



LYNNE ABRAHAM
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
1421 ARCH STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102**

NEWS RELEASE

Date: December 30, 2003
Contact: Cathie Abookire / 215-686-8711
Director of Communications

**D.A. Lynne Abraham and Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson Have a Message
For People Who Shoot Guns on New Years Eve:
You Will Be Arrested and Prosecuted to the Fullest Extent of the Law**

WHAT: NEWS CONFERENCE

WHEN: 11AM TUESDAY DECEMBER 30, 2003

WHERE: DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
1421 ARCH ST.
FIRST FLOOR PRESS ROOM

PARTICIPANTS: Joe Jaskolka, 16, who was shot in the head in 1998 by an unknown 'reveler' and his parents Greg and Brenda Jaskolka
District Attorney Lynne Abraham
Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson
Ruth Birchett, longtime North Philadelphia community activist who tape-recorded the New Years Eve gunfire outside her house.
Bilal Qayyum and Malik Aziz, Chair and Co-Chair respectively, Men United For a Better Philadelphia.

December 30, 2003---People who shoot guns off into the air to 'celebrate' New Years Eve will be arrested and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. That is the message from Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson and District Attorney Lynne Abraham.

"Not only will we prosecute offenders," said District Attorney Lynne Abraham, "we will re-arrest those whose cases are dismissed without cause. No family should ever have to go through what Joe Jaskolka and his family have gone through."

"There will be zero tolerance for people shooting firearms into the air in so-called celebration of New Years Eve," said Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson.

On New Years Eve, 1998, a so-called 'celebratory' bullet struck 11-year-old Joe Jaskolka in the head as he walked along Fernon Street near Second Street. Despite an aggressive investigation by Philadelphia Police, the

shooter has not been found, and the case remains open.

Since 1998, 109 people have been arrested on subsequent New Years Eves for celebratory gunfire.

Last year New Years Eve, 27 people were arrested for weapons offenses in conjunction with 'celebratory' firing of weapons.

And two years ago, (2001) 37 people were convicted for shooting off their guns on New Years Eve. Eight people were sentenced to jail time and 29 people were sentenced to probation.

“We do not look at this practice as ‘people just having a good time,’ ” said District Attorney Lynne Abraham. “This is criminal behavior that puts innocent people in the line of fire, and we will prosecute to the fullest extent of the law.”