



Friends of Ed Pawlowski

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PRESS ADVISORY

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OPERATION CLEAN SWEEP: ONE PART OF CRIME-FIGHTING STRATEGY

In a continuing effort to make Allentown safer, city police conducted several street sweeps over the summer in which law enforcement officers from various jurisdictions teamed with Allentown police to execute saturation patrols in numerous city neighborhoods. In all, 64 people were arrested on a variety of charges.

The city's Vice and Intelligence Unit and Patrol Division joined with Lehigh County Drug Task Force, Lehigh County District Attorney's Office, Lehigh County Adult Probation, Pennsylvania State Police, and FBI to carry out the sweeps.

Suspects were arrested for crimes that included possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia, weapons offenses, prostitution, underage drinking, furnishing alcohol to minors, criminal use of a communication facility, tampering with evidence, probation violations, theft, disorderly conduct and others.

“These sweeps are an integral part of our overall crime-fighting strategy,” Mayor Pawlowski said. “They let criminals know that Allentown's streets are not a safe haven for their criminal activity.”

The sweeps and the resulting arrests are indicative of Mayor Pawlowski's commitment to make city streets safer.

The Pawlowski administration has rebuilt the police department, bringing a force weakened by an unprecedented wave of retirements back to a nearly full complement.

Over the summer six new officers were sworn in and started police academy training and three others graduated from the academy and received badges.

"We have hired and trained more than 70 officers in less than four years," said Mayor Pawlowski. "We are steadily rebuilding the ranks of the department, which saw a third of the force retire since the end of 2005.

The administration continues to look for more opportunities to add the city's police force. Just last week the Allentown Police Department received more than \$430,000 from Lehigh County to help pay for four new police officers.

At an October 1 news conference, Lehigh County Executive Don Cunningham presented checks totaling \$1 million to Allentown and five other municipalities to pay 50 percent of the costs of the new officers over three years.

The money comes from the county's Safe Streets Grant for community police officers.

"These new officers will boost our community policing efforts," Mayor Pawlowski said. "Having these officers interacting regularly with the neighborhoods they serve will help reduce crime and enhance the quality of life in the neighborhoods.

In conjunction with boosting manpower, the administration has also sought new ways to reduce crime, implementing a state-of-the-art security surveillance network with more than 70 cameras watching city streets. The cameras are making city streets safer. Information gleaned from them resulted in at least 29 apprehensions in the cameras' first 18 months of operation and generated nearly 2,000 officer dispatches since January 2008, the Mayor announced earlier this summer.

In one case, the cameras helped close a murder investigation. In May, Mark Holdren, 23-year-old Palmerton man, was stabbed to death in a robbery attempt. Police were able to arrest a suspect in the

killing just five hours later with the help of surveillance cameras.

“The cameras have been invaluable,” said Mayor Pawlowski. “You can see the results. They have been used to identify crimes in progress and they have been used to solve crimes. Additionally they have deterred criminals who know they have to go elsewhere to ply their trade.”

The cameras are monitored by trained dispatchers at the city's 911 Communications Center, where the images are recorded and archived for investigators. The cameras can pan, tilt and zoom in to monitor suspicious activity. They are mounted on buildings, traffic signals, utility poles and street lights.

“The cameras have been the source of very beneficial information,” said Allentown Police Chief Roger MacLean. “We have made a number of felony arrests as a result of pictures picked up by the cameras. They are of value to us every single day.”

As a result of these crime-fighting efforts, city crime statistics have dropped each year of the Mayor's first term in office. Quality of life has also improved with the Administration's concerted efforts to clean up crime hotspots and target graffiti vandals, irresponsible landlords and nuisance crimes, such as excessive noise. Main Street and Weed and Seed initiatives have also reduced crime and improved the quality of life in the neighborhoods they serve.

"It will continue to be our policy to conduct saturation patrols, boost police manpower and look for new technologies and other programs to give our citizens our maximum investigative and enforcement effort to fight crime and to improve quality of life in our neighborhoods," Mayor Pawlowski said.