

# Hayward Daily Review

## **My Word**

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## **Unacceptable Tragedy: A Child's Death By Violence By Nadia Lockyer**

As a mother, my soul aches at the thought of a child dying by an act of violence. Taking action to prevent it is both instinctive and immediate. As a community, we must all respond and do the same, as if that lost child were ours, as if all children threatened by violence were our own.

In Alameda County, more than 230 children under the age of 18 have died by violence in the last decade alone. Last year, nearly 20. Alexandra Bingham was three years-old when she was allegedly drowned in a bathtub. Kamilah Russell was just two years-old when suffocated by her parent. Justice Afoa, described as a positive, athletic youth, was 17 when he was stabbed to death in broad daylight. Larry Malik Grayson, a freshman and member of the football team at Berkeley High School, was only 14 years-old when he died from gunshot wounds.

According to the National Violence Policy Center, Alameda County ranked second in youth homicide in the state. Only Monterey County had a higher rate.

Patterns of child abuse, domestic violence, and community or gang-related violence can be found in all of these children's stories - and these deaths are ALL preventable.

Help is out there. Yet it is up to each of us to identify and connect families in need to the services available. Alameda County has emerged as a leader in child abuse and family violence prevention efforts and programs, including the District Attorney's Family Justice Center, the Children's Hospital's Child Protection Center, the Probation Department's Juvenile Justice Center, and the Health Care Services Agency's school-based health clinics.

But we must work harder as a community until the day comes when there are no children who die by violence. The personal, familial, and community impacts of any child's death by violence are deep, vast, and touch us all - emotionally, developmentally, financially, and more. We must respond as one county family to bring an end to this unacceptable tragedy.

If you think you know a family or child who needs help, call (510) 267-8800 today.

In 1997, both the County and the State of California, followed by Congress in 2001, declared the last Friday in April as Children's Memorial Flag Day. In Alameda County, a

Children's Memorial Grove and monument was created in partnership with the East Bay Regional Park District at the Fairmont Ridge in San Leandro. An annual ceremony memorializes the names of children who died by violence the previous year and raises public awareness. This year's ceremony will take place on Friday, April 22, 2011 at 3 p.m. and will be attended by parents of children who've died by violence, representatives of county departments, and community leaders, joining hands to prevent this tragedy. The ceremony is open to the public.

*Nadia Lockyer represents District Two on the Board of Supervisors, which includes Hayward, Newark, Union City, Sunol and parts of Fremont. She was previously the Executive Director of the Alameda County Family Justice Center.*