

AND IN THIS CORNER ... Olympic boxers deliver anti-drug message to students



A group of third graders at the George Washington Carver School in Newark applaud an anti-drug message by the 'Triple Threat' Olympic boxers

By FREDERICK W. BYRD

Two Olympic champion boxers yesterday urged elementary school youngsters in Newark to reject drugs and believe they can do anything in life.

"Realize what drugs stand for—death—and decide where you want to be in life," said Ray (Merciless) Mercer, one of the "Triple Threat" Olympic champion boxers who recently opened a gymnasium in Newark.

At the rally before several hundred pupils of George Washington Carver Elementary School, his Olympic colleague, Alfred (Ice) Cole, said: "You just can't make it in this world with drugs."

"When I was your age, I wanted to be very good at something in life. But I knew with drugs I could not do it," he added.

The two boxers' manager, Marc Roberts, and their coach, Henry Johnson, sounded the

same theme to the enthusiastic cheers of the youngsters, who are enrolled in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Johnson said: "You have the worst drug problem ever to deal with. But we measure a man or a woman by how well he functions under pressure."

The anti-drug rally was organized by Fathers Against Drugs and No-Cane Inc. of Newark. Donald Bernard, a spokesman for the groups, said: "We are here because this epidemic is reaching into the lower grade and age levels. We need to immunize these youngsters through education as early as possible."

Councilman Donald Bradley, another rally organizer, agreed. "We hope these fighters against drugs can deliver a knockout punch against the scourge in our neighborhoods," he said to the youngsters' cheers.



Former Olympic boxer Ray Mercer, left, and his trainer, Henry Johnson, tell students of the dangers of drug use

Hafiz Farid, founder of No-Cane, explained the group's name means not only "no cocaine," but also "no crutch."

"You do not need the crutch of drugs to get through life," he said. "America has a serious problem, and you can be the solution."

"Fight the power. Fight the power of drugs, of materialism."

"Remember George Washington Carver. He achieved the status of a great scientist. You have that greatness in you," he said.

The most sustained applause of the day went to Valerie Adams, a Newark-born singer whose rendition of "Come Share Your Love" was a type of theme for the entire day.

The school principal, June Lockett, said such rallies were helpful.

"If we can get these youngsters' self-esteem up, it is easy for them to say no to drugs," she said.

Newark seeks troopers to help fight drug war

By FREDERICK W. BYRD

Newark Mayor Sharpe James yesterday asked Gov. Thomas Kean for the State Police to provide personnel "to assist the city in its narcotics enforcement activities."

James wrote that despite Newark's best efforts, "drug-related crimes continue to plague our city, threaten our residents and undermine our ongoing renaissance."

He said in the last three years Newark put five classes into the police academy, placed police kiosks on busy thoroughfares to provide 24-hour visibility and joined in task forces with Essex County on the drug scourge.

And, city officials said the average police officers' productivity, in terms of responses, arrests, and summonses issued, increased 7 percent in the last year.

James stated, "While our fight in this battle has been substantial, a great deal more must be done if we are to win this war."

"For these reasons both the municipal council and I agree that the city would be better able to address drug-related crime if the state were to assist us in a comprehensive approach."

"Through my work with the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the national League of Cities, I have learned that elected officials from towns and cities across America are calling on their state and federal governments to assist them in combating this type of criminal activity and are receiving their help," he added.

Detailing the problem, Richard Monteilh, the city business administrator, said, "From Jan. 1 to Sept. 19 of this year we made 19,400 arrests. That is 8 percent more than the same period last year."

"The overall increase in crime is 5 percent. It is hard to ferret out how much is drug-related. But 50 to 60 percent of those in prison are there for drug-related crime. From that we can estimate the crime increase is heavily related to drugs."

In the early 1980s, Gov. Brendan Byrne offered to send state police officers into Newark. However, then-Mayor Kenneth Gibson declined because the State Police would not be under municipal jurisdiction and there was no stipulation of how long they would remain.

Also, some months ago city officials considered suing the state for more help with law enforcement. The suit was based on the belief that the state constitution contained guarantees of public safety and state government is required to provide that aid.

However, City Counsel Glenn Grant said yesterday the suit was never filed.

Monteilh explained, "For us to bring suit would mean we would take the legal load for the entire state. Other cities have even greater need. A suit of this nature should be filed by the League of Municipalities. We would then join in such litigation."

The business administrator added Newark's drug problems are regional in nature, and it makes sense that the state should help combat them.

"This city is a transportation hub. That is good for our commerce but it also means people from outside come in to buy and sell drugs," he said. "We have done studies that show most of the people buying drugs on any particular night on a particular corner are not from Newark."

"This is a nuisance to our neighborhoods. It is the number one problem discussed at town meetings," he said.

Inner-city drug scene called snare to youth

By MICHAEL A. WATTKIS

Inner-city children have become so exposed to the world of drugs in their neighborhoods that words and slogans like "Just Say No" are having little effect on their attitudes, parents and officials said at a meeting last night.

"I think the words are there, but the conviction is not there," said one woman who brought several of her grandchildren to the meeting in the St. James A.M.E. Church in Newark.

"What I am afraid of is that they know too much. That worries me," the woman said. "There are too many people around them with access to drugs and who do drugs. They can't escape it. It's in the recreation facility, on the basketball court, wherever they go."

But those participating in the community forum conducted by the Newark-North Jersey Committee of Black Churchmen's drug task force said the ills of drugs must continue to be proclaimed until it makes an impact.

"It seems like the drug culture has become so widespread that children have become blasé," said John Ransome, superintendent of the Sunday School at St. James and a volunteer with a Boy Scout troop in Newark. "But you have to keep on saying how bad it (drugs) is until it sinks in."

Participants said the children's at-

titude to the mushrooming drug problem points to the fact that they need more positive role models, especially from the black male, a reinforcement of family values and parental discipline and more recreational activities to fill their spare time.

The meeting, one of several held by the churchmen's task force over the last several months, focused on the impact of the drug scourge on children and how the problem can be addressed.

The "greatest problem" that seems to be leading the youths astray and into the allure of drugs, said Ransome, is the "breakdown in the family" and the "failure of the black male as a man" in fulfilling his responsibility as head of the household.

"The children are being reared in homes where their parents are not able to raise them in a proper way," said an East Orange first-grade school teacher. "They are very much aware of the drug situation. It's around them. They know what's being done, who is doing it and what's popular. They are very much exposed."

Officials said one of the first steps that can be taken to address the problem is for the churches to open their doors on weekends during the school year and on weekdays during the summer for tutorial and recreational purposes.

Man held as drug kingpin

A 27-year-old Orange man, described by police as a major narcotics distributor along one of the city's main thoroughfares, has been arrested on drug and weapon charges, authorities announced yesterday.

Police Director Charles Cobbett identified the suspect as Jesse James Carter, an unemployed resident who lives in a Lincoln Avenue apartment building a few blocks from police headquarters.

Carter was nabbed 7:45 p.m. Wednesday at Central Playground, on Lincoln and Central avenues, while "pushing drugs right across the street" from both Orange Middle School and adjoining Orange High School, Cobbett said.

The suspect, a long-time "major

drug dealer along Central Avenue," had 73 vials of cocaine and a .38-caliber gun when taken into custody, he noted.

Cobbett said police charged Carter with possession of cocaine, possession of cocaine with the intent to distribute it, possession of cocaine within 1,000 feet of a school, possession of a handgun, possession of a handgun for an unlawful purpose, resisting arrest and discarding evidence.

The latter two charges, the director continued, resulted when Carter tried to flee from Detectives Steven Crumpton, Michael Gannon and Ronald Rogers.

Carter, "convicted of numerous drug offenses," was jailed in the lockup pending an arraignment today before Judge Freddie Polhill, Cobbett said.

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