"There is too much gun violence in Greater Cleveland. There are too many young people dying over nothing. It's not even a matter of being at the wrong place at the wrong time anymore; people are getting shot in their own homes.

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

The recent increase in gun violence and school shootings has Community Activists banning together to stop the violence. One rally was held at the Mt. Pleasant Business Center. Activist James Avery was upset about the six murders in less than 36 hours.

Avery joined with activist Art McCoy who spoke to the crowd about the senseless murders that have been going on throughout the city. "Rather than wage wars on crime and drugs, society needs to explore solutions that contribute to social justice and promote a just peace. The tired 'get tough' rhetoric of politicians is not a solution because violence is not 'caused' by our current

sentencing structure. Indeed, the 'get tough' approach is counter-productive when money to build prisons comes from cuts in crime prevention funds, community services and education," said Avery.

Threats continue to cause schools in northeast Ohio to go into lockdown, days after the school shooting in Chardon.

Reports of apparent threats started coming into area schools almost immediately after Monday's shooting rampage, which left three students dead and two others injured. And the threats continue to be reported.

On Friday alone, police confirmed incidents at Garfield Heights Middle School, Memorial Junior High in South Euclid and Springfield High School in Springfield Township.

Garfield Heights police said a student reported to the principal that another student had a BB gun in the building, so the school was put into lockdown. Officers searched the school and an all clear was given a short time later.

South Euclid police said a bullet was found in the computer lab and the school went into lockdown as a precaution. Investigators determined that a student brought the bullet to school, but there was no gun involved. Police said the two juveniles involved will be charged through juvenile court.

A student was detained at Glenville High School after another student accused him of having a weapon. The two had scuffled earlier in the day. No weapon was found, said spokeswoman Roseann Canfora, but the school was locked down at 9:45 a.m. while school security and police searched the building.

A bomb threat was phoned into Cleveland Central Catholic High School about 10 a.m. on the same day.

N orth Royalton High School was locked down that day as well about 8:30 a.m. after a student reported hearing talk about a weapon. The information was false, said Superintendent Ed Vittardi.

Schools are on a heightened state of alert following the fatal **Chardon High School shootings.**

Warrensville Heights middle school was under lock down after a student told teachers another student had a gun. School officials and police searched the building for the possible weapon. No weapon was found.

Cleveland, Ohio was rated the poorest city in America twice in the past decade; it was also rated the 10th most violent city in America last year. Many youth at the rally talked about growing up in a community of violence dealing with gunshots ringing out in night air.

It was painful for some of the youth to talk about the countless friends and loved ones whose lives were claimed because of the ignorance and unchallenged influence of gangs and the gang lifestyle.

Avery shared the need for an alternative, and he believe that the community has to do something about the violence that has gone on in our neighborhood (and many others) for too long.

Cleveland City Councilmen Zack Reed and Jeff Johnson say they are disgusted with the ongoing violence in the city. The conversation intensified last summer because of a spike of highly publicized shootings involving young people as victims and suspects. Thirty people were killed in the city last summer, accounting for more than half of the city's murder total for the

year.

The councilmen and the Jackson administration are urging the city's corporate and medical communities to take a more prominent role in anti-violence initiatives. Johnson cited the effort Procter & Gamble has done in Cincinnati working with youth programs as an example. His East Side ward contains several hot spots where shootings are common.

"There are key stakeholders who are not involved with this issue," Johnson said. "We're finding that people are not determining why they should be part of the debate because, up to this point, it's been a law enforcement perspective."

Blaine Griffin, community relations director for the city, said the corporate and philanthropic communities in Cleveland continue to be generous, but their brainpower also is needed to create a more systematic approach in tackling the issue.

"We need all hands on deck right now," said Griffin.

Khalid Samad from Peace in the Hood has been out in the Black communities for a long time dealing with crime in the neighborhoods and has talked with a lot of youth. "Many of our children have not been debriefed about rage, so they act out implosively," said Samad.

"There is too much gun violence in Greater Cleveland. There are too many young people dying over nothing. It's not even a matter of being at the wrong place at the wrong time anymore; people are getting shot in their own homes. Teens now have access to weapons, which is becoming very dangerous," said Avery.