

August 17, 2009

**MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE EXPANDS SCHOOL VIOLENCE
PREVENTION CAMPAIGN**

New Brunswick, NJ – Prosecutor Bruce J. Kaplan has allocated seized funds to sustain and expand the SPEAK UP Campaign in New Brunswick. Launched initially in 2006, SPEAK UP New Brunswick is a community-wide, comprehensive education and awareness campaign featuring 1-866-SPEAK-UP, the first-and-only national hotline for students to anonymously report weapon threats in their schools and community. Funding from the Prosecutor's Office will also support the launch of a text message-based reporting system for New Brunswick that works in conjunction with 1-866-SPEAK-UP.

According to the U.S. CDC, 10% of high school students in New Jersey carry a weapon at least once a month. Despite this alarming statistic, there are measures that can be taken to prevent violence and keep weapons out of the hands of young people. A study by the U.S. Secret Service determined that in 81% of school shootings, the attacker tells someone about their plans. Often, students know about weapon threats before they occur but don't tell anyone for fear of retaliation or negative social repercussions. However, the majority of young people are willing to report threats if given the appropriate tools and anonymity is a key factor that increases student reporting.

SPEAK UP provides just such an anonymous tool, empowering young people to report threats of weapon-related violence and serve as one of our community's best defenses against school and community violence. Since the national hotline launched in 2002, it has received approximately 30,000 calls, over 1000 of which have come from New Jersey. SPEAK UP New Brunswick features a mass media campaign, community events and youth-friendly awareness materials which encourage young people in New Brunswick to speak up to prevent violence.

For more information on this life-saving initiative, please contact Stephanie Guerami, Program Manager, PAX / Real Solutions to Gun Violence at (212) 269-4153 or via e-mail at stephanie@paxusa.org.