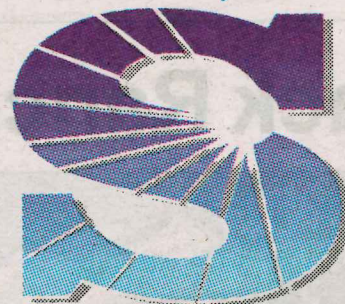


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Group rallies for school safety

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A large group of concerned parents, teachers, students, and community members clad in red showed up during the city council meeting Jan. 22 to bring attention to local schools losing armed security guard presence, such as D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) officers.

The organizer of the "red army" group was Challenge Charter School Principal Wendy Miller, who addressed council. Miller's action was prompted by the recent removal of the final two D.A.R.E. officers from the last 22 schools around the city. Their exit, which was effective Jan. 1, has left



Photos courtesy Challenge Charter School

Challenge School Principal Wendy Miller addressed council during their regular meeting Jan. 22 with 9-year-old Robert Gray, a student at Challenge.

more than 4,000 students without a police presence on campuses.

Miller pleaded with councilmembers, saying parents and members of

the school community were moved to the point of tears learning that their children may no longer have such programs available to them. Miller also



Challenge School Principal Wendy Miller helped organize approximately 100 supporters dressed in red to bring awareness to their cause. Miller and her group were trying to bring council's awareness to proposed budgets which would remove D.A.R.E. officers and other police personnel from local schools.

pointed out that councilmembers with children and grandchildren in local schools would also be affected by losing such programs.

D.A.R.E. police officers have long served an important role in local schools as they provide protection and an outlet for children who may be struggling

with peer pressure, bullying, or harassment issues. Local schools have been facing such difficult topics

MORE RALLY ON A2

RALLY: Group wants DARE officers back in the classroom, From A1

following recent school shootings. Many parents and community members feel much safer knowing their children are attending a school with an armed police officer on campus, just in case. Aside from protection of a potential disaster situation, D.A.R.E. officers more importantly serve as friends, mentors, and resources for children who may have concerns or fears regarding drugs, alcohol, and peer pressure.

Councilmember Yvonne Knaack commented on the situation following Miller's speech, saying both of her daughters to this day still talk about the D.A.R.E. program with fondness and remember the positive impact their D.A.R.E. officer had on them. Following the meeting, Miller said she was pleased with the turnout and overwhelming support from community members and was hopeful the display would gain council's attention.

Councilmember Manny Martinez reminded the audience and community that he and fellow councilmembers would face such difficult budget cut choices as this one very soon. New Mayor Jerry Weirs thanked Miller and her group for their attendance and participation and told her he would like to make a personal visit to the school's campus.