



**NEWS**

***Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas***

*L.A. County Board of Supervisors, 2<sup>nd</sup> District*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Community Response Exceeds Expectations for Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' Lennox Area "Gift for Guns" Holiday Exchange Program**

***'Gift for Guns' program is the first of many public safety initiatives  
aimed at making communities safer for residents of the Second District***

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY** – Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas on Tuesday joined representatives of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in the Lennox area asking residents to help make the holidays safer by voluntarily and anonymously surrendering firearms, in return for gift certificates ranging from \$50 to \$200 redeemable at Ralphs, Food 4 Less and Target.

The holiday 'Gift for Guns' program was the first of many planned public safety initiatives aimed at making communities safer for residents of the Second District. The program encourages voluntary surrender of any firearms – no questions asked. These initiatives are the first of two similar holiday gun surrenders to promote gun violence reduction in the Second District during the holiday season. Sheriff's deputies reported that more than 50 guns were surrendered within one hour of the program's 10 a.m. launch at Lennox Middle School. At days end, over 300 firearms were collected.

"The community's response exceeded expectations," according to Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. "This is the first time we sponsored this program on the west side of the Second District and the response demonstrates the community's desire to end senseless gun violence."

On Saturday, December 27, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas will again partner with the Sheriff's Department and the City of Compton for a second gun surrender in Compton at Ralph's Supermarket located at 280 E. Compton Blvd from 10 a.m. until the supply of cards is exhausted.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas used the occasion to address a weekend incident that resulted in the senseless death of Adriana Pizarro, a 34-year-old single mother and civilian employee of the Compton Sheriff's Department. "Ms. Pizarro was a resident of the Second District and a member of the County family. We're all saddened by her death," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

Having taken the day off on Saturday to do some holiday shopping with friends and co-workers, Ms. Pizarro was leaving her mother's Second District home when she was fatally wounded by random gunfire at about 9:15 p.m. A second victim, 23-year-old Alexander Castro, who police say was the intended target of the gun fire, subsequently crashed his vehicle into several parked cars and died.

Co-workers say Pizarro was an outstanding county employee who cared for her mother, two sisters and many nieces and nephews.

"Because of senseless violence, a one-year-old boy will never know the joy of a mother's love," Supervisor said in denouncing the crime. "Each holiday season, Ms. Pizarro's family will feel the void left by her death. The level of gun violence in our community must be addressed."

The largest challenge to Gifts for Guns is to ensure that the local residents understand that it is a completely anonymous process with no questions asked of those who surrender firearms. Supervisor Ridley-Thomas stressed that the ultimate goal of the effort is to get guns off the streets. "This exchange program is open to everyone, not just those living in the Lennox area. Come on down, turn in your weapons, get a gift card, no questions asked," he said.

“Getting guns off the streets alone won’t stop the violence in our communities. We want living wage jobs, training for these jobs and a safe place for our youth to learn and play. We need to link families with services and empower the community to access these services.”

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