

Local News

ORANGE

Art creations take up battle on gun violence

Jessica Mazzola *For The Star-Ledger*

ORANGE — An art movement aimed at fighting gun violence has come to New Jersey.

After stops in New York City, Philadelphia, Frederick, Md., and Alexandria, Va., artist Pamela Flynn has partnered with HANDS and other community groups to bring "Considering Harm" to Orange, a city that has been grappling with a spike in gun violence this year.

"The crime rate is going up instead of going down," said Christine Jackson, a spokeswoman for HANDS, a nonprofit group that works to rehabilitate neighborhoods in Orange.

"We want to keep residents informed ... to get the conversation started and keep it going."

In the traveling show, Flynn pairs artistic images of violence with stories and statistics from the community in which it is being exhibited. The Orange version includes details on a bloody shootout in April that killed a 17-year-old boy. His death was one of two homicides in the city in three days.

"Each time this is exhibited, it's people from (the depicted) areas that come see it,"

Flynn said. "The shootings are very relevant to them." She is working now on the exhibit's next stop, which she said will be in Trenton later this year.

The Orange exhibit, which is open at the Kelli Copeland Creative Lofts in Orange through the end of the month, coincides with a community forum Tuesday night meant to discuss gun violence in the community, organizers said.

It all comes about two months after Mayor Dwayne Warren launched "Operation Spring Cleaning," a public safety push he said was meant to cut gun and other street crimes. It includes increased street patrols, checkpoints, and cooperation between police and residents, Warren said in a release about the initiative at the time.

"The ultimate goal of Operation Spring Cleaning is to blanket our streets with coverage and quell crime and disorder as we head into the warmer months," he said. "We also ask and need the support of residents as we move to defend and protect our community."

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