

## **CURBING GUN VIOLENCE IN JEFFERSON COUNTY COMPETITION**

My submission is an art project which includes JCPS students and community members. Many people have experienced gun violence by witnessing it or being impacted when a community or family member is killed with a gun. It certainly happened in my family when my cousin, who survived the Pacific as a marine during World War II, was called back to serve in Korea in 1951. He was murdered by a drunken Marine with a gun who said "Look. It's not loaded" and shot my cousin in the head. It effected my family deeply including me; who was too young to understand what had happened.

One way to keep the cycle going is to not speak of it; a secret kept inside is a secret buried in the shame of trauma. It happened in my family and I have since learned in my work with preventing gun violence, it is the same for everyone.

My proposal is to travel to select schools and community centers in the county with a long blank banner I will sew from cloth and ask the students to write the name of the murdered person on the banner and write a one page corresponding story. I will type and edit the submissions. For example, 1. On the banner is John Smith. In the book next to the banner is page 1 and the name John Smith and his story, etc. The viewer can see the name and read the story. Each will be numbered correspondingly so a particular name can be accessed if desired. School counselors and community members can be on site for participants as emotional support. This is a project that can be continued by sewing more cloth on the bottom as long as there are people dying from guns and people mourning their passing.

I will embellish the banner with symbols and colors. When it is finished we will hang the banner and display a book of their stories on a lectern near the installation in a public setting (to be determined) either as a traveling or permanent exhibit. That would be up to the sponsor; the public desire and the publicity.

As a professional artist for over forty years, I have seen art play a large role in healing. Sharing your truth can help resolve grief and make others aware of the pain and suffering of all involved whether family member or peripheral participant. Mindfulness and awareness can make a difference and help to heal our community. There are many people in Louisville suffering silently because their community is victimized by gun violence.

**Submitted by: Lisa Austin**