

Notice to Manor Park Block Captains



Several neighbours living on the eastern side of Manor Park (Braemar / Jeffrey area) have been approached at home in the evening over the past week by a young man who recounts a sad and slightly complicated story of a car run out of gas, a stranded wife and baby in need, and can you spare me \$20 to buy some gas. This fellow, with 'the gift of the gab' as the Irish say, gave a seemingly convincing series of explanations about his situation. Where was his car and family, as nothing was visible on the street? They were left on Montreal Road. Why was he in Manor Park? He was going to visit a father-in-law in Linden Terrance. (Note that this street is in Glebe, not in Linden Lea). He had answers for all the questions, but, as our Block Captain noted, none rang true. In the end, his concern was and is to separate the trusting and/or charitable soul from a \$20 bill. Actually taking him to get the gas is not useful, may be counter-productive, and could result in a certain (or uncertain) element of danger.

Here is a description of the individual: of average/slight build, between 28 - 33, approx. 5' 8", short dark hair, a narrow, neat beard running from one ear to the other in a thin line, plus a small moustache. He was wearing dark trousers, shirt with large pale/dark blue checks, no coat. He said he was a roofer with "Ashton roofs". He was very polite and plausible!

Our concern is that none of the story elements are more than creative fiction or - in police terms - fraud. There has been no indication (so far) that this individual is dangerous, but front door encounters are far less threatening than getting into a car with a scam artist who may himself feel threatened, or desperate, and act unpredictably.

Tom Mosco, the Community Police Officer is aware of this scam, and reports that in addition to scamming neighbours in Manor Park, this individual has also been doing his thing recently in Rockcliffe where he has been successful - occasionally - in separating people from their money. The approach - although not necessarily this individual - was tried in Cardinal Glen. Last summer, the Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator reported that a similar 'out-of-gas' story was being taken from door to door on Dunbarton Crescent. A few firm refusals and a few calls to the Police led the individual to move his operation to a less well organized neighbourhood, I presume.

Please remember that it is NOT against the law to give money to any other person under any circumstance. But this is so only as long as it is done in full recognition of the circumstances by the person doing the giving. It is illegal to solicit funds under false pretenses. If you have given someone money and now you doubt the circumstances of the gift as being true, then it is possible to complain to the Police and to lay a charge of fraud. Laying charges of fraud against door-to-door scammers has happened in other nearby neighbourhoods, and resulted in 'cleaning up' this kind of undesirable soliciting at home.

So, what to do? First thing is to get out the word. Block Captains are asked to let their members on their Watch - and other friends and neighbours, why not) know that there is a problem and that this individual may visit them. Please provide your watch members with the description of the person, and his approach, and assure them that it is acceptable to refuse the request for money. For those who wish to do more, if approached, they can call the OPS at **230-6211**, and ask for the Dispatcher. Explain the circumstances, and ask if a cruiser could come to question the individual. Do NOT call 911 unless it is an "Urgent, Life Threatening situation". If the neighbour who has been approached only wants to 'record' the incident afterward, a call to **236-1222, ext. 7300** will reach the OPS crime analysts, who will record the incident in their database. Its more effective, at this early stage, to get the Police cruiser out to have the individual questioned about the background to his often-repeated story.

What else? This incident is an opportunity to meet new neighbours on your watch, and to speak to others on your Watch about Neighbourhood Watch, if they are not yet members. I would be pleased to receive any names and coordinates of new Watch members so that we can more

accurately determine whether we are approaching the 80 per cent membership level which the OPS requires to put up the new "Neighbourhood Watch" signs at the entrances into our neighbourhood. I will be speaking to a number of neighbours in parts of Manor Park where there are no Block Captains yet established. Should you know of someone interested in taking on this responsibility, let me know.

For more about Neighbourhood Watch, call Robert Todd, at **741-6812**, or send an e-mail to me at robert.w.todd@sympatico.ca.