

## BAH HUMBUG SEASON

Tis the time of year when all kinds of criminals are out and about everywhere bringing a Bah Humbug season to so many people. Media outlets everywhere are reporting a very bad holiday season, and criminals traditionally lurk in every shopping center parking lot to take advantage of an abundant flow of potential victims. During this time of year, nobody is safe anywhere except perhaps those who are very mindful of their daily habits, but taking certain precautions will minimize your chances of being victimized by one of those dangerous grinchies.

There are some things you can do to make your holiday season safer:

1. When out shopping, maintain awareness of your surroundings.
2. Before leaving home, clear the visible areas of your car of all non-essential items that could attract the curiosity of criminals looking to break into your car. Before leaving for work, put laptops in your trunk especially if you will stop somewhere on the way. Do not leave cell phones and purses in your car while patronizing convenience stores.
3. Be especially attentive to strangers walking down the street, especially when leaving and arriving home – if they do not look right let them know you are watching.
4. If convenient, take a good look around your block as you come and go home. If something does not look right, do another drive-by and report suspicious individuals as needed (but do not confront them).
5. Keep your doors locked at all times to minimize your chances of a home invasion.
6. Flat screen TV's and laptops are in high demand in the criminal underworld. Be mindful of where you dispose of the boxes when you buy a new flat screen TV or laptop. As much as possible, do not display those prominently visible from the outside of your home.
7. Arrange for packages to be delivered to work or some other safe, attended location.
8. As an interesting webfind, our not-so-distant neighbors in Lavista Park posted an excellent Power Point presentation explaining an increasingly common ATM scam. If you do not have Microsoft PowerPoint, you can probably use Power Point Viewer, a free browser plug-in available for download at the Microsoft website.

- **ATM scam:** [http://www.lavistapark.org/patrol/ATM\\_THEFTS.pps](http://www.lavistapark.org/patrol/ATM_THEFTS.pps)

## DECEMBER SAFETY MEETING

- **(THIS EVENING) Monday December 8th, 7pm, at Mary Mac's**

At this month's public safety meeting, we will have Lt. Rasmussen of the APD Vice Unit for discussion on the latest trends in Midtown street prostitution. We are always reviewing strategies to more effectively move the prostitutes from our neighborhood. With time we are becoming more effective with identifying and reporting problematic individuals (including prostitutes) to police and

prosecutors, but street prostitution remains an issue for Midtown. We will discuss all three strains of street prostitution - transvestite prostitutes, male hustlers on Cypress Street, and the "others" near Ponce & Boulevard (among the latter group, serious drug use stands out more than prostitution).

Sgt. Cooper of MPSA Patrol, an officer from Midtown Blue, and representatives from APD will give their respective updates. We still have whistles, and will hand them out at the next safety meeting. Thanks to a whistle, a resident thwarted a mugger. You should have one too. We encourage everybody to come early to socialize with your neighbors and enjoy a great dinner.

***Last year we released a special report on street prostitution in Midtown***

- <http://midtownponce.org/news/info/MidtownStreetProstitution.pdf>

### **MIDTOWN CRIME TALLIES**

We research the latest batch of crime stats at the APD for Midtown. We have posted the document containing the November itemization of selected crime types at the link below.

On this document, we did not itemize car break-ins (known as "vehicle larceny on official statistics) due to the high volume. As we manipulated the crime map, car break-ins seem rather evenly distributed over a longer period of time. But no matter which two-week period we selected, the 10th & Piedmont area stands out.

- ***Crime Tallies for November 2008:***  
<http://www.midtownponce.org/news/crimetallies200811.pdf>

### **MIDTOWN MUGGER**

- ***APD is diligently looking for him...***

### **PEACHTREE PINE UPDATE**

They continue to wreak havoc on our community. According to the latest news report, the Judge extended their deadline until December 22nd. We will monitor the situation closely.

### **CARJACKINGS**

On Friday, December 5th, two carjackings took places in Midtown.

In the first incident, the victim sent us this account: *At about 8:45AM this morning, my girlfriend was carjacked at gunpoint in the middle of the busy McDonalds parking lot on Ponce. [In a separate e-mail: the assailant reached around her neck with a gun from behind her and told her to walk forward and not to turn around. He was a black male (she saw his hand), didn't seem particularly tall (she's not either), and his voice wasn't very deep so it may have been a younger perpetrator]. This was during the peak of the breakfast rush and about 2 blocks from City Hall East. The restaurant was full of people and the parking lot was jam packed with cars. Somehow though - no-one saw anything.*

*Disappointingly, when I mentioned the recent crimes in Inman Park, the police detective who responded to the call told me "that's zone six, I'm zone five, I don't know anything about things*

*going on in zone six". Really? Seriously? Ponce is right next to us - I fail to understand a city organizational structure that allows this to occur.*

*This carjacking hits very close to home for me, and on the heels of the terrible L5P incident and beating at Mariposa Lofts I'm wondering what it's going to take to get this recent uptick in \*violent\* crime to come to an end. I'm with Phil Sims - as a community we need to do something more than we are currently doing. I'm no police detective, but something new is going on. This is not just a result of the holiday season.*

That evening, two black males carjacked another resident near 7th & Durant in their driveway. The victims were not injured, but were also badly shaken. We have no further details at this point.

## **RECENT ARRESTS**

On the evening of Wednesday (12/03), two street criminals were apprehended in our neighborhood.

Someone flagged down Midtown Blue to advise that he just spotted someone who had mugged him the week before. With the help of MPSA Patrol, Midtown Blue located the subject, who then initiated a foot chase when the officers appeared. The person reporting could not positively identify the subject as being the one that robbed him after all, and retracted the statement that he had been robbed by this individual. The subject was charged with obstruction for running from police officers.

About the same time, a thief was caught in the act on Myrtle Street. He was charged with entering automobile, battery, criminal trespass, prowling, and felony obstruction. He bit the arresting officer on the hand. The officer was taken to the hospital, but we do not know the outcome of her medical attention.

## **NEW PAWN SHOP**

We received word that someone wants to open a pawn shop on Boulevard just south of our area - in the heart of a high concentration of drug activity and public disorder. The owners of this business are eyeing the former Orbit video building on Boulevard. Given that pawn shops in general can pose a serious community nuisance, this causes great concern for us.

Under City of Atlanta ordinance, those wishing to open a pawn shop must appear before the License and Review Board in a similar fashion as establishments serving or selling alcohol. This process requires a loop through the Neighborhood Planning Unit system in order to give residents an opportunity to voice their input.

The location lies in NPU-M, which covers neighborhoods from Ponce de Leon southward, so heavy weight will be given to feedback from Old Fourth Ward residents and their organizations. Midtown lies in NPU-E, which ranges from Ponce de Leon northward to roughly Piedmont Hospital. Because the location of the pawnshop sits very close to the NPU boundary, Midtown could potentially have influence on the outcome on this particular License and Review Board case.

Councilman Kwanza Hall's legislative assistant wrote to the owner of the property asking for a clarification and to communicate community concerns. His office also has an inquiry about zoning issues affecting pawn shops at that particular location. We will monitor the situation in hopes that the entrepreneur will seek a more appropriate location than our area.

## **SAFETY REPORT FROM OUR VIRGINIA HIGHLAND NEIGHBORS**

In this, the season to be remindful of the things we have to be thankful for, I am very thankful that we have a functioning and active neighborhood watch system in place, the VaHi Safety Team. Every day, as we continue to hear more and more reports about the city's financial woes and the resulting cuts in city services (most notably in public safety departments), this points out that we need to be more and more alert, aware of our surroundings in our daily lives, and use common sense in our everyday activities. The Safety Team continues to grow on a weekly basis - but if you are on a street or block, in an apartment or condo building without a designated Street Captain - please step forward and take charge. The duties are simple, but very effective - get out, meet your neighbors and get to know them, get their e-mail addresses so you can forward the Reports on to them. The underlying theory of our watch is simple - people who know their neighbors tend to look out for them. Under our current state of affairs - this is very important. Send me an e-mail at [safety@vahi.org](mailto:safety@vahi.org) and I'll help you get started. This is not a time to worry about being a nosy neighbor - if you see something that is just not right - make a 911 call to report a suspicious person or activity that just should not be happening. Use your gut feeling - you know what is normal and what is not. We are a safer and more aware neighborhood because of our neighbors' involvement in the Safety Team - do your part too. I hope to hear from you soon.

If you are not aware of the senseless and brutal home invasion on Seminole Avenue this past week - the following links will inform you. The underlying message here is to keep your doors locked at all times - whether you are in or out of your home.

- <http://www.wsbtv.com/news/18201818/detail.html>
- [http://www.ajc.com/search/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2008/12/04/atlanta\\_home\\_invasion.html](http://www.ajc.com/search/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2008/12/04/atlanta_home_invasion.html)

The following link gives very good tips to follow when on a Christmas shopping trip and you are parked in a crowded parking lot. This particular occurrence happened at Lenox Square - but applies to our nearby Midtown and Edgewood shopping centers also.

- <http://www.wsbtv.com/video/18214256/index.html>

The recently reported carjacking at gunpoint on 12/5 at 8:45 a.m. in the PDL McDonalds parking lot emphasizes the fact of being aware and alert at all times - even in daylight with lots of other people around you. I only know that evidently the victim in this case was not harmed - but obviously lost her car.

A local resident reports that on 11/19, she was leaving a High Museum group meeting at a home on Brighton Road in Brookwood Hills at 8:45 p.m. when she was approached by a male who stated "give me your purse or I will shoot you". He grabbed her purse and fled. She was not physically harmed - but was left with deep fears for her safety. This guy now had her house keys, her address, checkbook and credit cards. the victim asks that you not have your purse visible at any time of day, not to walk alone after dark, especially in unfamiliar surroundings, and to be very alert at all times. Thank you Lynn, for having the courage to let us know about this incident.

I just received an e-mail message from another resident, who has doggedly followed the actions and court cases involving the scum-bag, Melvin Reeves, who attacked her in front of her Greenwood Avenue apartment home in August of 2007. She attended and testified in Clayton County Superior Court in his probation revocation hearing. She reports that thanks to her testimony, he is now behind bars for the next 8 years. As she now knows very well, our court system is not always a friend to crime victims, and requires a lot of diligence in tracking court cases to make sure that justice is served. She is to be commended for her courage.

To avoid losing UPS and FedEx package deliveries to thieves in this season and beyond, consider having them delivered to your weekday work address or to a neighbor's house who is home during the day. Yes, there are guys who have nothing else to do, but wander and look for packages sitting on your front porch.

**BE SAFE AND BE VIGILANT!**

*- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance*

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**A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR COMMUNITY SPONSORS WHO PROVIDE A MAJOR  
ENHANCEMENT TO YOUR PATROL'S EFFECTIVENESS:**

*Midtown Neighbors Association*

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***AND THE MANY RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS MEMBERS OF THE MPSA***

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