

Support group helps police solve killings

By Roy Wood
Post staff reporter

Gino Booker would have turned 36 on Thursday.

He won't be here to celebrate, though. Instead, his family, friends and members of Who Killed Our Kids will be holding a memorial at 3035 Walter St. in Walnut Hills, near where Booker was gunned down by unknown assailants on Oct. 14, 2002. He died two days later, said his mother, Vicki Johnson.

Booker had just dropped his son, a sixth grader at the time, at an after-school program and was coming out of a store on Walter Street with soda pop for himself and a woman friend when a car drove up and Booker and a man in the car apparently got into an argument.

The argument escalated into violence. After Booker was shot, his money, jewelry and cell phone were stolen, his mother said.

Johnson said Booker was a chef at a restaurant downtown on Walnut Street and raising his son alone. "He was very active in his son's life," she said.

She is holding the memorial near his birthday because she wants to keep his case before the public and simply because she loves him. "As long as I'm alive, my son lives," she said.

During the memorial, which will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. today, participants will go to Booker's nearby gravesite, then on to where he used to live.

Who Killed Our Kids, a nonprofit organization started by the mother of another 2002 Cincinnati homicide victim, is sponsoring the vigil. It helps families of unsolved homicides, regardless of the victim's age.

"I started it because I really wanted to do something," said Lucy Logan, whose son, 19-year-old Nolan Moi, was shot to death in his Madisonville apartment March 11, 2002.

The police department's Homicide Unit helped her contact others, she said. Within about two weeks, seven families had formed a core group. Now, 67 families are members.

When they initially got together, group members did more than grieve, Logan said. They immediately started trying to figure out what they could do to help police solve homicides.

"Homicide really is doing the best it can under the circumstances," Logan said, noting that the unit has 12 to 15 investigators and handles other crimes as well as homicides. "Not only are they understaffed, people aren't coming forward (with information)."

Who Killed Our Kids uses photos that victims' families supply to create posters that are distributed in neighborhoods and posted in storefronts. It raises money to sponsor rewards. And it serves as a liaison between families and police.

Keeping murder victims in the public's awareness is one of the group's most important functions, said Logan, who has offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of her son's killer.