

# 108th CC Hails Whelan's Promotion, Thief's Arrest

BY THOMAS COGAN

The 108th Police Precinct Community Council's October meeting took place on the last night of the month, Halloween. The streets near the old quarters of Sunnyside Community Services were crowded with roaming youth, leading Diane Ballek, community council president, to call for a fast meeting, "so we can get our cops back out there where they belong."

But the late date allowed for a significant celebration. The day before, 108th Precinct Commander Matthew Whelan was promoted from captain to deputy inspector and appeared at the meeting wearing the gold leaf insignia of his new rank. At the same time as news of the promotion came the news, not yet official, that Deputy Inspector Whelan would be transferred from the 108th to the 109th Precinct, where he is to assume command. Whelan assumed the latter to be true, though Detective Glenn Yule said it thus far amounts only to a rumor, and would become official not only with the announced transfer of Whelan but also with the naming of a new 108th Precinct commander. (The 109th Precinct, which covers Flushing, has headquarters at 37-05 Union St.) The celebration, however, was not about the transfer, but Whelan's new status as a deputy inspector. All attending the meeting were invited to have coffee and a piece of the sheet cake that had congratulatory lettering on it.

Pat Dorfman, a member of the community council, had created and circulated a petition citing the 108th as the precinct with the lowest crime rate of all 76 precincts in the city as of 2005 and calling for Whelan's promotion. She asked all in attendance to sign it and then framed it for Whelan to hang in his office, wherever that office might turn out to be. Whelan noted that in June he had accepted a certificate honoring the precinct's achievement that was presented by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly.

Deputy Inspector Whelan as precinct commander made a crime report, from which the bad news emerged that grand larceny auto is significantly on the rise. But another succession of incidents that might have become a long-running issue was apparently brought to an end. The recent bandit-on-a-bike that had been snatching such items as cell phones in Sunnyside, on Skillman Avenue and Queens Boulevard, among other streets, was apprehended during the month, and a companion was brought in, too. The arrest was the basis for

a Cop of the Month award.

The break for the police occurred in the second week of October, when one of the bandit's victims got a good look at his face while accosted on Queens Boulevard. Until then, the thief was known only as a black man on a white bicycle, as nobody could remember what he looked like. After the Queens Boulevard victim said she could identify him if she saw him again, the thief used one of the stolen cell phones to make a phone call to the Dominican Republic. The police picked up a record of that call and shortly thereafter they apprehended a man named Giovanni Jimenez-Rodriguez, who was then identified in a lineup. When questioned by the police, the alleged perpetrator gave up the name of Pedro Mira as a person assisting him in his operations, and Mira was arrested also. For their work on bringing in the bicycle bandit, Officers Daniel Toro and Christopher Bonomo were named Cops of the Month. Bonomo was unable to be in attendance to accept his award, but the recently married Toro was there, along with his wife.

When Whelan called for questions and comments, a woman reported that incidents at Berkeley Towers in Woodside, on 39th Drive between 52nd and 54th Streets, across from Windmuller Park, have subsided. She gave credit to the police for what has happened. At the September meeting, several persons had complained that neighborhood youth were noisy at all hours and inclined to acts of vandalism. Whelan's pledge to increase patrolling on streets in the neigh-

borhood was carried out and, according to the woman at the October meeting, lessened the number of incidents. A man reported what looked to him like drug dealing on Skillman Avenue and 47th Street in Sunnyside, and Whelan said that the police had intercepted a cocaine deal at that crossroads point. Another man asked about out-of-state licenses, which, he said, are all over the place and which he seemed to believe are an attempt to shield criminal activities. Whelan said that New York state allows out-of-state registration, and the police cannot question drivers merely because their plates are from outside New York.

Detective Glenn Yule said that the police still have 1,000 cans of paint donated by Decorama when that store left Queens Boulevard. Anyone who can use it is welcome to one or more cans, but the paint must be picked up soon, since the police must get rid of it one way or another before the weather turns cold. Lieutenant Frank Tarantola, precinct operations officer, said the graffiti cleanup on the last Saturday in September was successful, and he said the precinct would like to try one more cleanup before Thanksgiving, which this year falls on November 23.

One last tribute to Deputy Inspector Whelan was made at the end of the meeting by Joseph Conley, chairman of Community Board 2. He said the commander has always been responsive to communication from the board to precinct headquarters. He also praised Whelan for the precinct's low crime rate.

SOLGAR

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