

Guns turned into gift cards

BY JOHN RUCH
GAZETTE STAFF

A city buy-back program appears to be getting some guns off Jamaica Plain streets, with seven weapons turned in at the Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF) on the first day of the program alone, according to police reports.

Under the program, which began June 12, residents can turn in illegal handguns in exchange for a \$200 Target store gift card, and without facing any criminal charges. Target was ap-

parently deliberately chosen as part of the program's suggestion that illegal gun-owners "aim for peace" instead of aiming at other people.

The program continues through July 14, Mondays through Fridays, noon to 7 p.m., at all Boston Police stations and various other locations. The HSTF at 375 Centre St. is the only non-police JP location. Another four guns were turned in there on the program's second day.

"We felt like we partnered when the original buy-back started [in the 1990s] and we wanted to again partici-

pate," said HSTF's Jesús Gerena.

The buy-back gives out the gift cards only in exchange for working handguns. However, non-working guns as well as rifles, shotguns and ammo can also be turned in without criminal charges. Also, under state law, illegal guns and ammo can be turned in without criminal charges at any time, as long as the owner unloads and locks up the weapons and contacts local police ahead of time to arrange a time and place to turn them in.

At the buy-back program locations, weapons must be unloaded and must

be carried in a clear plastic bag, with any ammo in a separate bag. If the weapon is going to be carried in a car, it has to be locked up in the trunk, or otherwise not easily available to any passenger. A police officer is at each turn-in location to check the guns.

For more information, to arrange a private turn-in, or to give anonymous tips about gun crimes, residents can call 1-888-486-8477. Program information is also online at www.cityofboston.gov/aimforpeace.