

'We marched for peace'

West Rehoboth mother holds her son's final march

Taylor Goebel Salisbury Daily Times
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Coley Marchtmon collapsed on the floor, a coat of blood marking the brutal beating.

The West Rehoboth man was on his way home from work in July 2008 when he was jumped by a group of five men in Burton Village. According to details pieced together by his mother, Eleanor Marchtmon, the men beat him with a gun and brass knuckles, threw him against the pavement and left him on the road.

No one called for an ambulance, according to Eleanor, so her son laid there for some time, then dragged himself to his moped and rode the long mile to his grandfather's house — "Thank God he made it home," Eleanor said — where he keeled over.

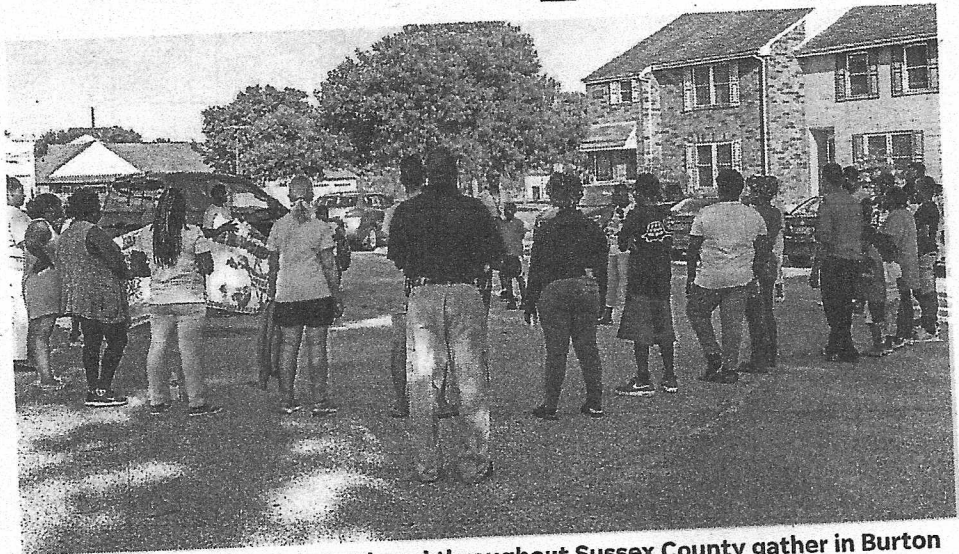
Eleanor rushed over after getting the call, and found him crumpled on the floor, still breathing. She called for the ambulance.

After receiving treatment at two hospitals over a few weeks, Coley died on August 4. He was 34.

Details on the reasons behind the attack and the cause of death remain foggy, but Eleanor remembers the police calling her while she was still at the hospital, praying her son would make it.

A group of friends, neighbors and family members had swarmed in West Rehoboth, wanting vengeance for Coley, the officer told her.

"I don't care who gets hurt now," Eleanor recalls angrily telling police. "As a matter of fact, don't even call me."



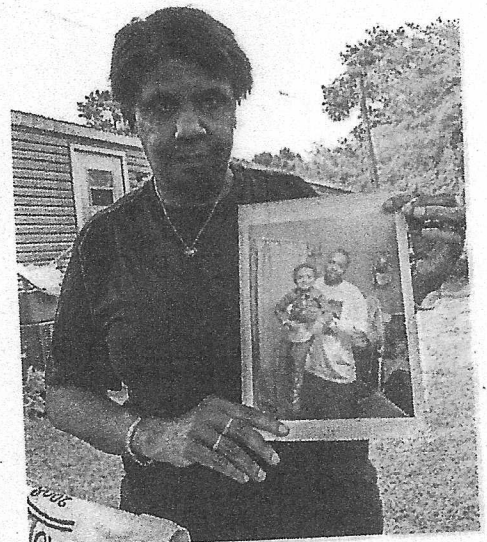
Residents from West Rehoboth and throughout Sussex County gather in Burton Village, where Coley Marchtmon was brutally beaten by a group of men while on his way home from work. STAFF PHOTOS BY TAYLOR GOEBEL

She hung up, and the officer called again: More people had gathered, and there was going to be trouble, and could you please help, ma'am?

"I didn't want people to retaliate, to hurt those boys or those boys' mothers," Eleanor said, taking a breath. She called her sister, Gail Savage, who is a pastor, and directed her to tell the furious group to not take action, to calm down, at least for a few days.

To mend losses beyond words, Eleanor began marching on Aug. 4 of every year from West Rehoboth to Burton Village, not only for her son, but for peace.

West Rehoboth, a historically black community tucked just outside Rehoboth Beach, is a mixture of mobile homes and a growing number of businesses and pricey domiciles.



Eleanor Marchtmon holds up a photo of her son Coley Marchtmon, who died 10 years ago.

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our hearts, continuing to pray for peace and understanding and compassion and for God's sake, please forgive," Eleanor told the 30 marchers, who were now holding hands. "Forgiveness is the biggest part of this march for me."

She motioned to the expansive parking lot, where the five men jumped her son.

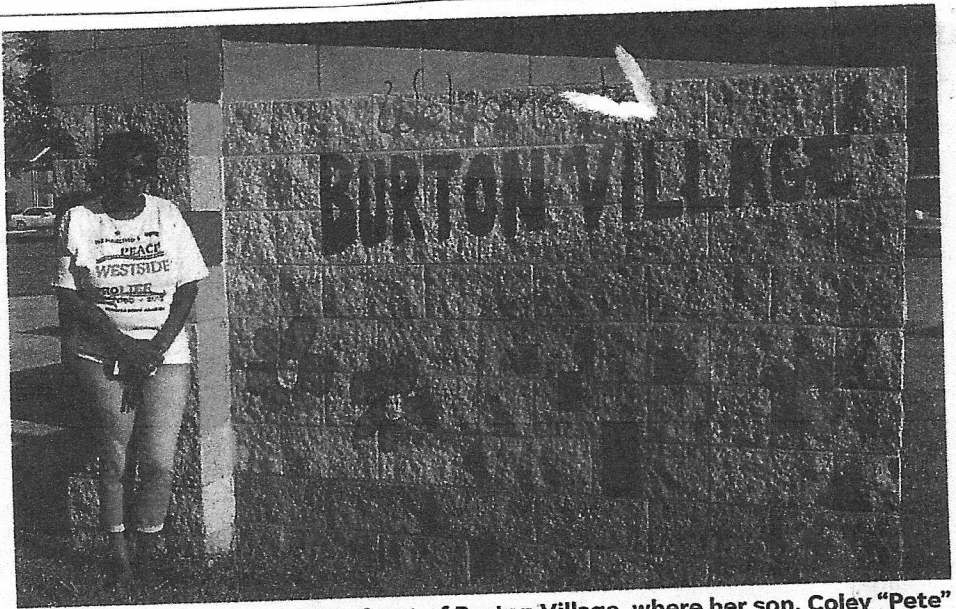
"Right here, right where we're standing," she said.

Her sister, Gail, led a prayer, her voice quivering among sweet-sounding "mhm's" from those who listened.

"We ask you to bring peace, forgiveness and love, God," she pronounced, "to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Where there's fighting and hate, let us love.

"Because you used my nephew, you used his life to demonstrate love and peace, God, so let it be...If this had to take his life to bring peace and to bring prayer and to bring us together, so let it be."

Nikki Frazier grew up on the same



Eleanor Marchtmon stands in front of Burton Village, where her son, Coley "Pete" Marchtmon was brutally beaten by a group of men in July 2008.

STAFF PHOTO BY TAYLOR GOEBEL

street as Coley. They were best friends, "Hennessy and Coors Light," she said, laughing at their earlier years.

"He was a good dude," she said. "He was really turning his life around."

Frazier gave Eleanor a long hug. She'd

been walking alongside Coley's mother every year since the peace marches began.

"Listen," Eleanor said, breaking the quiet, "do you hear any other mothers crying?"