

## Annual Stop the Violence/Back to School Rally set for July 31

Alachua County children and their families are invited to attend the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Stop the Violence/Back to School Rally on Saturday, July 31 from 10 a.m. to noon.

The event will be held at Citizens Park, behind the MLK Center off NE 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Waldo Road. The event is once again being organized by People Against Violence Enterprises (PAVE) and is supported by a wide variety of local sponsors, including primary sponsor Meldon Law.

Gun violence will be the main focus of this year's rally.

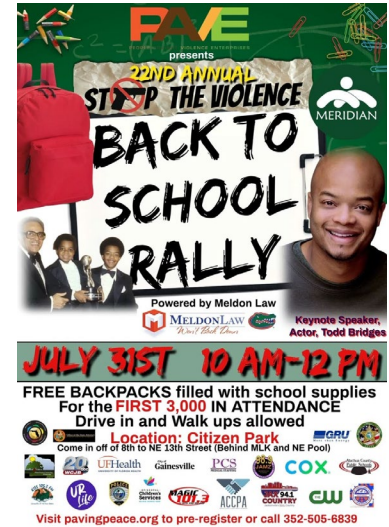
"With the recent increase in gun violence in our community involving our youth, it's necessary for us to wrap our arms around them like never before by working together in the area of intervention promoting gun safety," said Reverend Karl Anderson, the founder of PAVE.

The rally's keynote speaker will be actor Todd Bridges, who rocketed to fame as Willis Jackson in the popular TV sitcom *Diff'rent Strokes* and had many other roles on TV as a child. Bridges will talk about overcoming struggles with drug addiction and trouble with the law to again become a successful actor, director and producer.

The event will feature entertainment and other speakers, as well as information provided by community organizations about gun safety, counseling and other topics. Free COVID vaccinations and testing will also be available.

The first 3000 school-aged children in attendance will receive a free backpack filled with school supplies, provided by Meridian Behavioral Healthcare. Children must be present to receive the backpacks.

More information about the rally is available at (352) 505-6839 or at [www.pavingpeace.org](http://www.pavingpeace.org)



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