

EXECUTIVE OFFICE



INTER-COMMUNICATION

From: **EMMA BYRNE**
Press Secretary

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "EB", written over the typed name.

To: _____
ROBERT DEL TUFO
ATTORNEY GENERAL

(Institution or Department)

NOVEMBER 29, 1990

Date: _____

The attached story was only used in the Five Star Essex County edition.

Governor rallies residents and police to drive drug scourge from Newark

By RUDY LARINI

A campaign to recapture a drug-plagued Newark neighborhood from the pushers and addicts lurking on its streets was launched yesterday when Gov. Jim Florio took a well-escorted walking tour through the area to arouse support for stepped up police and community vigilance.

Operation Homestead, as the campaign has been dubbed, will feature an effort by state, county and city police to drive drug dealers from the neighborhood and enlist the help of residents in aiding law enforcement efforts to

keep them away.

"We're going to take back the streets," the Governor announced to the crowd after strolling three blocks down Martin Luther King Boulevard, accompanied by an entourage of police escorts, public officials and community leaders. Florio spoke at a podium outside an apartment building in which a police command post, or "mini-precinct," has been established.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to fight back against the people who would rob our families of their safety, their sense of well-being and, as important as anything else, their sense of dignity. We're going to fight back because there is no more important right we have than the right to be safe, the right to be secure, in our streets and in our homes," the Governor said. "If we don't have that right, there's no right that is more important."

"We're going to take back these streets and we're going to do it together because, frankly, that is the only way it's going to happen," Florio added.

"No more business as usual. When the police make their arrests and then leave, that just allows the bad folks to come back and that is not acceptable. We're going to do things differently now because the police and the people in the neighborhood are going to work together. They are going to help one another."

Florio said neighbors in too many communities today are strangers who no longer look out for each other's welfare.

"Fear has cast a very long shadow in many of our neighborhoods," he said. "We're going to go fight those shad-

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ows with the bright hope and the bright light of compassion."

Operation Homestead is the third phase of a drug assault launched a year ago when Mayor Sharpe James invited state troopers to help city police patrol high crime and dope-dealing neighborhoods.

During those phases, which included increased police visibility on the streets and a "buy and bust" undercover drug operation, authorities made almost 700 arrests and confiscated \$130,000 worth of drugs and 37 cars, according to the mayor.

He said the program proved that when drug dealers were driven from a building or a neighborhood, tenants and homeowners were buoyed to resist their return even after the intensive police surveillance subsided.

"We found that once we cleaned up an area, the tenants became active and they began to select people to move in who were not involved in any illicit drug trafficking," the mayor said, noting some landlords had no qualms about renting to known drug dealers. "Once you get them out and you say to a landlord, 'You've got to screen your tenants,' the tenants become involved as well.

"I have traveled all the neighborhoods of Newark and what I hear over and over again is, 'Mayor, what are you going to do about crime in our city,'" James said. "I'm so honored that the Governor, the attorney general and the superintendent of the State Police heard our plea and our cry."

The mayor said he does not expect any resistance to the State Police, who are still remembered in certain quarters as the force that was summoned to quell Newark's riots 23 years ago.

"This is not 1967; this is not a riot," the mayor said. "This is a war against drugs."

Residents in the latest target neighborhood, a mix of both well-kept and deteriorated housing and commercial buildings straddling the East and Central wards, said drugs and violence

are a constant menace in the area.

"You can't even bring your kids out," said Denise King, who like her neighbors, was willing to give Operation Homestead a chance.

"You've got to start somewhere," she said.

Holding an infant in her arms, Diane Barr said better police protection has been needed in the neighborhood "for a long time, a very long time."

Joan Roberts, who lives in a high-rise along the boulevard, said she was afraid a generation of young men will be lost if efforts to curb drug abuse do not succeed.

"I hope so," she said, "because if not our male species is going to go down the drain."

Operation Homestead is a component of the Newark Fighting Back campaign that is striving to marshal all segments of the community in attacking the problem of substance abuse and its associated social ills.

Funded by a \$200,000 planning grant from the philanthropic Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the coalition of organizations behind the Newark Fighting Back initiative is competing with 14 other cities across the country for as many as eight grants of up to \$3 million to finance innovative anti-drug programs. The coalition must submit its proposal to the foundation by next September.

Even if the city does not win the grant next year, however, the year-long planning and organizing effort should yield a long-term strategy to address the city's drug abuse problem, according to Edwin Stier, the former director of the state Attorney General's Division of Criminal Justice who co-chairs the Newark Fighting Back task force along with former Attorney General Cary Edwards and Rep. Donald Payne (D-10th Dist.).

"The thinking of this program is to find solutions to the problem from the community up," Stier said. "We believe there are natural strengths in the community even in the worst areas that are affected by the drug problem."

"If we can exploit the natural ways in which people resist the effects of drugs in a community," he added, "it seems to us we can ultimately help people establish values in the community that will overwhelm the drug culture."

Newark Fighting Back was conceived by four groups—the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Newark, the Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods, Friendly Fuld Neighborhood Centers and the Essex County Sheriff's Office—that originally planned to apply individually for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funding.

The combined group has organized into 11 committees that will conduct community forums and survey attitudes on a wide range of aspects of the drug problem, including criminal justice, health, housing, economic development, employment and training, recreation, education and public awareness.

The first community forum is scheduled Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon at the Citadel of Hope Academy on Martin Luther King Boulevard at West Kinney Street.

The need for a coordinated effort like Newark Fighting Back was underscored by Frank Williams, a teacher at

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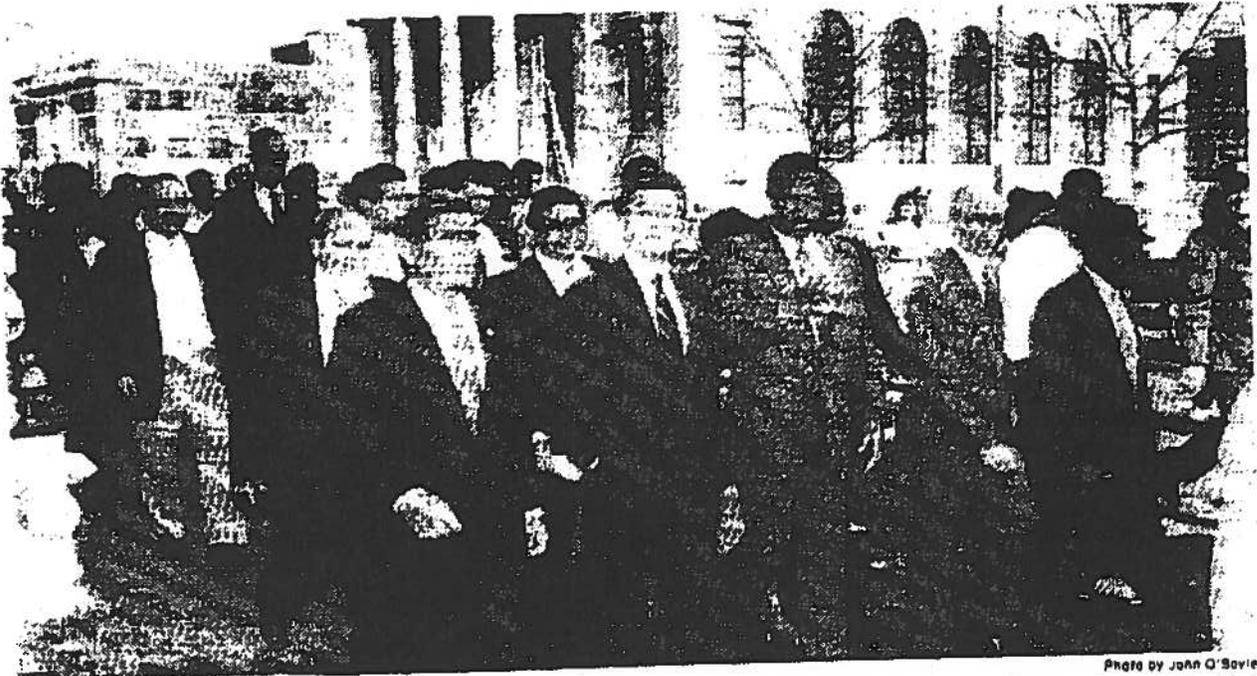


Photo by John O'Sovle

Gov. Florio, flanked by Essex County Sheriff Thomas D'Alessio and Newark Mayor Sharpe James, leads a group of elected officials and community representatives along Martin Luther King Boulevard to kick off Operation Homestead

the Citadel academy, who said he was unaware of Saturday's forum until yesterday.

"What's really needed is more community awareness," he said. "To be honest with you, we need somebody to bring the community together. Nobody knows what to do."

Florio, who had been greeted by applause from a crowd of students on

the steps of the Citadel when he arrived yesterday, said the success of anti-drug efforts is crucial to the future of young people.

"By fighting back, we can make sure that we take control of our own lives and our own destinies, and most importantly, the lives and the destinies of our children," he said. "What it is we're doing is making sure that the fu-

ture of this city, this state and this nation is going to be a secure place for these young people.

"My name is Florio, but I have an Irish side as well," the Governor added. "And if St. Patrick could drive the snakes out of Ireland, surely the good people of this city, working together, can rid ourselves of the drug parasites that infest so many of our streets."

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