

Rochester kicks off statewide gun buyback program

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Rochester's event also kicked off a series of buybacks around the state, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced Saturday morning.

In the coming weeks, the Attorney General's office will take guns in exchange for money at buybacks in Binghamton, Poughkeepsie, Utica, Yonkers, and the Buffalo suburb of Cheektowaga.

In Rochester, residents came to 342 Arnett Street to anonymously drop off their working and non-working guns in exchange for money. The Attorney General's office issued debit cards: \$25 for broken guns or antiques, \$50 for long guns, \$75 for handguns, and \$100 for assault weapons.

Additional \$25 Tops grocery store gift cards were provided by the committee, which raised money to support the effort, said Southwest Gun Buyback Committee Member Susan Morehouse.

The event was scheduled to start at 11 a.m. but opened its doors at 9:30 due to early interest, according to Assistant Attorney General Debra Martin. Despite the extended hours, participants had to wait in long lines before being served.

“We have been waiting for two hours — two hours of my day that I didn’t have to give,” said Kila Jackson, 27, of Greece. She and her sister, Kyesha, 23, stayed to return their father’s rifles but said long lines will discourage people from coming back again.

Christina Knowles, 34, of Rochester received \$75 for the .40-caliber rifle she said she found in her backyard last week. She said she was just grateful she had somewhere to safely dispose of the gun before her children found it.

Martin said the Southwest Gun Buyback brought in more than 200 guns. A final tally wasn’t available Saturday night, but Martin estimated between \$12,000 and \$15,000 was paid out. Since part of the offer was to have no questions asked, all of the guns will be melted down without being tested, according to Rochester Police Officer Patrick Piano.

Though that means potential evidence could be lost forever, “The police department’s point is that these guns will never be able to victimize another human being,” Piano said.

Buybacks have been the subject of that and other criticisms in recent years. The U.S. Department of Justice has stated that the guns turned in are those least likely to be involved in crimes.

Brandon Bradley, 23, of Rochester, explained that many people his age feel they need guns to protect themselves — they’d rather do jail time than be dead.

Brandon Bradley has lost at least five friends from his neighborhood to gun violence.

“This is a start right here,” he said of the buyback. “Hopefully, it will become a chain reaction.”

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