

## **MPSA YAHOO GROUP REACTIVATED**

In keeping with our mission to promote active community participation in matters related to public safety and security, we have reactivated our Yahoo Group. All along, we have monitored message boards of other neighborhoods, and find them to be a valuable source of information and a catalyst for neighborhood spirit. We also want to more effectively keep our operational planning, awareness efforts, and advocacy compatible with general sentiments of the Midtown community. We are also planning to run a “topic of the month” starting in January to elicit feedback on how the community perceives major issues affecting us.

You can access the Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MidtownPonce/>. We set it so that you can browse the messages without have to join that group, but those who choose to subscribe (requires a Yahoo ID) can set the frequency of messages sent directly – individual e-mails, daily digest, or web only. We moderate activity in that group not only to ensure quality participation, but also to prevent spam and other obnoxious posts.

The Eye on Midtown will have a set weekly release date – tentatively planned for Mondays. Many of the articles in Eye on Midtown will consist of bulletins we post to the Yahoo Group incrementally, and selected other posts as mailbag items. We encourage everyone to share their insights and information – a more informed community makes for a stronger one!

We have posted each article in this Eye on Midtown individually at the forum, and encourage reader feedback there. Selected responses will make next week’s Eye on Midtown.

- **MPSA Yahoo Group:** <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MidtownPonce/>

## **APD MIDTOWN LIAISON**

The Atlanta Police Department has established a new position known as the Midtown Liaison officer to focus on a limited number of problem spots in the Midtown area. Major Williams appointed Officer Frank Esquilin to this position. Esquilin has experience in the RED DOG unit, an APD unit targeting low-level drug activity. He also brings familiarity with our neighborhood from his time as a community patrol officer with the MPSA.

Among his crime pattern suppression duties, he is assisting shopping centers with long-standing issues arising from aggressive panhandling and loitering. He will intensively patrol other selected areas with patterns of criminal and nuisance activity, thereby freeing regular beat officers for general patrolling and responding to 911 calls.

Lt. McGee, the commander of the Midtown Mini-Precinct, pointed out at the December safety meeting that this position is already delivering results - Officer Esquilin arrested someone for pointing a handgun at another person in the parking lot of a shopping center. Plans in the near future include improved coordination with area police and security resources including MPSA Patrol and Midtown Blue.

Having a Midtown Liaison officer greatly assists our efforts toward a safer and more orderly neighborhood, and we look forward to having our neighborhood patrol working with him. Lt. McGee plans to introduce Officer Esquilin to the Midtown community at the January safety meeting.

## **BURGLARY CONVICTION**

Seven residents of intown neighborhoods attended a court hearing on Friday morning to witness the conviction of an area burglar. Bobby Perry was charged with the burglary at a pre-school in Virginia Highland, among other incidents, and appeared before Judge Glanville. Perry also shared charges with the trio we have dubbed the "Three Burglars," who were arrested together for a burglary on Ponce and later tied to other cases.

Upon his guilty plea, the judge sentenced him to 5 years imprisonment, with an additional 5-year probation period to follow. The probation period will include banishment from a range of intown neighborhoods include Midtown and Virginia Highland. Judge Glanville's sentence followed the recommendation of Sharla Jackson, our community prosecutor. He will not qualify for parole, and shall serve the entire five years. The judge also took into serious consideration the pre-school director's impact statement about how Perry's criminal act disrupted program operations and frightened the children.

As the defendant entered his guilty plea, he also gave a sob story about his battle with a profound drug addiction, his regrets for his involvement in the incident, and that an accomplice actually broke the window and entered the building. Along with his sentence, Judge Glanville chastised him for "desecrating a place of worship where people go for solace and protection". He further told the defendant that the church would probably have helped him had he asked.

Timothy Kozak and Jonathan Wells, the other two defendants initially expected at Friday's hearing, will appear at a later date to enter pleas. We will announce court watch opportunities when they become available.

## **AJC ARTICLE ON SPECIAL POLICE SERVICES FOR PHILIPS ARENA**

On Sunday (12/14/2008) the Atlanta Journal-Constitution ran a story about the use of police resources as a special operation for the Philips Arena. The City of Atlanta, under Bill Campbell's administration, entered into a contract with Philips Arena whereby the City would guarantee police services needed to accommodate the large events held there. The city provides these services such as traffic and crowd control by deploying on-duty Atlanta Police officers without assessing fees. Other major event holders, such as the Atlanta Braves, must employ off-duty police officers at their expense to provide the same services.

While some describe this arrangement as being a catalyst for redevelopment in the downtown area, others feel that it is a waste of taxpayer money and a serious drain on police resources. The article quoted Sgt. Scott Kreher, president of the police union, as saying that the absence of these officers from other parts of the city while working the arena "significantly impacts the department's ability to fight crime and fight traffic." This raises an interesting issue in a time when the City of Atlanta faces budget cuts which could adversely affect public safety in our city.

- ***AJC article: Some cops call city-funded security at Philips Arena a waste - [http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2008/12/14/philips\\_arena\\_police.html?cxntlid=homepage\\_tab\\_newstab](http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2008/12/14/philips_arena_police.html?cxntlid=homepage_tab_newstab)***

## **TESTIMONIAL FOR APD**

A resident in Old Fourth Ward recently shared with us his great experiences with APD Zone 5 under the proactive leadership of Major Khirus Williams. While the following pertains primarily to Old Fourth Ward, the members of Atlanta's Finest mentioned in this testimonial also work diligently to bring about greatly-improved public safety for the Midtown community. We therefore share the same level of appreciation toward the hard work of the Atlanta Police Department, and

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particularly the men and women of Zone 5. Thank you for sharing this with the Midtown community!

*E-mails often circulate regarding crime and incidents in Old Fourth Ward, delayed Police response, or other issues. For a change of pace, I would like to share with everyone the overwhelmingly positive experience me and my neighbors have had with APD over the last few weeks related to the burglaries on our street and in Old Fourth Ward.*

*Just after Thanksgiving I sent an email to the Old Fourth Ward group to let everyone know that our house was burglarized while we were out of town. That same day I received an unsolicited email from Major Williams, who runs APD for Zone 5, saying that he had heard about our burglary, was sorry that we had that experience, and just wanted to let me know that I would be receiving a call from Sgt. Schierbaum, who runs the burglary unit in our precinct, and that they would do everything they could to catch the people. Shortly after, I received a call from Sgt. Schierbaum who was extremely nice, professional and helpful. He explained that nationally only around 11% of burglary cases are solved, but that they had a little better success rate at his unit and they would do everything they could to catch the thieves.*

*Since our break in, there has been another break in on our street and several others that I know about in O4W (and probably others that have occurred in O4W that I/we don't know about). Major Williams has stayed in contact with me giving me updates on different things APD is doing on our street and in O4W to try to catch the thieves. In fact, he emailed me mid-day yesterday to let me know that there was a house alarm going off on my street at a particular address and asked if I knew the owners and how to contact them - he was on his way to the call himself (luckily, it turned out to be a false alarm). That impressed me even further - the professionalism, concern and time that someone of his position took to get involved with a routine call like that.*

*Since Major Williams took over command of Zone 5 six months ago, we have definitely noticed a larger police presence on our street and in our neighborhood. Response times to various calls recently have been 1-2 minutes. The KUDOS for this change of police presence in O4W goes to Kwanza Hall who has successfully gotten more police resources into O4W, which has largely been under served and in some ways forgotten from a police presence perspective. Major Williams also deserves huge credit for the way he manages Zone 5 and the professionalism and responsiveness he requires from his officers. He has continued to be responsive and supportive in dealing with other crime issues on our street and in O4W.*

*I just wanted to share this positive experience with everyone. I also hope to make the point that APD will respond to our crime needs. However, we as residents of O4W need to take the initiative and time to let Kwanza Hall's office (Jay Tribby) and APD know about problems in our neighborhood. Call 911 when you see the local drug dealer on your corner - they are not allowed to loiter on corners, much less deal drugs. Call 911 when you see something suspicious or if one of our local friendly vagrants becomes verbally aggressive. APD resources are allocated to where the problems are, and if we don't call 911 or let Kwanza's office know about the crime issues or other problems we are having, the help will not come and our neighborhood will be slow to improve.*

*With all that has happened on East Ave. over the past couple weeks, the neighbors on our street have come together better as a group and we have decided we are no longer going to tolerate the crime on our street. We are in the early stages of forming an "official" neighborhood watch group on East Ave. We'll be working with Officer Swoope to learn more about what we can do, how to get organized, etc.*

*We hope to - and really need to - expand our neighborhood watch to other streets/parts of O4W as we get the hang of it. We hope other streets in O4W will take the initiative to form their own*

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*neighborhood watches and we look forward to updating you guys on how our neighborhood watch program is going.*

***Kip Rupp - Old Fourth Ward resident***

**BE SAFE AND BE OBSERVANT! And please urge your neighbors to join and support the MPSA...**

***- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance***

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

***Midtown Neighbors Association***

***The Sembler Company | Post Parkside | Midtown Tire, Inc. | Ackerman & Company***

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

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