

A watchful eye in Valley Stream

Volunteers look out for crime in community

By Brian Croce



Brian Croce/Herald

Ralph Polverino, president of the Valley Stream Civilian Patrol, has been a member of the neighborhood watch organization for more than 20 years.

when Valley Stream's four school districts let out for the day. On a typical school day, there are about three or four patrol cars out in the late afternoon. A patrol for one individual usually lasts two hours.

Each member uses their own cars for patrol and has a walkie-talkie on them at all times. While cars are patrolling Valley Stream, there is one person in a central location that acts as the command center.

"If we see something, we report it to the cops with our cell phones and then report it to base with our walkie-talkies," said Polverino, a Valley Stream resident for 52 years.

Once a crime or incident is seen, the Civilian Patrol makes sure to alert the proper authorities and then provide any assistance they can. "If there's an accident we ask the cops if they want us to [direct] traffic or something like that, but we do not interfere with the policemen at all," Polverino said.

Often, there is no crime to report, which makes patrols seem uneventful, but to Civilian Patrol members that's good. "Many times it's boring," Polverino said. "You do your two hours and you don't see anything, but other times you see things."

He added, "If nothing is happening that's a good thing. That means there's no crime."

Former Civilian Patrol President Guy Ferrara has been a part of the organization for 24 years and a resident of the community for 44 years. He knows that Valley Stream residents feel at ease when a Civilian Patrol car rides past their home. "I try to go where there's a lot of people to make them feel better," Ferrara said. "There are a lot of quiet streets and you have to make sure you hit every one once in a while. I never do the same tour twice."

When a person on patrol changes their location, they call it into the command center so they're accounted for in case something happens. After a few stops on the town, members record the places they've recently visited to keep a detailed account of their tour.

Tom Intravaia has lived in Valley Stream for 33 years and has been a member of the Civilian Patrol for five years. "We have good contact with the 5th Precinct, and also our mayor and all of the personnel in his department," Intravaia said. "We have really good contact with them and I'm happy about that."

Intravaia has reported a fire, fights and abandoned cars during his time on patrol.

Members of the Civilian Patrol do not get paid for their services, but they do receive a small stipend for gas each month thanks to a \$3,000 grant from New York state. Prior to the grant, the Civilian Patrol was funded entirely by donations from local residents. According to Ferrara, the Valley Stream Civilian Patrol started in the late 1960s.

The Civilian Patrol holds meetings on the last Thursday of every month in the Village Hall courtroom at 8 p.m. If you are interested in volunteering two or more hours a week with the Valley Stream Civilian Patrol or have any questions about the organization, call (516) 823-9088 for more information, or email vs_cp@valleystreamcivilianpatrol.org

There are many people who care about the general well being of Valley Stream and those who call it home. These people display their care in a multitude of ways and often lend a helping hand to those in need whenever possible. No matter the scale, every good deed in a community is helpful, and the members of the Valley Stream Civilian Patrol are well aware of that.

You've probably seen them driving around town with long "Civilian Patrol" signs atop their cars. The Civilian Patrol had about 200 members at its height in years past, but now has approximately 35 active members.

Ralph Polverino, president of the Civilian Patrol for the last six years, has been a member since 1990. He organizes the patrol schedule each week to make sure that there is at least one car on the road at just about all hours of the day.

"It's a volunteer job, so you can't tell anyone to go out," Polverino said, "but we ask for as little as two hours per week from each member."

The height of Civilian Patrol traffic comes in the afternoon

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