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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Business community joins local law enforcement fight to reduce murder rate
Chamber pledges to raise \$200,000 toward JSO's Operation Safe Streets initiative**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (August 15, 2006) – In a press conference today, the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce made a \$200,000 commitment on behalf of the business community in support of Operation Safe Streets, a Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) initiative designed to prevent gun crime and reduce the murder rate. After less than one week of fundraising, nearly \$180,000 has already been pledged by 26 organizations and several individuals.

The Chamber has made a commitment to JSO to raise \$100,000 for the Gun Bounty portion of Operation Safe Streets and \$100,000 in funding to promote the Operation Safe Streets program throughout the city. Sheriff John Rutherford is contributing another \$130,000 from drug seizure funds for promotional efforts.

"Our goal through this partnership is to galvanize the business community in an effort to combat the gun violence that has occurred in our city during the last few months," said Chamber Chair Ed Burr. "This program provides a tangible way for our businesses to get involved in the fight to make our streets safer and our community a better place. The response by the business community to date has been tremendous."

Operation Safe Streets is a three-pronged law enforcement response to the murder rate, with the Gun Bounty initiative being a key piece of the program. The Gun Bounty program – different from a Gun Buyback – asks local residents to anonymously alert law enforcement of illegal handgun possession by neighbors, family, friends or acquaintances through the First Coast Crime Stoppers hotline at 1-866-845-8477 (TIPS). If an arrest and weapon confiscation occurs, the tipster will receive \$1,000.

"The Gun Bounty program will be an effective tactical tool for getting illegal guns off the streets of Jacksonville and out of the hands of criminals," Sheriff John Rutherford said. "This will target precisely the people who are committing violent gun crimes. I am very appreciative of the Chamber's support of the Gun Bounty program and Operation Safe Streets."

The promotional campaign will include billboards, bus wraps, TV and radio ads, speakers in schools and various other efforts informing Jacksonville citizens of Operation Safe Streets. This campaign will also include a collateral piece and educational brochures to be distributed in the city's gun crime "hotspots," as defined by the Sheriff's office. The Dalton Agency has donated their time to create the program's promotional pieces.

Steve Halverson, president and CEO of Haskell and a Chamber Trustee, is leading the effort to raise funds from Chamber members. Haskell has contributed \$10,000 to this effort.

Many organizations in the business community have already donated their funds or services, including:

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AmSouth Bank; Bank of America; Baptist Health; Barcelo and Company; Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida; Chartwell Capital; Coggin Automotive; Compass Bank; Dalton Agency; Demetree Brothers; Elkins Construction; Fidelity National Financial; Florida Rock; Florida Times-Union; Foley and Lardner, LLP; Haskell; Landmar Group, LLC; Miller Electric; PGA TOUR; PSS; Regency; Reynolds, Smith and Hills; St. Joe Company; VyStar Credit Union; Wachovia and Zurich.

Steve Halverson, Kevin Hyde, Tom Petway, Peter and Lee Ann Rummell and Jim Winston have made individual contributions.

About the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce is the business membership organization of influence whose actions contribute to responsible economic growth and a better quality of life for all people on the First Coast, which includes Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns counties. We lead regional economic development by supporting the growth of area businesses, helping to attract and establish new businesses and fostering a healthy and inclusive business environment. Moreover, we improve quality of life through responsible, sustained leadership on community and regional issues of relevance to our members.

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