

BY THOMAS COGAN

## Partnership With Local Police Can Forestall Burglaries

The 108th Police Precinct's first community council meeting in two months took place in late January. The precinct's acting commander, Captain John Rowell, who has been in that office since early December, addressed the meeting at Sunnyside Community Services and made a crime report, honored five Cops of the Month, introduced a guest speaker (who talked about burglary and what you can do about it) and took audience questions. But first he described himself as a veteran of 15 years on the job, being assigned to Queens for 12 of them. He also made mention of the man he is standing in for, Deputy Inspector Thomas Kavanagh, who has been ill for several months. Rowell said the precinct's regular commander "is getting healthier" and might be back the following week.

The Cop of the Month award covered two months, November and December, and was presented to five patrol officers: Jaime D'Amico, Joel Edwards, Charles Macolino, Shamal Tatum and Alex Ward. During the last two months of 2007, these five made a total of 92 felony arrests for crimes ranging from robbery to assault. The captain's crime report highlighted street robberies, many of them involving cell phones and iPod music players. He said that on Queens Boulevard many of those robberies have been inflicted on students coming from either Aviation or Queens Vocational H.S., headed for the Rawson or Lowery Street stations on the No. 7 line. Some officers have been assigned to that vicinity to spot possible incidents and prevent them. The acting commander said there has-

n't been much trouble coming from area nightclubs recently, a situation he hoped would remain that way.

As far as fighting crime is concerned, "everything has to do with the partnership with the community," Captain Ron Leyson of Patrol Borough Queens North's anti-crime unit, the evening's guest speaker, said. The main part of his talk was about burglary prevention and recovering from a burglary should it occur. In the matter of prevention, Leyson made reference to community cooperation and urged citizens to report suspicious activity, since it could lead to crime prevention. Don't think the police don't want to be bothered; receiving reports from the neighborhood is part of the job, he added. "I can't emphasize that enough," he said. Use the police in your own program of crime prevention, he continued, explaining how citizens can have police officers look over their residences and recommend ways they can be made safer against invasion by burglars. As far as temporarily surrendering police officers for that duty, Leyson said, "I'm glad to give them up." Such preventive counseling is part of the job of the police because it is counter to the burglar's job, "which is to steal from you". Burglars often monitor their potential victims' moves and wait for opportunities to hit them where they live; so if somebody seems to be hanging around the neighbor-

hood and looking things over, it might be wise to report it to the police. Real life provided an object lesson: Rowell said that only that morning, one such call came in to the 911 emergency hotline describing a burglary in progress, and when police went to investigate, they caught the burglar "with his legs hanging out the window". Preparing for the worst possible case can be helpful too, Leyson said, meaning that it's smart to photograph your valuables to aid in your description of them to the police, should they be stolen. He said that stolen goods can be sent in many directions, but the police can follow such traditional outlets as pawnshops, which are required to retain goods brought in to them for three weeks. He concluded with an anecdote about a family that had photographed pieces of the family jewelry, individually and as worn by family members. When it was the family's misfortune to be burglary victims, members were able to supply the police with photographic documentation for their search, and eventually many of the jewels were recovered.

During the question period a woman charged the police with indifference of a sort by relating a second-person account of their response to a complaint about early morning partying in an apartment on 46th Street. She said she was told by a woman friend that two officers came by in a patrol car and, when her

friend met them and repeated her complaint, they suggested she tell a party celebrant or two that they should come down to the car and the complaint could be talked over. Rowell replied indignantly that this was not proper police procedure, and that the officers would certainly have left their car and gone to the apartment in question. He said he simply couldn't believe the incident as described. Rather than dispute at length, he referred the woman to the executive officer while the meeting went on. Another woman said she noticed youths in the vicinity of 43rd Avenue and 43rd Street loitering and occasionally scrawling graffiti on walls. That prompted Community Relations Officer Juan Toro to tell her to report graffiti activity immediately by calling 911. If the police can catch these vandals in action, they can be arrested, he said.

A man attested to the effectiveness of calling 911 by relating that one night he had seen a band of apparently drunk and definitely disorderly young men coming down a street near Greenpoint Avenue, bashing side mirrors on automobiles as they went. He phoned 911 and reported where the group was and what the young men were doing. He later learned they were apprehended within a few minutes of the call.

Another report of suspicious activity came from a woman who said she'd noticed a man in her neighborhood who had dyed his blond hair dark and painted over the advertising on his van. She was encouraged to keep an eye on him; the spectacle was bound to be interesting, whether or not it led to anything nefarious.

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