

Some Crimes On Rise In 108th Precinct

BY THOMAS COGAN

The last 108th Police Precinct Community Council meeting of the year brought a warning that the crime rate is threatening to reverse its long and encouraging decline, as the precinct commanding officer reported increases in nearly all the crimes on the index from late October to late November. The Cop of the Month awards were a reminder of crime in the community's midst, too, as two officers answering an unusual complaint discovered a thriving drug factory. During the question period, however, complaints came back to noisy nightlife and matters better addressed to the Department of Transportation, rather than the police. Also, a spokeswoman took a few minutes to describe the National Children's Study, a project that is being launched in Queens and elsewhere in January.

Lieutenant Mark Wachter, 108th Precinct operations officer, introduced the two Cop of the Month award winners, both of whom had won previously. Sergeant David Porter and Patrol Officer Sean McCaffrey earned their latest awards on Friday, November 7 when they were approached on the street by a woman who said she had been thrown out of her home by her son a few days earlier. She gave the officers her address, and the two went to the house to confront him. The situation exploded immediately, as the woman's son attempted to flee and then put up a vigorous struggle with Porter and McCaffrey.

The officers subdued the suspect, and when they entered the home, they found two other men and a number of controlled substances (Wachter mentioned marijuana, cocaine and Ecstasy) they were packaging for street sale. The men, who were directly arrested, were alleged to be frequent sellers of drugs on Skillman Avenue. Porter, whose wife and daughter were in attendance, has been in special operations in the precinct for 11 years, while McCaffrey has been in the precinct for 17. Because the investigation is proceeding, the address of the house where the incident took place was not revealed.

Where Precinct Commander Deputy Inspector Thomas Kavanagh's October report was celebratory, the one for November had him looking a little downcast. There were no murders or rapes, so the worst was avoided, but the number of robberies increased from 16 to 25. Robbery arrests doubled, from five to 10, and arrests for felony assault nearly doubled, from five to nine. Burglaries increased to 27 from 24. Grand larcenies were down, but not by much, from 39 to 37. Kavanagh commented that many incidents occurred in the daytime; and

he expressed surprise that anyone could still fall victim to a hoary confidence game in which a perpetrator offers a passerby a chance to split the value of some goods the perpetrator is holding if the victim will only take some money out of his bank account but, he said, the routine was tried successfully on Roosevelt Avenue during the past month. Grand larceny auto incidents increased from 18 to 20.

When the commander took questions and complaints, the meeting heard once again about Bar 43, the highly popular place at 43-11 43rd St. that succeeded a succession of unpopular ones at that address. The bar is said to be open as late as 4:30 a.m., emitting a great deal of customer noise, though in the colder months to come it shouldn't be as open to the street as it has been since launching in the spring of this year, and the noise should be lessened. But complainants said that many patrons, apparently blocked from using the bar's burdened relief stations, have taken to urinating in several spots in the immediate vicinity. Wachter said two summonses for noise violations were issued at Bar 43 recently, but he hadn't heard about this latest complaint. He said he would look into it.

Complaints were heard about the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's recent removal and relocation of bus stops on the Q60 route along Queens Boulevard, but the commander had to plead that bus routes just weren't his department.

Elise Barrow, Queens enrollment coordinator of the National Children's Study, spoke for a project that has been described at other times in recent years, in anticipation of its initiation in January 2009. The National Children's Study will examine children from birth until the age of 21: 100,000 nationally, 1,200 in Queens. Barrow represents the Queens Vanguard Center, attached to Mount Sinai School of Medicine. She said that every residential address in 18 Queens neighborhoods would be visited by project workers in uniform and with badges, asking a variety of environmental and health questions related to the children in the many households. By tracing the development of children from birth to early adulthood, the study is attempting to determine the causes of many childhood and adult diseases and afflictions. Barrow quoted a project worker stating her purpose vis-à-vis the residents she would be calling on: "It's just me following you around and putting notes in a log."

The next meeting of the 108th Community Council takes place on Tuesday, Jan. 29, 2009. The community council will not meet in December.

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