

Iverson donates \$100K to gun buyback program

BY DAVID LERMAN | Daily Press

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WASHINGTON - Basketball star *Allen Iverson is donating \$100,000 to support the Newport News Police Department's "Gun Buy Back" program*, U.S. Rep. Robert C. Scott announced Wednesday night.

The program, used in many major urban centers, offers money to residents who turn in guns to police, with no questions asked. *The Newport News program is a joint effort of the police and the Peninsula Community Foundation.*

Iverson, a Peninsula native, pledged support for the program in a statement issued by Scott's office.

"I have made this contribution because I want to make a difference and I hope that others join me," said Iverson, who now plays for the Denver Nuggets.

"I can remember growing up in Newport News and Hampton," Iverson said, "and if we can prevent one more child from being killed and another family from crying and mourning the death of another loved one, then it is more than worth it."

The donation by Iverson comes after a troubled personal history with guns. In 2002, Iverson was arrested on 14 felony and misdemeanor charges in Philadelphia after police said he broke into his cousin's apartment and threatened him with a gun. Iverson had said he was looking for his wife, whom he had thrown out of his mansion that evening. He was later cleared of all charges except one misdemeanor.

In 1997, he pleaded no contest to gun possession in another incident. And before he became a national star, Iverson made headlines on the Peninsula after a fight between black and white youths at a former Hampton bowling alley in 1993. He received a five-year prison sentence, but then-Gov. Doug Wilder granted him clemency after Iverson served four months at the Newport News City Farm. A state appeals court overturned the conviction in 1995.

Scott, a veteran congressman and Newport News Democrat, said he was hopeful that Iverson's contribution would strengthen the fledgling gun program and encourage more donations.

"This is a great gift from local NBA standout Allen Iverson," Scott said. "It is a significant act of philanthropy for a well-intended community-based effort. It may initiate a larger degree of participation by others."

In Congress, Scott serves as chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on crime, terrorism and homeland security.

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