



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

For information contact:

Rep. Jamilah Nasheed

(314) 409-5730

July 10, 2007

**“Save Our Children” Vigil and Rally Set to Remember Loss of Young Lives**

Neighborhood activists, community leaders and elected officials will gather to mourn the loss of Alexis Purtty and work toward ways to take back our community. The “Save Our Children” prayer vigil and rally will be held this Wednesday evening from 6 to 8 p.m. on the corner of Vandeventer and St. Louis Avenue. Organizers plan to memorialize the tragic events of last Thursday night and scrutinize the response of local police.

Purtty, a 13-year-old science and honors student at Carr Lane Middle School, was stabbed late Thursday evening by a 12-year-old neighbor. Witnesses said the two had a verbal altercation as Purtty broke up what was turning into a fight. The boy returned a short time later with a steak knife, which he used to stab Purtty in the chest before fleeing.

The police response to the situation has been harshly criticized. The victim’s mother, Alecia Kimbel, says that police were called multiple times as the situation was escalating, but no officers visited the scene of the disturbance until after her daughter had been stabbed. As Kimbel and a friend rushed her daughter to the hospital, police stopped their car and forced them to wait for an ambulance. Purtty was pronounced dead upon her arrival to the St. Louis Children’s Hospital around 12 a.m. Friday evening.

“The police response to this situation made a tragic situation even worse,” said State Representative Jamilah Nasheed (D-St. Louis). “This is not the first time our community has been failed by an inadequate or inappropriate police response. Clearly, something needs to be done to fix the department’s relationship with the local African-American community and the city, as a whole.”

Rally organizers say they want to encourage and strengthen the community beset by this tragedy. They point out that last Thursday’s events claimed the lives of two young children – Purtty, who lost her life to senseless violence, and her 12-year-old attacker, whose life is now claimed by a penal system full of hate and despair.

“Last Thursday, our system failed to protect our youngest and most vulnerable,” Nasheed said. “But the system was broken long before the evening of July 6<sup>th</sup>. If a 12-year-old boy can be spurred to this type of violence, there is something inherently wrong and out-of-order. Our community needs to come together and fix it.”

**“Save Our Children” Prayer Vigil and Rally**

**Wednesday, July 11<sup>th</sup> – 6 to 8 p.m.**

**The Intersection of Vandeventer and St. Louis Avenue**