

The Honorable Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero
Maga'hågan Guahån
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Hafa Adai!

Over the past few weeks, several events have happened that I think require us to speak about more openly and more often within our community. Burglaries, sexual assaults, child abuse, and traffic fatalities are some of the serious issues that have made recent headline news.

We are working to keep our island safe and public safety is one of the reasons why I chose to run for Governor. Now that I've taken office it continues to be a priority for the Lieutenant Governor and me.

Let's be clear, government cannot solve these problems alone, but we will lead the effort.

For the past several months, we have taken a second look at the budgets of our law enforcement agencies to find efficiencies, savings, and unused federal programs and funding.

That scrutiny has resulted in more Guam Police Department officers on patrol. Nearly 30 more will be hired within the next month. The same can be said for our Customs Authority which soon will be hiring an additional 20 officers to protect our borders.

Adding more officers on patrol and at our borders helps, but there is much more that needs to happen with all of us to help protect our children, our families, and our properties. In this sense, it will take an island-wide community effort to make and keep our island safe.

I applaud and encourage the community watch groups and non-profit organizations that sacrifice and dedicate their time to care for the most vulnerable on our island--everyday heroes who selflessly give themselves to this vital cause, like Victim Advocates Reaching Out, Healing Hearts, Erica's House, Child Protective Services, GPD's Domestic Assault Response Team and their recently launched Stranger Danger Program.

I was very encouraged by the hundreds of people who participated in the ENOUGH campaign to raise awareness of sexual assault. The more people know about this and other crimes perpetrated on our citizens, the more we are able to address and to stop these crimes from happening in the first place.

We have already taken some steps to help families deal with the challenges that crime produces. In our 2020 proposed budget, we will hire more social workers and we will work with the Legislature to keep this initiative funded.

Our Administration is also working toward improving our justice system as a whole, collaborating with all branches of our government.

In fact, Lt. Governor Josh and I will be meeting with parents, students, teachers and our community

at Liguán Elementary School to get their feedback on ways we can improve school safety. This is part of a program launched a few weeks ago in partnership with the Guam Department of Education, Guam Police Department, Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center, Department of Public Works and Guam Homeland Security, called the School Safety Partnership. We want you to share with us your concerns and your ideas on ways we can better protect our children from all forms of abuse.

Safety is a priority for our administration. While we are taking these steps to make our community a safer place for everyone, I want to thank each of you for doing your part to help us with this islandwide effort--for saying something when you see something, for calling 911, or Crimestoppers - even if it is to report on a family member. We all need to do our part to make Guam a better place and I want to thank those of you who are helping us to do so - whether you work in the government, the private sector, or as an observant member of a neighborhood watch group. As they say, it takes a village to keep us safe. On Guam, it takes 19 villages.

Si Yu'os Ma'ase for being a part of our village effort. God bless you and your families, and God bless Guam.