

## **West Hill's activism keeps going strong**

Neighborhood still mourning child's death works against violence

By **PAUL GRONDAHL**, Staff writer

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ALBANY -- Nearly a month after the May 29 shooting death of 10-year-old Kathina Thomas, residents of West Hill are trying to heal and to maintain momentum in their efforts to rid the streets of gun violence and youth gangs.

"There are a lot of positive things going on here," said Dr. Bob Paeglow, who runs a health clinic and prayer center on Clinton Avenue.

Thomas' mother receives medical care from Paeglow, whose office is located around the corner from where the young girl died after being struck in the back by a stray bullet. Jermayne Timmons, 15, has been charged with second-degree murder for allegedly firing the fatal round.

The killing of a child galvanized community anger over neighborhood crime and is motivating some to tackle other issues.

A capacity crowd of 125 neighbors gathered Saturday evening in the Star of Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church for "Healthy Hearts on the Hill," a free, low-fat community meal prepared by the chef and staff of the Schuyler Inn in Menands, along with demonstrations on how to cook in healthier ways.

Paeglow, the Rev. Beresford Bailey, pastor of the church, and other neighborhood leaders waited on tables and promoted strategies for reducing a high incidence of diabetes, heart disease and other obesity-related conditions in the African-American community.

"Our community is coming together in ways that counter all the negative things said about West Hill," said Paeglow, whose family lives in the neighborhood.

His wife, Leane, is president of the West Hill Neighborhood Association and their daughter, Amanda, works with troubled teens and coordinates alternatives to incarceration for Albany County District Attorney David Soares.

On Saturday, neighborhood activists are hosting a West Hill summit at Paeglow's health care office, Koinonia Primary Care.

"We're committed to people who want to come together in a spirit of cooperation to look for solutions to our problems," Paeglow said.

Government, church and civic leaders are expected, and the public is invited. A round-table discussion will be led by a University at Albany professor trained as a facilitator.

"It doesn't matter who gets the credit. We want practical ideas that are sustainable and that will lead to significant change," Paeglow said.

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