



LYNNE ABRAHAM  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
THREE SOUTH PENN SQUARE  
CORNER OF JUNIPER AND SOUTH  
PENN  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107**

# **NEWS RELEASE**

**Date:** June 28, 2007  
**Contact:** Cathie Abookire / 215-686-8711  
Director of Communications

Donna Griffin  
Philadelphia Weed and Seed Project  
215-477-7747

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**PHILADELPHIA GUN REMOVAL PROGRAM ALLOWS CITIZENS TO HELP  
RID THEIR HOMES AND NEIGHBORHOODS OF ILLEGAL GUNS**

*Gun Removal Initiative Begins Today*

**GUN REMOVAL HOTLINE: 215-686-9585**

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**WHAT:** News Conference

**WHEN:** THURSDAY JUNE 28, 2007

5pm---News Conference

Immediately thereafter--- \*\*\*\*RAIN OR SHINE\*\*\*\*

Philadelphia Weed and Seed Project outreach volunteers go door-to-door with informational post cards

**WHERE:** 52<sup>ND</sup> and Market, Southeast Corner  
Under the El

**WHO:** District Attorney Lynne Abraham  
Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson  
Donna Griffin, Executive Director, Philadelphia Weed and Seed Project  
Inspector Anthony Boyle, Southwest Division  
Lt. John Walker, Southwest  
Captain Mike Sinclair, SW Detectives  
Captain Christine Coulter, 16<sup>th</sup> District  
Captain Greg Malkowski, 19<sup>th</sup> District  
Captain James Clark Jr., 18<sup>th</sup> District

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**Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham, Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson, Donna Griffin, Executive Director Philadelphia Weed and Seed Project and law enforcement officials today outlined the Philadelphia Gun Removal Program, which begins today and allows police to remove guns from the home with written consent from the homeowner. Residents are informed that by providing a written consent to search, no one in the household will be charged with illegal possession of the firearm.**

**“With more than two hundred murders before the year is half over and untold numbers of people shot and/or threatened with illegal firearms, I have been calling for sometime to “Do Something” about the unspeakable and indiscriminate carnage on our streets,” said District Attorney Lynne Abraham. “Not only do we prosecute, but we try to prevent crime. With our innovative programs, including our straw purchase initiative, this is another piece of reigning in gun violence.”**

**“Public safety is my number one priority,” said Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson. “The Philadelphia Gun Removal Program gives citizens the opportunity get involved and to take a hard stand against illegal guns by allowing police to remove these weapons from their homes.”**

**“The Philadelphia Gun Removal Program gives parents an excellent opportunity to participate in the reduction of youth homicides in Philadelphia,” said Donna Griffin, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Weed and Seed Project.**

**After the news conference, Philadelphia Weed and Seed Project outreach volunteers will go door-to-door to distribute informational post cards. They will work on Peach St. and Ruby St., just north of Market.**

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## **The Philadelphia Gun Removal Program**

The Philadelphia Gun Removal Program is a resource to which family and neighbors can turn for assistance in taking guns out of our homes and neighborhoods.

### **The Origin of the Program**

The Gun Removal Program is modeled after the highly successful “Consent to Search” program which originated in St. Louis, Missouri. At a community meeting there in 1993, a woman complained to a police supervisor about a problem house in her neighborhood where juveniles were repeatedly seen with guns while the mother was out. When the police supervisor tried to explain how a full investigation would have to be undertaken to obtain a search warrant for the property, the woman replied “Why don’t you just go knock on the door and ask the mother if you can search the house?” The Consent to Search program was born.

Its purpose was to remove illegal firearms, particularly those possessed by juveniles, without seeking criminal prosecution. Residents were informed that by providing a written consent to search, no one in the household would be charged with illegal possession of the firearm.

Police began to knock on doors identified by the community and ask parental permission to search for illegal weapons. Community response was overwhelming, especially in neighborhoods with high levels of gun violence. 98% of those approached consented to a search of their premises, and guns were found in half of the homes searched. One parent even offered to sign several predated permission forms so that the police could return at random. Another mom wanted to give police a key so that could search while she was at work. The Program was subsequently nominated for a federal award.

### **How It Works in Philadelphia**

The Philadelphia program operates in much the same way as its precursor in St. Louis. Citizens who would like to report a property where illegal guns are believed to be kept should call the Gun Violence Task Force at **215-686-9585**. Experienced officers, trained to take a “low-key” approach, will then visit the property, speak to an adult resident, and request permission to search for illegal weapons. In exchange for such permission, the District Attorney’s Office will promise in writing that should any illegal firearms be located in the premises, no one will be charged with illegal possession of the firearms. Should any located firearms be traced to prior crimes, charges may be filed against the individuals who committed those prior crimes. To record this agreement, a written consent form signed by the District Attorney’s Office will be provided to the adult resident.

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