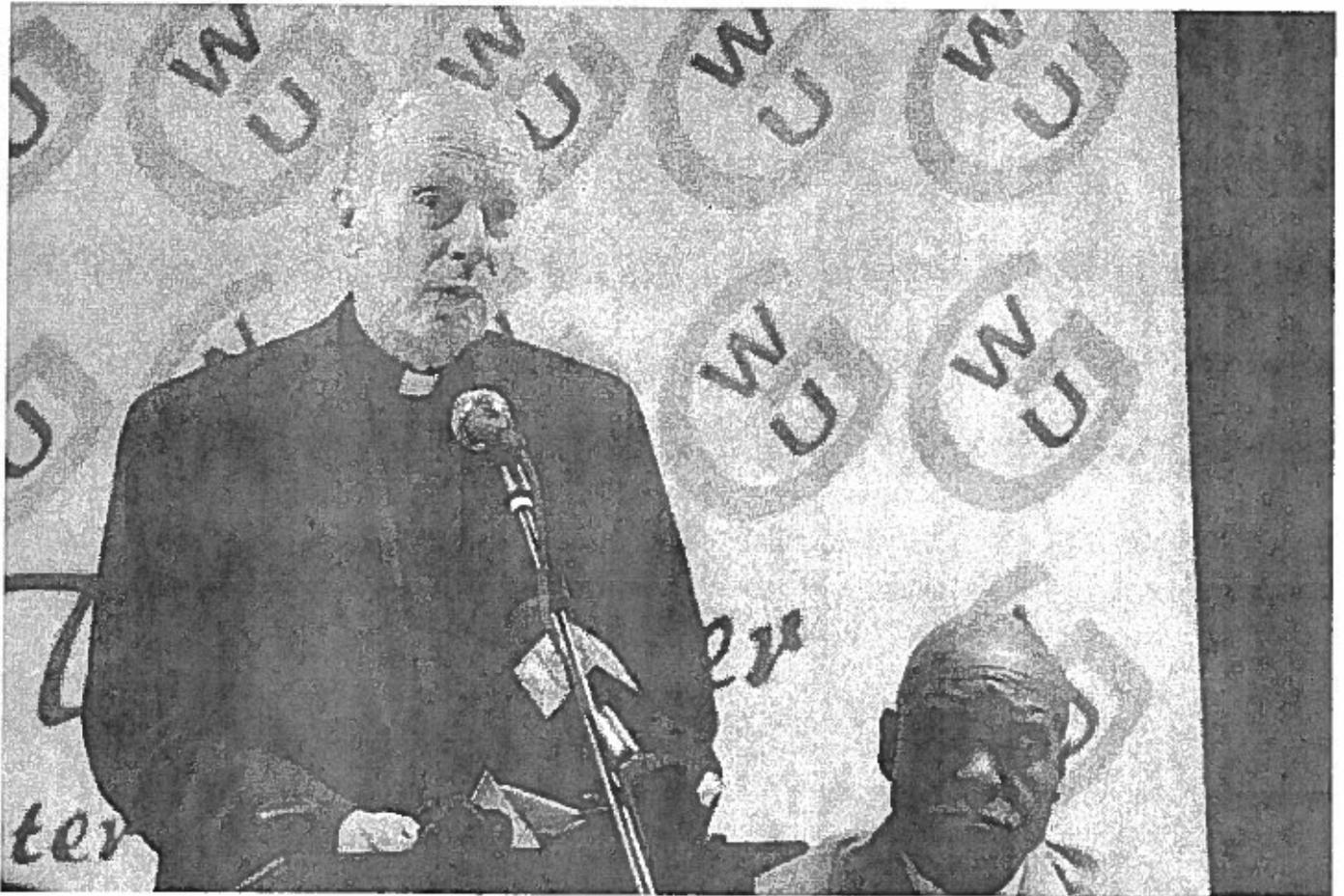
Reach Jordan Carleo-Evangelist at 454-5445 or jcarleo-evangelist@timesunion.com. On Twitter: @JCEvangelist_TU.

To help fund SNUG:

Checks can be made payable to Trinity Alliance, with "SNUG" in the memo line, and sent to 15 Trinity Place, Albany, NY 12202.



Albany Common Council member Dominick Calsolaro speaks during a press conference in support of Albany SNUG anti-violence initiative at the God With Us Center in Albany, NY Thursday, Jan.12, 2012. (Michael P. Farrell/Times Union)



Bishop of the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese, Howard J. Hubbard speaks during a press conference in support of Albany SNUG anti-violence initiative at the God With Us Center in Albany, NY Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012. Reverend Dr. Edward B. Smart is pictured right. (Michael P. Farrell/Times Union)



Freddie Johnson III holds his 1-year-old son Freddie Johnson the fourth during a press conference in support of Albany SNUG anti-violence initiative at the God With Us Center in Albany, NY Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012. (Michael P. Farrell/Times Union)