

## SPECIAL REPORT

# THE CRISIS WITHIN

The stress of crime and poverty tears at children, research shows — inhibiting brain growth, inviting disease and ultimately slashing life spans



Best friends and neighbors Destiny Sonnier, 9, and Akeelah Kelly, 8, shout, “Justice for Jamyla!” during a community march against violence in August. Jamyla Bolden, 9, was a fellow fourth-grader at Koch Elementary School near Ferguson who had been shot through a window as she did her homework on her mother’s bed.

STORY BY NANCY CAMBRIA • St. Louis Post-Dispatch | PHOTOS BY LAURIE SKRIVAN • St. Louis Post-Dispatch

**T**he white casket is low enough for most of Jamyla Bolden’s elementary school classmates to gaze directly into the face of their friend, her eyes closed, her lashes long.

A childish angel adorns the interior satin lid just above the fine profile of Jamyla’s face and gazes down wide-eyed on the children. A message beneath it reads, “You shall fly with new wings.”

The children have come to the wake at Wade Funeral Home on an August evening to say goodbye to Jamyla, a fellow fourth-grader at Koch Elementary School who had been shot through a window as she completed her homework on her mother’s bed.

They stand in the cement block chapel next to parents and grandparents at the casket, most too shy and uncomfortable to speak.

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 2



“I was her best friend. She was like my sister,” says Akeelah Kelly, 8, who finds comfort in her mother’s arms during a vigil for Jamyla Bolden, 9, in August. Akeelah had played outside with Jamyla on Ellison Drive in Ferguson hours before Jamyla was killed.

**SOLUTIONS THAT WORK** • Relationships can counter damage of stress. **PAGE 8**

**THE SCIENCE OF STRESS** • See how toxic stress affects development. **PAGE 10**



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