

Belmont joins Boston for peace

Thursday, September 21, 2006

A diverse and enthusiastic crowd of 500 people, including a large contingent from Belmont, marched and chanted peace slogans through the streets of the Grove Hall neighborhood of Boston on Sept. 11. The "Take Back Our Neighborhoods" Peace March, organized by the family of Herman Taylor III, was sponsored by nearly two dozen groups in Boston and Belmont who were mobilized to work for peace.

Taylor, a Belmont High School student and member of the varsity basketball team, lost his life to gun violence near his home in Boston on July 12.

Freedom House in Boston, where the opening rally took place, quickly filled to capacity with people sporting purple peace ribbons. Speakers included civic leaders, friends and family. Taylor's parents, Herman Taylor and Sarah Coleman, spoke of the necessity of peace and reaching out to the young people. Taylor's friends spoke of the sadness of their loss, and Sophia Snow, a young poet, mesmerized the audience with words of the difficulties growing up in Boston. State Rep. Anne Paulsen spoke of the need for more connection between the suburban and urban communities and encouraged the listeners to start by introducing themselves to one another in the audience.

The marchers were greeted by approving waves from bystanders, some of whom joined the procession. The event ended in a candlelight vigil. At least 50 people from Belmont attended the event, including Paulsen, the Rev. Edmund Robinson of The First Church, Unitarian Universalist, and the First Church Youth Group, Acting High School Principal Michael Harvey, high school staff and students, Lt. Peter Hoerr of the Belmont Police Department, and members of Belmont Against Racism.

"We are grateful for the tremendous outpouring of support from the Belmont community," said Kathryn Bonfiglio, president of Belmont Against Racism. "Belmont's school system, churches, police and elected officials are working together to support the Taylor-Coleman family as they transform their grief into positive action."

Taylor's family has established the Herman Taylor III Memorial Fund to send youth to sports camps. Contributions can be made at any Citizens Bank branch to account #1305939945. See www.ht3fund.org for more information.

The Belmont Idol Talent Show, a fund-raiser for the School Choice Program, of which Herman was a member, will be held Thursday, Nov. 16 from 7-9 p.m. in the BHS auditorium. Call 617-993-5862 for more information. A portion of the proceeds will go towards the Herman Taylor III Memorial Fund. The event is a fund-raiser for college scholarships and academic programming for the School Choice Class of 2007. There is also a plan for a 3:3 basketball tournament and fund-raiser sponsored by the Belmont High School basketball coaching staff.