

THE CALL

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Community Leaders Take Stand at 39th and Prospect

By Ché Parker

July 10 marked the beginning of reclamation on 39th and Prospect.

On that day, the Community Movement for Urban Progress (Move Up), along with Councilman Troy Nash, kicked off a 144-hour marathon against drugs and violence in the eastside community.

The marathon is a community effort to take back the neighborhood residents say is plagued with drugs and prostitution.

The heat and humidity did not effect the overwhelming support being offered by area residents and passing motorists. Nor did it sway

Councilman Nash's conviction.

"It was fantastic," said Councilman Nash on July 11 of his first night spent sleeping on the corner. "It was hotter than I expected. I'm going to sleep outside the tent tonight."

Volunteers from around the metropolitan area have donated their time and energy to what they hope will generate a long-term positive response in the area.

"On the 145th hour it might be business as usual on this corner. But we are going to follow up. We want to try to get some businesses estab-

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lished here," stated Mike Smith of Move Up.

Representatives from neighborhood groups, as well as government and social service agencies participated in the marathon by handing out useful information and safety devices.

"The response from the community has been tremendous. The people have been very supportive," said Riccardo Lucas, community activist with Move Up.

The southwest corner of 39th and Prospect resembled a family reunion more than a rally. Sponsors donated plenty of bottled water, and all the necessities for a successful cookout.

Throughout the day on Tuesday, volunteers and supporters walked up and offered words of encouragement and praise.

"I'd like to help the community get the drugs off the street. I lived in this area. There are kids out here," stated volunteer Brenda Robinson.

The marathon will conclude with a prayer on Sunday morning, July 16.

"This community has suffered too long, from neglect and broken promises and broken dreams. I hope we will send a message that we are committed to taking back our community," Councilman Nash said.

For further information, contact Riccardo Lucas at (816) 842-8515.



PLAN OF ACTION . . . Riccardo Lucas of Move Up, left, is shown above with City Councilman Troy Nash at the 144-Hour marathon to rid the neighborhood near 39th and Prospect of drugs, crime and prostitution. The two will be joined by a host of area leaders and residents until the conclusion of the marathon on Sunday, July 16. -- CALL photo by Jerry Lockett