If you have followed this column in recent years, you might have discerned a single underlying theme that runs throughout all of them. It is a theme that is essential to ensuring the health of our communities. It can be summed up in one word: SERVE. It cannot be overemphasized. We live in an age where the threat of terrorism and brutality is ever-present. It can strike at anytime and anywhere. Given the many challenges to our survival and especially those who seek to threaten our lives, liberties, and pursuit of happiness in the 21st century, it is vital for citizens to be vigilant, trained, and poised to be of service to our families, our communities, and ourselves. Complacency is not an option. This, of course, means finding the time to get involved in a worthwhile activity. Become an active participant in a Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU); a social, civil, faith-based or fraternal organization; a community group in your neighborhood. Support your children’s activities also. Know where your elected officials stand on civilian oversight of police and corrections. Be registered and vote. Stop looking for a leader and become your own servant leader.

While it is not always possible to eliminate those forces that seek to take away our freedoms and destroy our way of life, the surest path to their success is for us to do nothing. Get involved. SERVE!

And remember, if you ever have a question about this agency and/or a complaint about an Atlanta police or corrections officer’s action, contact the ACRB at 404-865-8622. Email us at acrb@atlantaga.gov. Visit our website at www.acrbgov.org. The Atlanta Citizen Review Board is here to serve you!

The much-anticipated ACRB Mediation Program got off to a strong start with a citizen and an officer coming to an agreement. The issues raised by an incident that brought them to the mediation table and the citizen’s complaint against the officer were resolved. Throughout the summer and into the fall of 2017, ACRB launched a citywide billboard campaign and simultaneously met twice a week with sworn officers of the APD to address any and all questions or concerns they may have about the ACRB Mediation Program. The free service gives citizens a chance to sit with an officer in a neutral and supportive environment before a professional and impartial mediator to express concerns about an incident and resolve a conflict.

Details about a mediation cannot be publicly nor specifically disclosed. Both parties sign confidentiality agreements. Disclosing details about a mediation is strictly forbidden.

Kat ray Alexander’s incident involved APD Officer Leslie Blasini, assigned to the Airport Precinct. Alexander said that on June 21, 2017, while driving alone in the I-75/85 southbound lane, Officer Blasini pulled her over and made an inappropriate comment. She wanted to freely and
If a serious injury occurs during an incident and an Atlanta police officer is first to arrive at the scene, residents can feel assured that the officer is trained and equipped with some of the most innovative devices that have saved lives during incidents in the city.

Thanks to Sgt. Thomas Soukup, Lt. A.G. Senzer and outgoing Major Darin Schierbaum from the Atlanta Police Training Section for giving ACRB a mini tour and a look at some of the life-saving simulated training methods taught and the first aid kit that each officer carries. Major Schierbaum and Lt. Senzer confirmed that two lives have already been saved by APD officers applying the custom-designed tourniquet from the kit.

“We have implemented tourniquet training at the recruit level, and in-service level,” said Lt. Senzer. “We have our first confirmed save in Zone 3 of an officer applying a tourniquet to a citizen and saving his life...his mother cradling her son’s head in her arms...the blood flowing in the street and an Atlanta police officer on his knees saving the life. That’s community right there. That’s service being delivered. We’re assisting the citizens and to know that the police department, yea, we enforce the law. But it’s important for us to save lives when that opportunity presents itself.” Major Schierbaum, a 15 year APD veteran who left his post at the Atlanta Police Training Section to assume command of Zone 5, adds “Those are the good training that’s going on here that we see occurring. And we want that to be the standard that we’re judged on and that we’re all striving to reach, is the quality training that lies outside those ‘traditional areas’ you would think of a police officer.”

The Major describes “Tom” as a “top notch training tool...simulates talking, pulse, breathing...It has the weight of a human, the feel of human skin and it makes the training very realistic so we can try to simulate that stress and that realism that can throw an officer off if we didn’t make the training here as realistic as we could. So we have that device and that’s what we use to simulate the arterial bleeding, the blood spurring; make it as real as we can. That officer has to get in there and get dirty. That way, when they do that, when they’re on any other street in Atlanta...we’ll be able to do it just as well...”
Your Story: “When I think of ACRB…”

“...a great organization...I appreciate the fact that you’re there.”

He holds the distinction of having filed the most complaints with the ACRB against sworn officers of the Atlanta Police Department (APD). He is a familiar fixture at City Hall, often speaking during televised public hearings before the Atlanta City Council about police misconduct and other issues. He recently organized a prayer vigil of citizens and ministers on behalf of the families of those who have been killed by law enforcement. He also professes to be an ordained minister with a ministry known as The True Believers Shekinah Glory Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C.)

When asked to describe himself, Raymond Washington speaks about “...a good heart. I’m not perfect, no one is perfect. But I do believe that God has put something in me to cause me to be able to run forth in this race...” Washington says he thinks it is very sad that he has come up with a notion that most African American young men, unlike himself, lack knowledge “when it comes down to the Constitution and...being able to know what your rights are or know how a police officer is supposed to be treating you as a human being...Since I’ve had these experiences...it has been harassment 90 percent of the time, especially after...the Citizen Review Board found in favor of me and sustained my complaint against Officer David Holleman.”

The ACRB, after a thorough investigation, found that on March 28, 2015, Mr. Washington was not only falsely imprisoned when Officer Holleman unlawfully stopped and detained him, but also that the officer used excessive force by pointing his firearm at Washington, grabbing him, throwing him against a patrol car then searching him. APD’s Office of Professional Standards (OPS) and then APD Chief George Turner disagreed with the ACRB findings and cleared Officer Holleman of any wrongdoing.

“The reason why I ran to the Citizen Review Board was because in the beginning stages of this case...the City of Atlanta Police Department, their internal affairs, jammed together and decided that they wanted to stand against me because this officer pulled a loaded gun and pointed it at my chest...If I did not have God in my life, I do not know what I would have done to myself,” Washington explained, “When you’re fighting a battle of this magnitude, this is not easy.

It’s very important to me not just that I be able to have a voice but everyone, no matter who you are, what color you have, everybody should have a voice if they are paying taxes by the city or the municipality that they are paying taxes to...Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and I can go down the list of people that gave their own lives, all because of the fact that they saw wrong being done.”

Since 2015, Raymond Washington has filed five formal complaints with the ACRB against the APD, mostly on charges of harassment. The case involving Officer Holleman is the only one that the agency ruled in his favor. “This is not something I am making up...There’s...nothing wrong with me...I think they (APD officers) should check themselves...When you’re in those kinds of jobs, those people sometimes take their jobs as though they’re God over people...If these folks are gonna keep on violating people’s rights, they need to be reported to somebody. I’m not a crusader that’s out here looking for some name. That’s not what I’m doing. I believe, number one...that there have been injustices and the injustices are really raising themselves up literally, all the way to the White House.”

Raymond Washington describes the Atlanta Citizen Review Board as “a great organization...I appreciate the fact that you’re there.”
The First Mediation Between a Citizen and an APD Officer is a Success

Continued from page 1

fully express her feelings to the officer about his comments without confrontation in a safe, neutral setting where he would have to listen to every word she had to say. Alexander, who had heard about ACRB via Google and a police officer friend, filled out a complaint form online at acrbgov.org. “I went into detail as to what occurred...I wanted to basically speak with him (the officer) a little more. I know he was doing his job. I felt we should sit down, one-on-one and speak about it” Ms. Katray explained.

She subsequently received a phone call from an ACRB investigator. “During that conversation, he asked me what occurred on the day of the incident. I went into detail and explained to him the situation. And then afterward, he stated that they would be giving me a call back with a follow up date and to find out if the officer would like to have a mediation.”

Officer Blasini advised ACRB that he agreed to a mediation with Ms. Alexander. “I thought it was good. I think more people should understand that and see how it works, how people can misunderstand something because you don’t know what that other person is going through...” Officer Blasini, who described the experience as “virtually painless really,” said the initial waiting process to set up the agency’s first mediation was the only part of the action with which he took issue. Now, from start to finish, ACRB Mediation process is significantly quicker than going through a formal investigation of a complaint.

Officer Blasini added “You should be able to sit down face-to-face, not in a hostile, derogatory way, but to be able to talk to the person who accused you of something and come to an understanding.” Having reached a satisfactory outcome, the citizen and officer at the end of the session signed a mediation agreement. What did Ms. Alexander and Officer Blasini take away from the ACRB Mediation experience?

“...It’s important, especially with all the things that are going around these days about what police officers are. We’re really not that way, but one small apple can spoil that whole bunch, said Officer Blasini.”

“I came back to the precinct and I told everybody what it was, and I recommended it,” said Officer Blasini. “Of course, you’re gonna have skeptics about everything, the negative folks...We don’t know what people are going through. I apologized for it. I don’t know why more people don’t apologize more than they should.”

Ms. Alexander said at the end, she thanked Officer Blasini “for acknowledging his mistake and correcting it. (ACRB Mediation) made me feel my opinion mattered when I was reaching out to have a mediation. I felt like they took the time to read my complaint. I thought that I would be just filing a complaint and not hearing anything. But I was glad to know that somebody followed up for me in reference to my complaint.”

ACRB Executive Director Lee Reid has made informing the public about ACRB Mediation a top priority. The agency not only launched a citywide billboard campaign and met twice a week with APD officers, but Mr. Reid also began a series of public appearances before a number of Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs) and various community groups to be sure the public was made aware of the free service.

To citizens who are considering ACRB Mediation, Ketray Alexander says, “...they should consider doing it since it’s a good thing to get a basic understanding of why things are done and how they are done when they are stopped by an officer and they feel they are being mistreated. They should reach out to someone else to get a better understanding of the situation and sit down with that officer (with whom) the incident occurred so they can know what was going on with each other on that day.”