



City of Bridgeton
City Hall Annex, 181 E. Commerce St, Bridgeton NJ 08302

Ask the Mayor a monthly impromptu column

January 2009

Early Christmas morning, someone was shot to death at an apartment complex in Bridgeton. It was the tragic result of young men settling a fight with gun – something which has become far too common in our city. My prayers – and, I am sure, the prayers of everyone in our community – go out to the family of the young man who was cut down at such an early age. I hope as well that we will offer prayers for the young man who has been arrested for this crime and for his family.

Whenever such a tragedy occurs, people want to know what the city is going to do. Our Bridgeton police have a well-established reputation of responding promptly in these cases and arresting the responsible parties. A jury and judge will determine the fate of the accused person.

But all that is done after the tragedy has occurred. What can we do as citizens of Bridgeton to prevent our young neighbors from engaging in the aggressive posturing and self-destructive behaviors which lead to these heart-breaking outcomes?

It is up to all of us as members of a community to take an active role in a reducing anti-social behaviors and criminal acts. If you see suspicious activities in your neighborhood – call the police! Your prompt call might prevent a verbal dispute from escalating into another tragedy.

Many of us look back on our teenage years and wonder how we survived. We knew we were smarter than our parents, that no one understood us, that we were invincible and ought to be able to stay out all night and do whatever we wanted to do. Young people need loving supervision, responsible mentors and appropriate role models. They need to learn how to recognize dangerous situations and avoid them, how to defuse confrontations or walk away from them and to trust and confide in the caring adults in their lives.

Parents sometimes feel they are facing these problems alone but they should know that help is available. Our community is blessed with teachers, counselors, clergy and coaches who are dedicated to the education, safety and well-being of the young people of Bridgeton. Call on them and encourage your children to take advantage of the activities available in our schools and churches and on our athletic fields.

Let's all resolve to do a little more in 2009 to make Bridgeton a safer and more peaceful place for all our children.