



MIDTOWN PONCE SECURITY ALLIANCE

Public Safety Report 08 / 2008

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**AND OF COURSE THE MANY
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MEMBERS!!!**

ATTENDANCE AT AUGUST SAFETY MEETING

- **Peggy Denby** - MNA Safety Chair, MPSA President, & Moderator
- **Sharla Jackson** - Community Prosecutor
- **Lt. McGee** - Midtown Mini-Precinct
- Sgt. Cooper - MPSA Patrol
- **Mike Rary** - Candidate for Fulton County Sheriff
- **Major Easterling** - MARTA Police
- Several additional Midtown residents, though this meeting was lightly attended

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

On Tuesday, August 5th, we celebrated our 6th Annual National Night Out Going Away Party for Crime. Several hundred residents came to the Mentelle Drive location to join in the fun. We also had visits from:

- **Lt. McGee** - our Midtown Commander
- Major Williams - the Zone 5 Commander
- **Sharla Jackson** - our Community Prosecutor
- District Attorney **Paul Howard**
- **Chief Coxtton** from the Fire Department along with local firemen
- Several MPSA officers
- **Anne Fauver** - one of Midtown's City Council Members

We really appreciate everyone coming out for this annual event to "take our streets back" from criminals and other unsavory street people, and to show support to all those involved in making our neighborhood safer, and thereby improving our quality of life. A lot of hard work and dedication is

required and we are seeing a huge improvement. We have a way to go but we are getting there. From time to time we enter into a phase we are not familiar with, and scramble to maintain the level of safety we have attained!

We continue to need all the support available to us in order to continue to improve our neighborhood security. Please join the MPSA, encourage your neighbors to join, and encourage your friends who do not live in the patrol to make contributions. Everyone benefits from our work, even adjoining neighborhoods! Thanks to all for your support, see you next year at NNO and each month at our Safety Meetings.

The pictures are still posted at the MPSA website. If you want a larger version of a photo, you can request it by the number next to the photo.

- www.midtownponce.org/nno2008

MONITORED COURT CASES

Sharla Jackson, our community prosecutor, gave us an update on several high-priority cases for us.

Kenneth Lamb - he is known as the “barefooted panhandler” and has a protracted history of raping women, assaulting people, and drug offenses. We were advised after the safety meeting that the judge dismissed the charges related to compliance with the sex offender registry. We are still unclear if the other pending charges will still go through, but we were told that Kenneth Lamb would be released from jail in the imminent future.

Ricky Love - brutally assaulted a woman on Peachtree in the summer of 2006. Psychiatric evaluations have been completed and he was found competent enough to stand trial. The Fulton County DA’s office would like to see commitment to long-term psychiatric care outside the Atlanta area.

Damon Foson - also brutally assaulted another woman (not same incident as above) in the summer of 2006. A final disposition on the case is expected in the next month.

Tywang McCoy - arrested for stalking, indecent exposure, and theft of credit card. Trial date not set. Tywang McCoy also has an active warrant in Florida, but they are not pursuing extradition (it is common for states including Georgia not to pursue extradition for misdemeanors, probation violations, and post-conviction sex offender issues).

Steven Green - the transvestite prostitute frequently bringing illegal activity into the neighborhood, was among the subjects in a YouTube video, and recently arrested on felony charges. A trial date is set for later this month.

Marquis Ellis - currently incarcerated but will face burglary charges for an incident in Midtown. This is the suspected burglar who scaled a wall to enter via a second floor window reported earlier this year in an e-blast.

“The Burglary Trio” - We recently reported the apprehension of a trio of burglars - we will monitor these cases as well.

MIDTOWN MINI-PRECINCT

During the last month the Midtown Mini-Precinct conducted the following:

- 1332 calls for service

- 951 drop-ins
- 78 arrests
- 53 traffic citations (mostly in conjunction with the 52 roadblocks conducted in the last month).

These figures certainly do not include activity by the mobile unit also covering Midtown.

Vice details targeting prostitution continue. The most recent stings focused on Cypress Street, though the Vice Unit covered other area hotspots such as Ponce de Leon Avenue.

The Ponce de Leon Hotel has been the subject of numerous community complaints especially because of the prostitution and drug activity revolving around that block. A drug-addict found dead of an overdose in the area was also living there at the time and active in the Ponce & Boulevard drug scene, and may have bought the crack from a dealer known to be living there. The Midtown Mini-precinct has assigned an officer to visit the Ponce de Leon Hotel several times a day, and to monitor activity on that block.

Panhandling and other forms of vagrant activity continue to affect Midtown, but police have little recourse in dealing with the issue. Midtown needs an anti-panhandling overlay - like the one for downtown - to better address quality of life issues here. In the meantime, Sgt. Cooper and the MPSA Patrol officers discourage panhandling and remove vagrant nests immediately upon discovery.

MARTA POLICE

Major Easterling of MARTA Police came to the meeting. The issue with bus shelters on Ponce remains a major issue for us. We sent a list of specific shelters. Since a very long time, street people abuse these shelters *day and night* for drug and prostitution activity, and vagrants set up camp in these shelters. This in turn creates a very intimidating atmosphere for area residents and workers using MARTA. As this is a community that appeals to people wishing to pursue a more environmentally-friendly walkable way-of-life, safety on public transportation routes is very important to the advancement of the Midtown experience.

The most problematic shelters on our list:

- #338 - in front on 494 Ponce (on the Ponce side of former Wachovia branch) - affects bus route #2
- #A11 - on the Monroe Drive side of the former Wachovia property - for bus route #27
- #202 - in front of the Kentucky Fried Chicken on Ponce just west of Parkway Drive - bus route #2
- #201 - in front of the Chevron at 180 Ponce de Leon Avenue - on bus route #2

MPSA PATROL REPORT

The patrol made arrests nearly every shift, mostly for vagrant things - these included criminal trespassing, disorderly conduct, urinating in public, and violation of pedestrian duties. While many of these arrests were noted along Ponce, some were

noted as far north as 10th Street. Arrests for shoplifting and active warrants were also noted in the patrol log.

Two transvestite prostitutes were arrested on felony charges (resisting arrest, fleeing and eventually assaulting officer) in the residential part of the neighborhood. One of these was locked up twice on the same block.

The Vice Unit conducted stings on two different dates along Ponce de Leon. On one of those days, 7 arrests were made in a two-hour period. No report on the other, as the patrol officer needed to leave to avoid foiling the sting.

Sgt. Cooper investigated a report of vagrant activity on Argonne near Ponce. A mattress was reported, but was gone before the patrol investigated. The mattress was apparently laid on a plywood board still on the premises. This spot seems to be a daytime stopover, as no night-time activity was noted despite increased attention to this spot.

Georgia Power agreed to put up a fence along the defunct track behind Midtown Promenade to curtail vagrant activity. Vagrants camp along the Beltline, sneak through holes in the fence to break into cars, shoplift, and panhandle, and then retreat to the wild area along the Beltline.

Sgt. Cooper walked the Beltline twice during the last month, once with a police official, and the other time with Peggy Denby (representing Keep Atlanta Beautiful), a group representing the Beltline, Trees Atlanta, Park Pride, and others. The objective was to assess logistical needs for a forthcoming massive clean-up. The cleanup is scheduled for November 9th, and those groups will call for volunteers at a later date. They walked from Ansley Park to Freedom Parkway - the same stretch covered by Sgt. Cooper and Steve Gower on that frigid morning in January (Steve Gower's video is still at www.youtube.com/midtownkrefeld, though conditions are much worse now than then). They found one "condo" with a nice view of the skyline (two units each with two rooms in the same structure - this was immediately dismantled).

The patrol began logging calls for service during the last month. The patrol handled or assisted with twelve 911 calls and 9 calls via the MPSA hotline. This is only a two week period. Residents should first call 911 to ensure the situation to be reported is entered into police communications, and then take advantage of the MPSA patrol hotline (given to Members only).

In response to complaints by Myrtle Street residents, the patrol issued 35 parking tickets. Patrons of nearby establishments are simply not reading the parking permit signs. While we do not take a position on, or coordinate the establishment of, parking permit initiatives, police officers including those working for us are charged with enforcing all laws on the books including parking regulations.

MICHAEL RARY - CANDIDATE FOR FULTON COUNTY SHERIFF

At the last minute we arranged for the Republican candidate for the Fulton County Sheriff's Office. *Next month we hope to have the Democratic candidate in attendance at the safety meeting.* The Sheriff's Department is charged with the

operation of the Fulton County jail, so this is a very important race for Midtown. Regardless of who wins the race, we want MPSA and other Midtown/intown civic groups to play a visible role in shaping public policy relating to the jail.

So this month we start with Michael Rary, who spoke to us about how folks all around Fulton County are very concerned about crime and criminal justice issues. The sad reality is that the jail is woefully inadequate in size for the needs of Fulton County - the jail simply cannot hold all the criminals that need to be there until sentenced.

Mr. Rary emphasized that Fulton County needs a strong, in-charge person, and of course he outlined why he feels that he is the best candidate for that role. When asked how much it would cost to build a new jail to supplement the small (compared to our needs) jail, he quoted \$22,000 per cell using prefabricated building techniques. Fulton County already has the space to build additional jail spaces - on the site of the old County jail in use until the current facility was built in 1989. He also advocates that social services such as the Social Security Administration, Medicaid, and a jobs office, should have branches in the jail to better equip inmates with needs so as to reduce recidivism after release.

Michael Rary has outlined his plans, if elected, for Fulton County at his website under the heading “the Rary plan” (link below).

- <http://www.mikerary.com/>

JUDGE SUSAN EDLEIN

Midtown's own Susan Edlein, who was appointed to the Fulton County State Court earlier this year, made a brief presentation for her re-election campaign.

Judge Susan Edlein, of the Fulton County State Court, is a long-time Midtown resident and member of the MPSA. After graduating from the University of Virginia School of Law, Susan and her husband Scott moved to Midtown. Edlein quickly took a leadership role and served six years on the Board of Directors of the Midtown Neighbors Association and created a non-profit organization, SHAPE, to support balanced and neighborhood appropriate development along the Ponce de Leon corridor. In addition to her involvement in her three young children's various activities, Judge Edlein has been active in other organizations focusing on children -- she has tutored students, organized mock trial programs at several Atlanta Public Schools, and served as a parent representative on Morningside Elementary's Local School Council.

Prior to becoming a judge, Susan Edlein was a litigation partner in Holland & Knight's Atlanta office, where she was co-chair of the national Real Estate Litigation Team and the Atlanta coordinator for the Women's Initiative program. As a civil litigator, Edlein represented individuals and corporations in a variety of cases, including contract disputes, complex litigation, product liability, personal injury, and bankruptcy. Edlein also participated in numerous pro bono programs in which she represented individuals who could not otherwise afford a lawyer.

Judge Edlein has been recognized for her skills and leadership: she is a member of the Class of 2005 Regional Leadership Institute; in 2006, she was selected as a Legal Eagle by Atlanta Women's Magazine and a Rising Star by Georgia Super Lawyers; in 2007, she

was named one of Georgia Trend Magazine's Georgia Legal Elite. Susan Edlein's leadership and legal skills were recognized when she was recommended by the Judicial Nominating Commission as one of five finalists to fill a judicial vacancy in Fulton County, and was appointed by Governor Perdue as a State Court Judge. On the State Court, Judge Edlein presides over criminal cases below the grade of felony and civil actions regardless of the amount in controversy. Fulton County Judges are elected in county-wide non-partisan elections. Judge Edlein has a contested election in November.

For more information:

- www.judgesusanedlein.com

PONCE & BOULEVARD ISSUES

The letters of agency are working well, though much work needs to be done. Some properties, such as the big check cashing place at the corner of Ponce & Boulevard, remain highly-visible hangout for the drug culture at times.

Grace United Methodist Church recently installed a wrought-iron fence around their meditation garden, which has so far eliminated a concealed camping spot for the street people. This is a sensitive property for the neighborhood, and our intensive efforts seem to be holding up affecting that property. Some may notice street people traffic to and from that property during lunch hours - this is attributed to a weekday lunch program for indigent women and children. **We feel very good about this well-managed program** and have never had any issues in all the years we have been in operation. They do not permit people to hang around before or after meals, and have always had full compliance with this policy. Most of the recipients are shuttled in from their homes, and are returned immediately afterwards.

Bedford Pine - Tenants at Bedford Pine continue to toss their trash on to a neighboring property rather than walk 30 more feet to the dumpster conveniently located on their property. This is another example of how a large Section 8 project brings rampant crime and public disorder, as these kinds of housing projects attract tenants lacking in civility.

"Michelle" - Many people in Midtown have seen "Michelle" in the Ponce & Boulevard area for many years. Michelle, a transgender individual whose real name was Billy Rainey, was found dead of an apparent drug overdose near the Kroger on Ponce de Leon Avenue. Michelle was actually one of the much lesser criminals on the Ponce & Boulevard scene, but still could never break free of that destructive milieu. Michelle was one of our most frequent informants and helped us identify some of the most problematic individuals in the Ponce & Boulevard drug culture. Michelle was recently offered a job by a business on Ponce de Leon, and was able to get a room at the Ponce de Leon Hotel after sleeping on the streets for a long time.

The tragic reality is that most living in the Ponce & Boulevard milieu will die on the streets after years of a life of street crime emanating from the use of street drugs. Area residents will continue to find them dead periodically in parks and alleyways as long as "homeless" services continue with simple handouts rather than actually

pressure them into working their way out of the drug culture and onward to a more productive life.

- A photo of Michelle: www.midtownponce.org/news/michelle.jpg

VAGRANCY ISSUES

A public official recently forwarded us a statement by Debi Starnes, who is the Mayor's policy advisor on homeless issues. Her letter was in response to very lively dialog taking place on the Inman Park message board, but also pertains to Midtown. Residents in that area are especially upset about a Sandy Springs church sponsoring their vagrant activity in their area by operating a feeding station in Little Five Points.

I am still involved with the issue, trying to help Mayor Franklin get as much done on this issue, as we can, before she leaves office.

I can report on a lot that has been done and is being done by the City, County and the Regional Commission on Homelessness - and did so a few months back, in the Advocate.

But, let me address the specifics of the current commentary. I have begun personally meeting with all of the "feeders" we have in the City to explain that this is not helping the homeless - it, in fact, is harming them by enabling them to just sit around and wait to be fed like stray cats, instead of seeking assistance from a legitimate agency that can offer food in a dignified setting, as well as other services. Once we explain the issue and offer options of where they can bring their food, volunteers and energy to a more comprehensive effort, many churches and agencies are more than willing to change their tactics. Some, of course, respond with "How dare you tell me I can't help the needy...." I also agree with taking a busload of homeless persons to the physical location of the feeders and challenge them to demonstrate their true concern for the needy by doing more than handing out a piece of chicken - often, their good hearts end at that point.

If any of you know a name or location of the Little 5 Points feeder(s), please let me know and I will meet with him and invite them to join a larger effort, where their resources are needed. If they refuse, then we can determine the next steps.

The Mayor and I are urging all our citizens and our agencies to stop "serving the homeless" and do the more difficult work of getting people "OUT of homelessness". I do not believe it is okay to be homeless in a large urban environment. I do not believe it is okay for individuals who can do better, to choose to just live off the system and not try to become self-sufficient productive participants in the larger society. But, more importantly, for those who are unable to make a rational choice due to mental illness and/or serious addiction, it is not okay for the rest of us to leave these citizens out on the streets just fending for themselves (and to occasionally throw them a buck or a chicken breast).

I am willing to meet with interested parties in IP to develop a multi-pronged strategy to deal with the specific individuals, groups and issues in L5P and IP. We are doing and have done this in other targeted areas with dramatic results.

And, by all means, DO NOT GIVE money to panhandlers and/or homeless persons. There is real help available, so let's get them to that help.

Debi Starnes

MPSA MAILBAG

Ponce de Leon issues - this is the letter to a public official triggering extra police coverage mentioned above.

I am writing today to ask your personal assistance in helping us reduce crime in the Zone 5 area. I live [and own a business at Glen Iris Lofts]. I have recently been victim of attacks, property destruction, attempted break-ins at my office and theft from my vehicle. Many of my neighbors have experienced similar events, and we are all growing increasingly concerned about the propensity for future incidents.

From the inside, I have installed security cameras at my office and have urged my condo association to do the same at our complex so that we can have some degree of protection. From the outside, I implore each of you to use your resources to attack crime more aggressively as well. As I am sure you are aware, the Ponce Hotel located near the intersection of Glen Iris and Ponce de Leon is a hotbed for drug and prostitution activity. I have seen ambulances, police cars and medical examiner vehicles there on a regular basis. Furthermore, there are continually vagrants loitering outside of this establishment.

It is clear to all of us here at Glen Iris that working to clean out this one establishment would improve the safety of this neighborhood immensely. Please let me know what your plans are to help clean up this institution of illegality, and what I can do to help.

MPSA NOTE: The properties on both sides of the Ponce de Leon Hotel are up for sale, and combining these parcels would make an ideal site for a mixed-use development. Many of the tenants in the Ponce de Leon Hotel are put up by social service organizations - hence the unusually high rental rates (more expensive than Motel 6). The Ponce de Leon Hotel has been a member of the MPSA since the very beginning.

Menacing note left on car - On Monday, 8/11, I parked my car on [undisclosed location]. On Tuesday morning, I found a note on my car that basically told me that I should park where I live and that they know where I live, what I look like, and what I drive. The author used horrible language and it really freaked me out. I live on [undisclosed location], and I was parked on [same undisclosed block], so I'm not sure what this person wants me to do. My challenge is that this is an angry person who used violent language to tell me they are watching me, and don't want me to park in what I assume they

consider their private parking space. If I can't park on my own block, where would I go?

I did go down to the APD precinct at the CNN building and the officer on duty took my statement and made notes on his pad, then gave me a case number. Unfortunately, the officer told me that there is nothing they can do, even though it is very likely that the note was written by the residents in that house, and no real investigation would happen unless they take further action against me. I've attached a copy of the letter for your reference.

MPSA RESPONSE: The note was indeed very unsettling and reflected malicious intentions. Sgt. Cooper will look into the matter, and as needed set up a protocol for the recipient of this communication. Further notes of this nature could constitute stalking or some other criminal offense under Georgia law. It is also illegal to leave any kind of note, card, or flyer on cars under city ordinance. Whoever is doing this can expect to be dealt with seriously by police and prosecutors.

MIDTOWN GRAMMAR

Midtown is a distinct place and with “official boundaries,” rather than a geographic description. Midtown is therefore a proper noun written with a capital M. It is not a geographic description. In reading e-mails we often see spellings like “*midtown*” and Mid-Town. The correct spelling for the neighborhood we call home is **Midtown**.

STAY SAFE! Please encourage your fellow Midtowners to join the MPSA!

- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance

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