The View of the Executive Director

We want to thank those citizens and police who have begun to respond to our Mediation Program, a structured, yet informal complaint procedure that brings both sides together in a peaceful, non-confrontational environment, before a neutral, impartial and independent third party, to resolve conflicts. Thanks to the fine actor Joel Rush who is using his celebrity to promote the mediation campaign.

We also want to welcome aboard W. Calvin Anderson who has been assigned to manage our Community Outreach Volunteer Ambassador Program (COVAP). Our little army of well-organized advocates for the agency will give us the eyes and ears we need throughout the city to gauge citizen concerns, then act accordingly.

Actually, 24/7, the agency is all about the business of conflict resolution and citizen feedback in some form or fashion. We do not always conclude incidents to everyone’s satisfaction, as is often the case with most mediated incidents, but our investigators who follow the evidence wherever it may lead are able to deliver enough documentation in their reports to give our Board a fair and objective view of an incident before deciding on a case.

As the weather gets warmer and more residents find themselves outside enjoying a stroll in the park, flower show, music concert or ballgame, we must remember to always remain vigilant.

So remember, if you ever have a question about the agency and/or a complaint about an Atlanta police or corrections officers’ action, contact the ACRB at 404-865-8622. Email us at acrb@atlantaga.gov. Visit our website at www.acrbgov.org.

Allow me to express my gratitude to the citizens who have come forward anonymously to lodge complaints against sworn officers of the Atlanta Police Department. Regardless of the outcome of your case, we know that we might have missed your complaint if you were forced to reveal your identity.

Joel Rush, a Bad Policeman on TV, Promotes the ACRB Mediation Program

For actor Joel Rush, who brought the character to life, his stunning and convincing portrayal has been a blessing and a curse. Although critically acclaimed for the role, he has also been shunned on the streets of Atlanta by those who fail to distinguish between the fictional personality and the Atlanta resident who cares deeply about improving relations between citizens and police.

This is why Mr. Rush chose to help promote the Atlanta Citizen Review Board’s Mediation Program.

The popularity of the show caused the Indiana native to re-locate full-time to Atlanta in 2016. He has invested much of his spare time attending, supporting and/or participating in police/citizen conferences, rallies and strategy sessions. He is using his celebrity to do interviews and whatever else he can to ensure peaceful relations between law enforcement and the citizens they are sworn to protect and serve.

The TV and radio public service announcements (PSAs) that Mr. Rush did for the ACRB says:

“Hey Atlanta, I’m Joel Rush. You probably know me as a really bad cop on TV, But that’s not who I am in real life. In real life, I live and work right here in this city. And I believe we all have a voice.

(Continued on page 2)
Acclaimed Actor Does a P.S.A. For the ACRB Mediation Program

That being said, if you ever feel disrespected by a City of Atlanta police or corrections officer, please know that there are peaceful ways to resolve these differences. Consider mediation through The Atlanta Citizen Review Board. Call 404 865 8622 or go online at acrb.gov. ACRB Mediation…IT’S TIME TO TALK, ATLANTA!"

The public service announcement was shot by and aired on City of Atlanta TV26. The making of the ACRB Mediation public service announcement and interviews by Rush and Executive Director Lee Reid were also broadcast on a number of the city’s commercial television stations.

Rush explained why the partnership with ACRB and its Mediation campaign is so important to him. “Spreading love is important to me. I think that’s the thing that’s going to heal all of us, especially at this time. But right now, this is a problem in the African American community with police brutality that has to be addressed.”

Rush continued, “If anybody hasn’t seen the documentary “13”, I know that was a huge eye opener for me in bringing police brutality to the forefront. With my television show, Tyler (Perry) is trying to use our show as a medium to kind of put a spotlight on a problem that has been going on for a long, long time.”

For me, it’s 2017, and I can’t speak for generations that came before me, but I can speak for my generation, I can speak for generations after me…I don’t care if you’re Black, White, gay, straight; I don’t care what color you are, I don’t care what you do in your personal time. If you are a good human being, if you have a good heart, if you are loving and tolerant of those around you, the world is a better place, period…We need to focus on loving our neighbor, not judging our neighbor.

ACRB is really making a push to give people in communities that usually don’t have a voice, they’re giving them a voice and a platform to…if something is being done in your community that needs to be addressed, please call us. And that’s very, very important to me. I’m passionate about helping those that don’t have a voice, so this is meaningful.”

ACRB Mediation Program is confidential except in cases of child/elder abuse and credible threats of violence. No information gathered during the mediation will be shared with anyone outside the process.

An impartial, independent neutral mediator helps a citizen and an officer find a solution to their conflict. Both sides are able to share their points of view in a fair, peaceful and objective environment.

Hundreds of mediation brochures specifically created for sworn officers of the Atlanta Police Department and citizens are being distributed.

To help ensure conflict resolution, participants are urged to be open to share and learn others’ perspectives; focus on the issues; remain calm; avoid the temptation to attack and, perhaps most importantly, be willing to listen.

The professional, neutral, independent and impartial mediator is not only trained to listen to both points of view and ask clarifying questions, but also guide both parties through the process and assist in writing up an agreement. Mediators never take sides, assess blame or force anyone to make a decision.

When both sides agree that their conflict is resolved, the mediation is considered a success.

Mediation bench ads near MARTA bus stops have appeared throughout the city as a part of the campaign. And whenever schedules permit, Reid and Rush will do media interviews on the ACRB Mediation Program.

“We want citizens to know that there’s an opportunity to be able to discuss with an officer any concerns that they have,” explained ACRB Executive Director Lee Reid. “We’re about building relationships, and we believe that one-on-one opportunity provides that great mechanism for us to be able to improve relationships.”

When asked why Joel Rush, who plays a bad policeman on TV, was sought to be the face of ACRB Mediation, Reid replied “Partly because of his role, but also because I had the opportunity to see Joel during a forum. He had talked about his commitment to reaching out to the community to discuss issues that were occurring.

And in our office, when we discussed it, we said it would be a good opportunity to help move our Mediation Program forward. I mean anytime you can build relationships and if people get to talk to each other about an incident, that’s a good thing. So that’s what we’re trying to push and that’s why we’re grateful that Joel is helping us with that message.”

(Continued from page 1)
“...You were the only ones to follow through the process....”

Atlanta resident Samantha Leroy is a classic homebody who prefers to invest most of her time on the many pleasures and activities around the household. But it was on a particularly beautiful day in October of 2015 that the stay-at-home citizen was coaxed by her friend to emerge from her comfortable confines and take a stroll through Piedmont Park with their two dogs. Recalling everything that happened later that day, she said “It was crazy ‘cause I never go out.” If she had stayed inside, she likely would have never encountered APD Officers Terrence Whitten or Arkeda Collins.

Arriving at the park, Leroy said “We crossed the street in front of a police car and saw a whole bunch of other dogs. We decided to let them run and play.” Immediately, she said a police officer emerged from his cruiser and told them they could not have their pets roaming unleashed outside a dog park. “We said ok, fine, and put the dogs back on the leash.” That could have been the end to the story, but it was only the beginning.

“The cop asked for my ID and my friend’s ID. I said I didn’t understand why. He said we need to write down your information to show that we talked to you. I gave him my name. He told the female officer to run my name.” The officer returned with her driver’s license. There were no outstanding warrants or issues which is why Leroy said she could not understand why Officer Whitten kept questioning her. She asked “Am I not being detained?” When Officer Collins responded, “Yes,” Leroy informed the officers that she and her friend were not answering further questions and leaving.

Minutes later, after finding a shady spot under a tree, the officers pulled up across the street from them. Leroy said “...the female cop walked toward us.” That is when Leroy turned on her video camera which she says clearly showed that their pets were leashed. Leroy said Officer Collins told her that her supervisor said they should have given her a ticket. The officer announced that she was writing citations for both Leroy and her companion as she walked back to her police car.

Shortly thereafter, as she fought the fines in court, she filed a complaint with ACRB, alleging false arrest and false imprisonment. On July 14, 2016, the ACRB determined that the false imprisonment and false arrest allegations against both officers Collins and Whitten be assigned a finding of Sustained and recommends that both officers receive written reprimands as penalties for both infractions. It was also determined through the investigation that Officers Collins and Whitten provided untruthful statements as to what occurred during their second encounter with Ms. Leroy which resulted in them unlawfully detaining her and issuing her a citation which is captured on video. The Board recommends that the APD review the evidence and take appropriate action in accordance with the department’s disciplinary matrix.” Leroy complimented ACRB. “You (ACRB) were the only ones to follow through with the process.”

However, then-Chief George Turner rejected the findings of the ACRB after a subsequent APD investigation into the incident painted a different picture. “... Officer Arkeda Collins and Terrence Whitten did observe Ms. Leroy and her male companion in the park with their dogs off leash and they were issued a warning. Later, the officers while on patrol encountered the same individuals in the park with their dogs unleashed, which is a violation of the city ordinance and they were issued citations...The video issued by Ms. Leroy does not show the events that led up to the second encounter with Ms. Leroy in which she was previously warned and does not support the allegation that she was unlawfully detained.”

Leroy was outraged. “I’m a good citizen. I pay taxes...On the one day I come outside, why are you harassing us? That’s why police are not very popular right now!”

W. Calvin Anderson Becomes COVAP’s Volunteer Outreach Coordinator

W. Calvin Anderson, M. Ed, a nationally-known educator, program developer, community organizer and Founder of One Safe Community.Com, has accepted the position as Volunteer Outreach Coordinator for ACRB’s Community Outreach Volunteer Ambassador Program (COVAP).

Anderson, whose community-based initiatives have been endorsed and/or implemented by a number of civic groups, law enforcement and schools in Connecticut, Brooklyn, North Carolina and Georgia, brings to COVAP a wealth of knowledge, community coordination skills and urban-based program development abilities as ACRB’s volunteer corps continues to expand and evolve.

“It is an honor to serve the City of Atlanta coordinating COVAP,” said Anderson. “The ACRB provides opportunities for taxpayers, residents and citizens to ask questions, share concerns, and complaints related to contacts between – the Atlanta Police Department’s Public Safety Officers and the diverse citizens of the “world-class” City of Atlanta.”

Anderson met the volunteers for the first time at its monthly meeting in March. He said “The 2017 COVAP - Class of Ambassadors are committed private citizens who volunteer their time and many of their talents, professional skills and resources to help other taxpayers and citizens to comment about contacts with police officers. Through the Atlanta Citizen Review Board, we all learn to better understand that the City of Atlanta maintains a model Democratic “check and balance system” to improve police and community relations. (Continued on Page 4)
ACRB Partner Dick Blick Art Materials Receives Phoenix Award

Mayor Kasim Reed bestowed the Phoenix Award, City of Atlanta’s highest civilian honor, to Dick Blick Art Materials, an ACRB partner in its 2017 Art & Essay Contest. Blick offered art supplies to all Atlanta and Fulton County public schools and Atlanta-Fulton Public Library branches that needed them to participate in the contest whose theme this year is “How to bring police and citizens together.”

The Award reads in part, “On behalf of the People of Atlanta, I commend Dick Blick Art Materials...For 20 years, Blick Art Materials has been an advocate for the arts and has made a positive impact within the City of Atlanta. They have been committed to helping schools and members of the community discover ways to use art materials to engage and inspire our future generation. Your work with local organizations and large foundations to provide supplies and raise funds for those in need is truly admirable. ...I salute Blick Art Materials for offering support and spreading creativeness throughout this great city.” (Signed) Kasim Reed, Mayor of Atlanta, March 9, 2017.

W. Calvin Anderson Becomes COVAP’s Volunteer Outreach Coordinator

(Continued from page 3)

Anderson outlined his goals for the volunteers. “To me, principle goals for our COVAP team of citywide outreach ambassadors are to” 1) increase citizen trust, 2) encourage civic health and, 3) improve 21st century partnerships through mediation and reconciliation between our diverse citizenry and the City of Atlanta’s Police Department.

The 2017 Class of Outreach Ambassadors will be trained to use the high moral and ethical standards of the ACRB. We will also invite and welcome new volunteers to our team of active citizens to create our 21st century opportunities for improved civic health and “normalcy” with respect to police-and-community-relations. It is our hope that Atlanta will continue its historic tradition of leading responsible citizens through Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s ideals of partnership with government and direct-social-action. Atlanta, Georgia must always continue to respectively lead-the-nation and the world with its "best practices" and respect for ‘world-class’ citizenship and public-servant accountability.