

## **What Should We Do About the Crime?**

**By James H. Buford**

Unless you have been living under a rock, you may have noticed that crime is once again reaching epic proportions in the St. Louis area. This year, 69 people have been murdered in the City of St. Louis which is the same amount of murders as last year at this time. It makes me wonder if there is ever a time when the law enforcement, business, civic and residential community can come together and work on a solution for crime and violence in our neighborhoods?

This time may have finally come with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department and St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay working to resolve crimes in the downtown area by threatening to shut down clubs that have been tied to recent shootings. It may have also come with the advent of the Urban League Public Safety Advisory Council which is comprised of law enforcement, civic and residential community metropolitan leaders meeting bi-monthly to seek solutions to crime and violence in our communities. Since July 2009, the Council has served over 6,000 teens through youth gang summits at area schools which include: Beaumont, Vashon, Roosevelt, Sumner, McCluer South-Berkeley, Eskridge, Normandy, Jennings and Riverview Gardens High School. These summits were designed to give teens a chance and a choice to choose successful pathways in life by using positive role models and facilitators for ongoing mentorship.

As we have already learned from numerous anti-violence movements in the past, efforts to reduce crime must be well-funded and consistent in order to produce lasting results. Although the task has been great, there is still a lack of financial support for these initiatives that will help make St. Louis a better place to live. With everyone concerned about education, business growth and job creation being valuable ways to build a community, safety issues speak to a metropolitan region's quality of life and are just as important. Without a concerted effort to fight crime in St. Louis on a consistent basis, all activities to diminish crime are only a shot in the dark. The time has come for all stakeholders in the St. Louis metropolitan area to become serious about decreasing crime. No longer should we sit back and talk about murders in the media without resolving to do something about it. No longer should we argue with our critics about our national crime rankings without doing something about it. The time is now.