

Street a success

advice and words of wisdom to the community. He told the gathering that everyone has a responsibility to children and children have a responsibility to learn and to make right decisions.

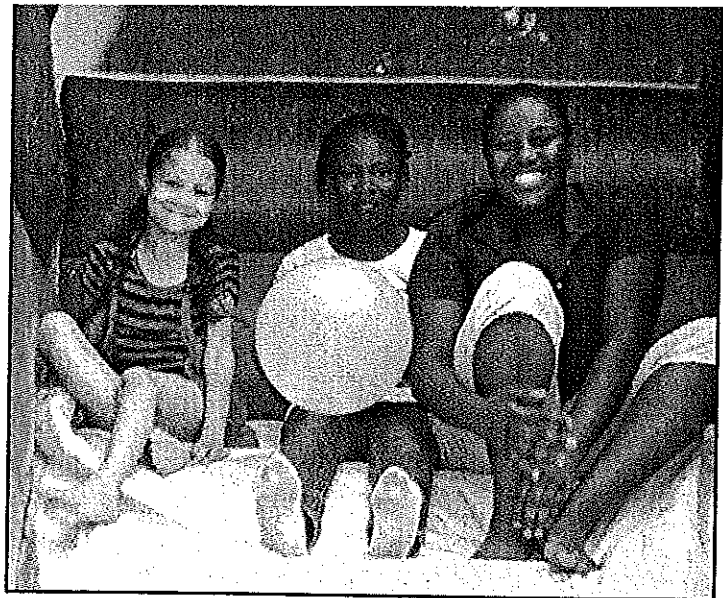
The community rally was about unity and to educate children about how the law is designed to protect them and not work against them.

The day melded law enforcement, religious leaders and the common man in providing information to help children, youth and adults make positive choices in their lives.

Police officers, city and county personnel, churches, civic and community groups came together to offer food, fun and guidance to the rally participants.

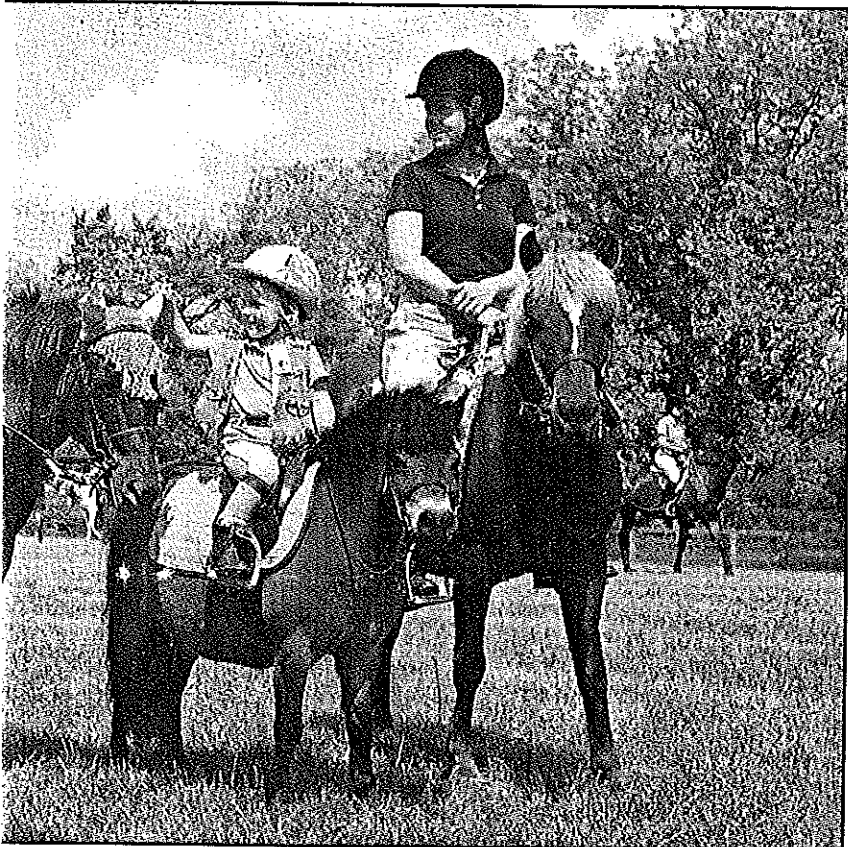
"The police department is trying to improve a quality of living for all those who live and work in Thomson," said Thomson Police Chief Joseph Nelson. "It is very important that we instill values in our kids.

"We want the citizens to know that we are not the enemy. We are their friends," he said.



The McDuffie Progress/Linda Green
Kiara Phillips, Brotaiya Climons and Alysseus Mance get ready to slide down the inflatable. For more pictures of the festivities, see page 7A.

ding for a cure



hes over to make sure Milkshake's ear warmer is snug
rday trail ride with her sister, Neilly Dozier, 6, and mom,
l ride, hosted by Belle Meade Hunt, was a fundraiser for
ay for Life.

The McDuffie Progress/Wayne Parham

LEARNING Victim's Rights Rally teaches prevention

BY LINDA GREEN
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"If my daughter had told me or someone that she was being beaten, she would be here today," said the mother of a girl beaten to death by her boyfriend.

Benita Hudson, the mother of the late Sharika Hudson, made that statement as she addressed the April 28 Victim's Rights Rally held at Thomson-McDuffie Middle School.

Her daughter, then 15, was beaten to death by boyfriend Terry Terrell Johnson in 2010. He was charged with malice murder, felony murder and aggravated assault

"I had no idea that she was being beaten on," Hudson said. "I wish to God that someone would have told me."

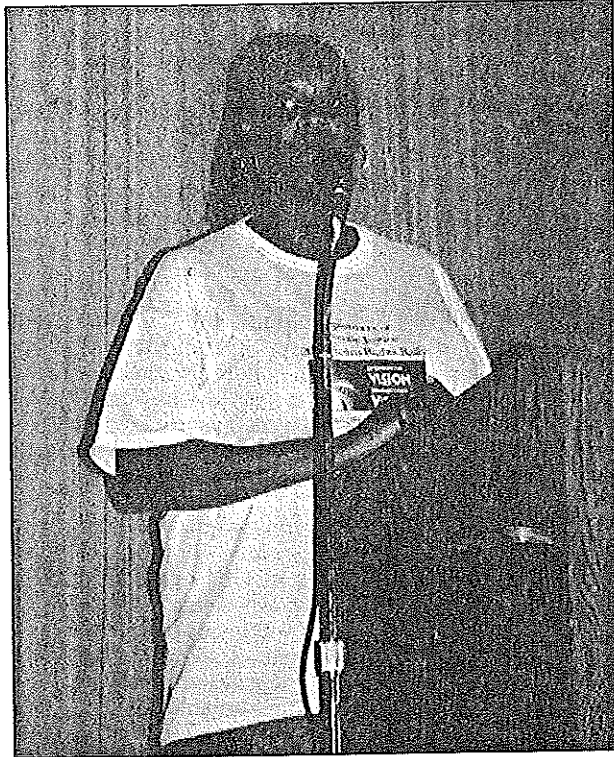
Hudson implored young girls involved in a



Benita Hudson

See RALLY, Page 6A

ent nears for Briarwood Headmaster



The McDuffie Progress/Linda Green
Kimberly Usry welcomes program participants and gives the rally's purpose.



The McDuffie Progress/Linda Green
Ursula Docher, of SafeHomes in Augusta, keynotes the April 28 victim's rights rally.

Sponsored by the McDuffie County Department of Juvenile Justice, the Saturday rally was part of the national crime victim's week, held April 22-28.

The juvenile justice department partnered with SafeHomes of Augusta to talk about domestic and dating violence.

Under the theme "Extending the Vision, Reaching Every Victim," the rally offered workshops for teen girls and teen boys and parents as well as a resource fair on different types of crime and solutions.

According to the National Center for Victims of Crime, in 2010, teens, aged 12 to 17, experienced 616,479 violent crimes including rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault.

The underlying message provided to Saturday's rally participants was that the next crime victim could be one of them or one of their loved ones.

Ursula Docher of SafeHomes, the domestic violence safe-haven, told the gathering that one in three teens know someone who has been hit, pushed or punched or have experienced or is experiencing some type of abuse; one in four teens have been hit; eight out of 10 girls who've been physically abused in dating, continue to date their abuser; and, one in five high school girls have been physically or sexually assaulted by someone they are dating. She also told the rally that of girls between the ages of 15 to 19 who have been murdered, 30 percent were killed by a boyfriend or husband.

"Dating violence is the use of physical, sexual, emotional, verbal force from one dating partner to another," she said, as she offered four signs of an abuser.

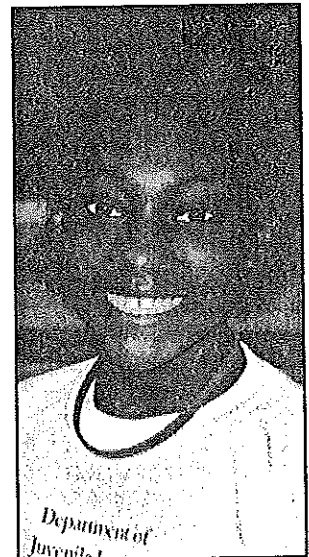
Some warning signs include extreme jealousy, demanding seriousness

early in the relationship, overly charismatic, and has witnessed abuse and believes that it is okay.

Docher encouraged the participants to tell someone about the violence toward them and she also provided numerous hotline numbers that will provide guidance to resolution of their negative situations. She encouraged the teenagers to contact the local police, SafeHomes, the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at (866) 331-9474 or the website www.loveisrespect.org.

During the teen girls workshop, 10 young women discussed different types of bullying, fighting and dating violence.

The girls, in a questions and answer session facilitated by Kim Thomas, spoke about confronting someone who spread a rumor and most said they handled the



The McDuffie Progress/Linda Green
Trynity Bailey-Usry, 11, attended teen girls workshop on dating violence.

perpetrator by fighting.

Thomas, director of Afro Puffs and Ponytails, Inc., advised the girls to tell someone about being bullied and to be cautious about retaliation.

"You do not want to do anything that will cost you your record," she urged. "Does fighting someone because they said something about you change them?" she asked.

When Thomas asked if any of the girls had been hit by someone they were dating, a few hands were raised.

"You should not be in a relationship where someone is hitting on you. That is not acceptable. You need to not be afraid to report it," she urged. She also encouraged the girls to tell someone about their situation or to call the teen dating abuse hotline for support.

For Trynity Bailey-Usry, 11, her most important learning of the day was how not to be abused. "I learned to stay away from it," she said.

Deandre Davis, executive director of communities in schools of Burke County, led a workshop for boys. His focus was on helping the 15 young men in the session reach their destinies, strengthen their values and their Christian identity.

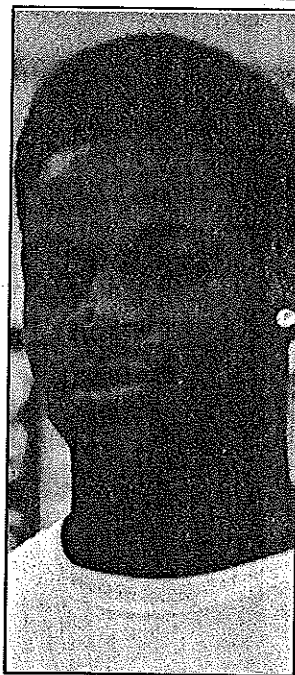
"You gain life when you understand how to give yours away," Davis said. He advised the boys to work hard to be better than what they can be.

"As young men, if you do not strengthen yourselves now to deal with today's challenges, you won't be able to deal with the weight that is to come," he said.

Children, particularly young African-American boys, are often stereotyped by society, he said. He encouraged the participants to be careful of earning negative labels.

"If you are not careful, people will put tags and labels on you and you will try to live up to that label," he cautioned.

He advised the young men that each of them were created for a purpose and they must overcome challenges



The McDuffie Progress/Linda Green
Darius Hester, 14
learns about letting go and placing situations in God's hand during victim's rights rally.

ed the teen boys workshop. "I learned that that just because you witness abuse, that does not mean you will become an abuser," he said. "If I feel like I am in a situation where I am about to lose it, I will just leave and let go and let God deal with it," he said.

Kimberly Usry of the McDuffie Juvenile Justice Department, explained that the day was about providing teens with information about and against violence.

"It was an outlet to let them know that when they are involved in these situations, they can make decisions and the resources are there to help them learn how to make those decisions."

The rally also collected toiletries to benefit the clients of Safehomes.