

Mayor's Office of Communication
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MEDIA ADVISORY
Mayor Sharetta Smith Looks to Combat Community Violence & Releases the following Statement in response to Recent Shootings

LIMA — Mayor Sharetta Smith released the following statement this morning:

“On yesterday I visited with a 10-year old child and her mother - just one of the families whose lives have been turned upside down from our city’s recent surge in gun violence.

I learned that the events that transpired a week ago yesterday on Spring & Cole Street, marked the second time in one week that this same 10-year old had been caught in the crossfire of gun violence.

The first on Saturday, July 23rd when she along with several other children were spending the night at a house for a slumber party, when someone decided they would drive by and release rounds. The second, on July 26th when she was injured, while sitting in a car when someone again, decided they would drive by and shot several rounds into a crowd with no regard for human life or safety.

I learned that this brave little girl, actually laid in the car over her two brothers to keep them from being injured.

No child should have to make that decision!

The events that transpired over the last two weeks are beyond devastating. A young man lost his life. Shootings occurring in multiple neighborhoods. A 10-year old is now a victim of gun violence.

Once again, we see lives senselessly lost and injured in yet another horrendous, brazen and despicable act of gun violence. My heart is with their families, friends, and loved ones; and with everyone impacted by these terrible tragedies.

*But let me say this - to that someone or someones who think that this kind of behavior is OK, these senseless acts of violence will not be tolerated in our community, and we will not stop until **EVERYONE** who is responsible is held accountable and justice is served for the victims and their families.*

The Lima Police Department is investigating these crime to ensure that the people who are responsible are arrested and brought to justice. I urge anyone with information about this incident, or any other crimes, to report it to the Lima Police Department at 419.227.4444. Tips can be submitted anonymously.

I also want to say that this is a complex, ongoing investigation and we will release more information about this incident as information becomes available.

I am also committed to ensuring that LPD has all the resources including, manpower and technology to enforce crime.

Earlier this year, I authorized the hiring of additional police officers to increase our force to full authorized strength of 84 officers. Today, we are down 9 officers and we are actively and aggressively recruiting to fill those slots. I am also working diligently with the Lima Police Department to develop and strengthen initiatives to combat crime in our city.

Lima Police Chief Angel Cortes is also taking a comprehensive look at how policing is enforced throughout our city; and is committed to a continued focused on community policing to develop trust to build police and community relationship and increase dialogue with law enforcement, and a more targeted approach to address violent, repeat offender – focusing on those individuals that are contributing to crime in this city.

*But let me also be clear and say that **community safety is not solely a responsibility of our police department**. Overall the Lima Police Department, the Allen County Sheriff's Office, and other law enforcement partners have done a good job at keeping our community safe, where crime has seen a double digit downward decrease for over a decade.*

*However, **community safety is all our or responsibility**. These senseless acts of violence currently happening in our city aren't random acts. It's happening in homes and within families. We need **EVERYONE** who sees and knows what's happening to speak out. **Ending this violence starts with us!***

I am also encouraging citizens to not be afraid, but to be aware. I know these shooting has affected many in our community.

The safety of our residents and visitors remains a top priority; and will not accept continued violence as a way of life in our in our city, which is why we are committed to stopping the violence that is occurring, but also to preventing violence from being committed.

We will take a balanced approach to community safety that includes enforcement, intervention, and prevention.

Along with efforts to hire additional officers and commit additional resources to law enforcement we are also investing in crime reduction through prevention and intervention – with many initiatives we have already started, including:

- ***The Bar Owners Roundtable*** - a quarterly series of discussions that focus on the engagement of bar owners with city departments to learn and communicate about safety policies and best practices. Already, these discussions have resulted in increased “spot checks” at bars and night clubs to ensure safety, and appropriate occupancy levels.
- ***Gen Next*** – a workforce development initiative that aims to employ 300 youth ages 16-24 over the next three years.

In the near future, we will announce additional initiatives including adding streetlights throughout the city, but especially in areas that have a high history of crime to improve safety and combat crime, and engaging community partners to offer counseling, conflict resolution and other community violence reduction strategies.

As Mayor, I will continue to fight to protect our communities and urge others to join me.

Lastly, I know that all of the answers to won't come from city hall. So, over the next two weeks, we will be hosting a series of listening session to hear solutions about how we can all work together to Keep Lima Safe, and urge the community to come out to one of the following sessions to be held at the Cambridge Center at 418 N. Central Avenue:

Tuesday, August 9, 2022

- 6:00pm – 7:00pm (Individuals who have lost loved ones to gun violence and gun violence survivors)
- 7:15pm – 8:15pm (Educators and Childcare Providers)

Tuesday, August 16, 2022

- 6:00pm – 7:00pm (Healthcare Professionals)
- 7:15pm – 8:15pm (Neighborhood Groups and Business Owners)

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