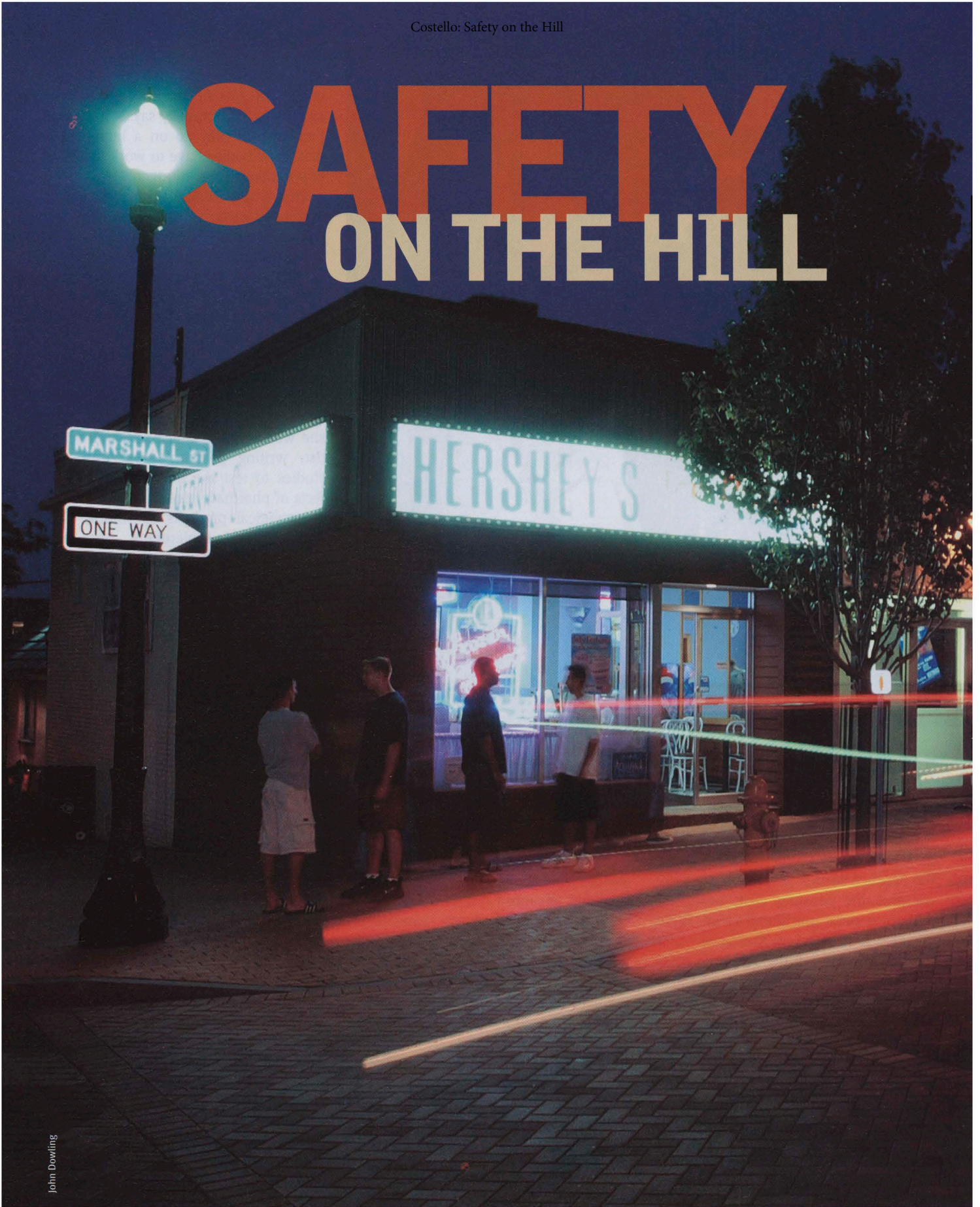
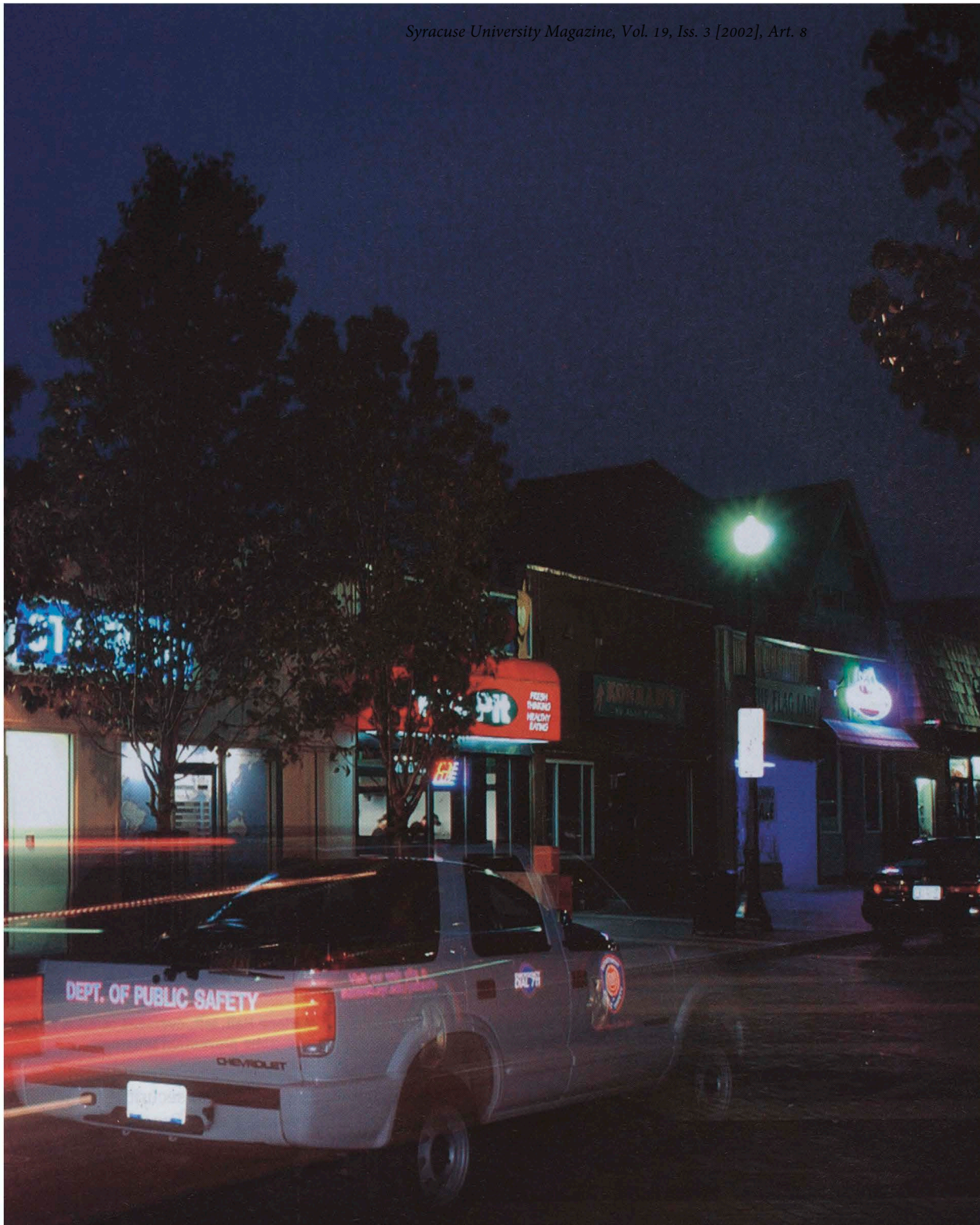


SAFETY ON THE HILL



John Dowling



THE UNIVERSITY INITIATES NEW PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE SAFETY ON CAMPUS AND IN THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS

BY MARGARET COSTELLO



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Department of Public Safety Director Marlene Hall, left, oversees campus security operations, including patrols and crime prevention programs.

Public safety officer Kwamena Morris patrols the winding roads of South Campus, stopping at one point to assist a locked-out student. At the north edge of campus, Lt. John Sardino sits in a patrol car and gauges the number of students heading out to Marshall Street bars—a good indicator of the kind of night that lies ahead. A few hours later, officer Andrew Clary frees an embarrassed pair of students who have handcuffed themselves together and can't find the key. Clary then heads off to a residence hall, where a first-year student has drunk too much alcohol and needs medical assistance. Meanwhile, student security aides staff their posts at the en-

trances of each residence hall, and residential security/public safety officers Marshane McCurty and Karen Esposito make sure that an unwanted guest leaves campus without incident. "No two nights are ever the same, but this looks like a pretty normal night," Sardino says. In fact, the only major incident on that Friday evening last spring occurred before dark when an unarmed local youth tried to rob a student and was caught by public safety officers a few minutes later.

Marlene Hall expected to encounter these kinds of incidents when she began as the director of the Department of Public Safety (DPS) in January. She realized many DPS calls are the result of students experimenting with new freedoms, and she also knew violent crimes can occur in any community without warning. She just didn't expect to be handling a cluster of serious incidents all at once. During Hall's first week on the job, Simeon Popov, a graduate student studying trombone in the Setnor School of Music, was killed. Popov was working part-time as a pizza delivery man when he walked in on a drug-related robbery in an off-campus apartment and was

UNIVERSITY INCORPORATES A CRIME PREVENTION COMPONENT INTO FRESHMAN ORIENTATION EACH YEAR.



Department of Public Safety officer Kwamena Morris logs a patrol of the South Campus residential areas.

fatally shot. The following week a parking attendant was viciously stabbed and then robbed in a lot near the University-affiliated Syracuse Stage, a few blocks from Main Campus.

The two attacks unnerved the campus community, and Hall and other University leaders responded quickly to the safety worries of students, parents, faculty, and community members. The University held numerous meetings for students in the residence halls and sponsored two off-campus forums to listen and respond to questions from students and area residents. In the following weeks, Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw issued four letters to students and parents that provided updates on the murder case and informed them of new initiatives to improve safety in and around campus. "We worked around the clock to get these programs started as soon as possible," Hall says. "No one wanted to rest until we addressed these concerns."

CONFRONTING WEAKNESSES

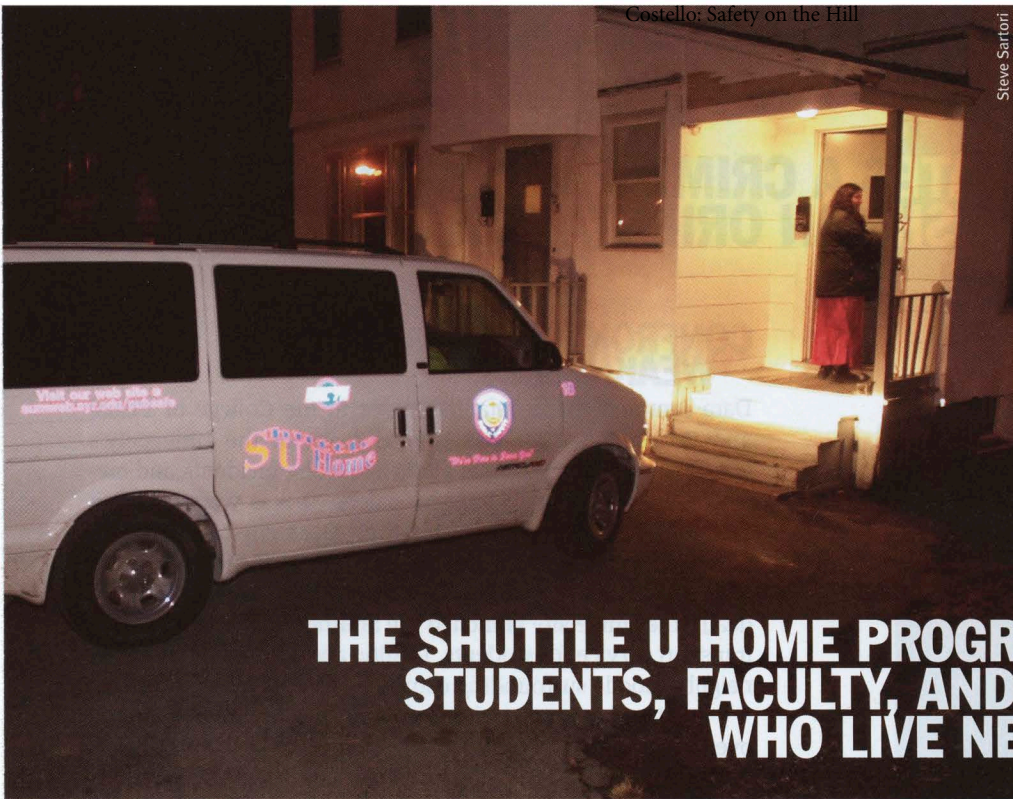
Dara Jemmott '04, a retailing major in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, was glad to learn of the University's efforts in e-mailing campus alerts about the incidents and creating new programs to improve safety. "I was worried about the murder until they told us it wasn't just a guy out there randomly killing people," Jemmott says. "And it was good that they started the new shuttle service." Within days of Popov's death, the University launched the Shuttle U Home program, a transport service for students, faculty, and staff who live in the neighborhoods surrounding campus. The University also:

- instituted a new web-based registration process for all overnight campus guests;
- partnered with the City of Syracuse Police Department and the Syracuse Property Owners Association to begin additional police patrols in off-campus neighborhoods where SU students live;
- hired new community services officers to patrol the Syracuse Stage area;
- announced the creation of the Office of Off-Campus Student Services and the South Campus Welcome Center, both of which are open this fall; and
- improved lighting and safety measures at various spots around campus.

"These safety initiatives were already in the planning stages at the time of Simeon's tragic death," says Barry L. Wells, senior vice president and dean of student affairs. "We were aware of safety and security issues and had been working with committees of students, faculty, staff, and community members for several months to develop solutions."

As a result of this work, Colleen O'Connor Bench, director of the Parents Office, provided substantive responses to dozens of calls from concerned parents. "Parents want to know how we're going to keep their children safe, and they are content with the responses they're receiving," Bench says. "We are being informative and action-oriented. We're saying, 'This is as much a concern of ours as it is of yours, and this is what we're doing.' We aren't afraid to address our weaknesses, and we've taken an upfront attitude about keeping parents informed and including them in the education process."

College administrators and public safety departments nationwide face unfavorable odds in protecting a population that, by its very nature, attracts crime. "Students historically are easy targets," says Lt. Joe Cecile, head of the Syracuse Police Department's Team Oriented Policing Division, which works with the University on patrolling off-campus neighborhoods. "Many students come from suburban areas where they're not used to locking doors, placing valuables in their car trunks, or avoiding walking home alone at night. Plus, students often have a lot of valuables—laptops, CDs, stereos, cameras, televisions—in a small space. We try to teach students how to avoid being easy



THE SHUTTLE U HOME PROGRAM TRANSPORTS STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF WHO LIVE NEAR CAMPUS.

targets. But just when they start to catch on, they graduate, and a new crop comes in.”

The University incorporates a crime prevention component into freshman orientation each year, including discussion of the most common crimes at SU—student-on-student larcenies. (There were 275 such incidents reported on campus in 2001.) Students also receive information about how to avoid date-rape scenarios. Although the University makes efforts to educate students about possible hazards, students sometimes create safety problems for themselves and others in what is often their first residential experience away from their parents’ watchful eyes. “Years back when I started in this position, parents were concerned about outside factors jeopardizing their students’ safety,” Bench says. “Today, they are more concerned about their students’ ability to manage their own safety based on decisions they make.”

Using poor judgment, feeling invincible, and behaving inappropriately are not problems unique to college students, but are common for all students during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. “Nationally, if you look at who’s affected by crime—who are the victims and perpetrators—it’s that 12 to 25 age group, particularly late teens and early 20s,” Hall says. “A great percentage of the University community falls into this category, compared with a regular city or community, so we have a much higher probability of something happening. Plus, we’ve got one heck of a population density on a small piece of property. Yet, if you look at our crime rate, you’ll see that it is lower than the national average.”

The FBI Uniform Crime Report for 2000 estimates that for every 20,000 people in the United States, approximately 825 incidents of the following crimes occurred: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, car theft, larceny, and arson. Federal law requires that all higher education institutions annually report the same list of crimes. In 2000 (the most recent data available), Syracuse University reported 51 such criminal inci-

dents on its campus of approximately 20,000 students, faculty, and staff, or 94 percent fewer crimes than the national average.

Although SU’s crime rate is lower than the national average, by most accounts the University experienced an unusually high number of serious safety-related incidents in 2001-02. In addition to the Popov murder, the University responded to a 100-person fight between two fraternities in a Marshall Street parking lot; a hit-and-run accident on Euclid Avenue that left a junior struggling to regain full use of her brain and body; a fraternity fight at a chapter house in which a male student was critically injured after allegedly being struck in the head by a pool ball stuffed in a sock; and two separate alleged assault cases involving high-profile student athletes. “Every year on a college campus brings with it serious incidents of some kind—sexual assaults, drug or alcohol overdoses, major student protests,” says Dean of Students Anastasia L. Urtz. “This year we’ve had a cluster of serious events, including a murder, which is certainly a rare occurrence. Although we’ve seen substantial decreases in overall misconduct, we haven’t been entirely successful in reducing these kinds of dramatic incidents, which really catch the attention of the broader community.”

TRACKING TRENDS

By analyzing such cases, however, University administrators have identified certain trends. For example, most incidents—whether serious or minor infractions—often involve alcohol or other drugs. The New York City man arrested and charged in the Popov case allegedly targeted the off-campus apartment of two SU students, whom he knew to be dealing drugs and handling large amounts of cash. “We have very stern sanctions for students found to be distributing drugs on our campus because, among other negative consequences, they attract people to campus who often have very serious criminal intentions,” Urtz says.

CRIME REPORT

More information about SU's incidents of crime can be found on the web at sumweb.syr.edu/pubsafe/safety.html.

Alcohol and other drug use creates another whole layer of problems because the substances cloud judgment. "If you look at statistics from the Department of Public Safety and the Office of Judicial Affairs, 80 percent of all their cases involve alcohol or other drugs," says Associate Dean of Students Dessa Bergen-Cico '86, G'88, G'92, who leads the Substance Abuse Prevention and Health Enhancement (S.A.P.H.E.) Office. According to *Binge Drinking on America's College Campuses*, a publication that summarizes three national surveys of college students throughout the '90s, frequent binge drinkers are 10 times more likely than non-binge drinkers to vandalize property and 8 times more likely to be injured.

In addition to fueling student misconduct, alcohol and other drug use also increases the likelihood students will fall victim to crime. "We know from research at SU and nationally that students who are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs are more likely to be assaulted or robbed," Bergen-Cico says. "They're easy targets because they're often unable to defend themselves." This is especially true when it comes to sexual assaults. According to information collected by the University R.A.P.E. (Rape: Advocacy, Prevention, and Education) Center, more than 90 percent of the center's cases involve alcohol.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

Problems with student abuse of alcohol came to a head during a student disturbance on Livingston Avenue in spring 1999. Intoxicated students refused to end a block party and created large bonfires that jeopardized the safety of the neighborhood. Ultimately, police in riot gear were called in to squelch the uprising. The incident prompted the University to overhaul its alcohol and other drug policies and craft a comprehensive pro-



Communications specialist Linda Thomas fields calls at Department of Public Safety headquarters in Sims Hall.

gram to deal with substance abuse and campus security issues. The resulting 12-Point Plan for Substance Abuse Prevention and Health Enhancement (students.syr.edu/12pointplan) was credited with reducing the total number of student misconduct reports 33 percent, from 1,639 cases in 1998-99 to 1,101 in 2000-01. The plan was also cited as an "Exemplary Program" by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, and as a "Model Program" by the U.S. Department of Education. "The plan is unique in its comprehensiveness and in recognizing that one or two new programs will not solve the problem," Wells says. "Prevention research reveals the need for a comprehensive approach, one that not only addresses the specific educational needs of individuals, but also seeks to bring about basic change at the institutional, community, and public policy levels."

In addition to decreasing the frequency and severity of substance abuse-related incidents, several elements of the plan focus on increasing awareness and the use of prevention and treatment programs. Since the plan's implementation, Options, an alcohol and drug counseling program run by S.A.P.H.E., has experienced a decline in the number of students mandated to attend and an increase in student self-referrals. "That to me is a good shift," Bergen-Cico says. "We've

Department of Public Safety officers Wendy Masiuk and Rick Fernandez patrol campus on bikes.





STUDENT MARSHALS PROVIDE A WALKING ESCORT SERVICE AND PATROL SPECIFIC CAMPUS LOCATIONS.

done a lot with the Options program to address counseling as a sign of strength instead of weakness. We want students to see us as a resource working in their best interest, because alcohol and other drug abuse is really a public health issue.”

When the awareness and education element of the plan isn't effective, its standard sanctions policy comes into play. For violations, the new policy mandates specific punishments, which increase for repeat offenders. A third alcohol offense, for instance, results in an automatic one-year suspension. “When students realize that, they change their behavior,” says Juanita Perez Williams, director of judicial affairs (see related story, page 19). “There is a clear correlation between the implementation of the standard sanctions and the decline we've seen in alcohol-related cases.” In the 1998-99 school year, the Office of Judicial Affairs handled 910 alcohol violations; after two years of enforcing standard sanctions, its alcohol-related caseload dropped 35 percent to 599 violations.

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

The University's 12-Point Plan and strict enforcement policies not only lessened problems on campus, but also improved the quality of life for residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. In an effort to build campus-community coalitions, the University increased funding for the Neighborhood Patrol (NP), a joint project between the University and the Syracuse Police Department. The NP's purpose is to infuse more police patrols into off-campus neighborhoods during weekend nights, primarily to break up noisy student parties and address quality-of-life issues for permanent residents. “When we started this initiative, loud music was the number-one complaint, followed by open containers and parking,” Cecile says. “The complaints are down from three years ago, and not simply because we started giving tickets. It's because the University stepped in and created this larger deterrent with its own judicial sanctions.” The neighborhood patrols also reduced burglaries and break-ins, and result-

ed in the arrests of criminals caught in the act. “Those are good by-products of what the original NP was set up to do, which was to handle nuisance calls and violations affecting quality of life,” Hall says.

Students have expressed mixed feelings about the neighborhood patrols; some feel targeted rather than protected by police. “I've heard students complain that while their radio is being stolen, they are being kicked out of a party by police, and they wonder why the police weren't there to stop the thief from stealing their radio,” says Justin Osborn-O'Brien '05. “But those students have to look at the bigger picture. The University recognizes we are part of a larger community, and it has to tailor its security not only to the students and their best interests, but also to the community.”

Although students sometimes grumble about having to show their SU I.D. cards before entering residence halls, Osborn-O'Brien and his peers realize they are in a paradoxical state of wanting independence from parental-like controls, yet needing assurances that someone is looking after their safety. “College is about becoming an adult, but I am still relatively juvenile despite what I would like to say,” Osborn-O'Brien says. For instance, he admits he exercised poor judgment last fall when he duct-taped the elevator doors shut on his residence hall floor. He meant only to prevent his peers from reclaiming couches that he and his floormates had removed from other lounges; however, in taping the doors shut, he accidentally jammed the entire elevator system and trapped several people on two elevator cars.

“I just wasn't considering the consequences, or what effect my actions could have on others,” says Osborn-O'Brien, who was vice president of his residence hall and is now a member of the University Judicial Board. He immediately accepted responsibility and apologized. He received a severe punishment, which he says made a significant impact on his college experience. “The penalties for messing with an elevator are so clearly written in the student handbook—although I'll admit that the first time I ever read the handbook was after I broke one of the rules.”

REACHING OUT

Administrators acknowledge that most students don't review the crime and safety publications the University is required by law to distribute every year. That's why they try to find new ways of sharing the information—with posters in bathroom stalls, fliers on dining tables, computer screen savers, and occasional role-playing presentations. Many offices enlist students to help brainstorm ideas on effective ways to convey public health and safety information. For example, Office of Judicial Affairs Director Williams hopes to try out a student suggestion to improve awareness about date rape by sponsoring a non-alcoholic party. At the party, students would mingle and drop dye into the sodas of their peers to demonstrate how easy it is to slip date-rape drugs into beverages.

Autumn Figueroa '05 says such student-driven efforts will be more likely to have an impact on her and her peers. "College kids will not sit there and read through a Department of Public Safety brochure that gets put in their mailbox," says Figueroa, a University Judicial Board student ambassador. "You have to get inside a college kid's head. Students are more likely to listen to other students."

According to a survey of approximately 400 students conducted by a School of Information Studies class last spring, most SU students say they would like their peers to take more responsibility for promoting safety measures and educating each other about crime prevention. The study also found that students wouldn't mind having their freedoms restricted or having more surveillance cameras installed to ensure their safety. "The majority of students see themselves as part of the community and want to do their part to ensure that the campus is safe," says methods research professor Michael Nilan, who taught the class. The students conducted the study in consultation with the Chancellor and presented their preliminary findings to University leaders to encourage them to incorporate students' opinions and suggestions into future public safety policies.

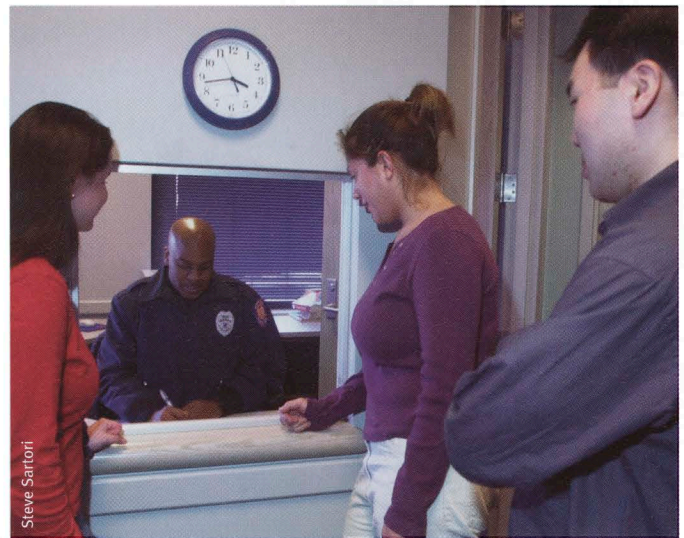
The survey also revealed that although students feel safer on campus than off, they would like more public safety officers patrolling the Hill. While Hall says she would never oppose hiring more officers, she feels the officer-to-campus resident ratio is much better than in a municipality. The students' concerns, Hall says, highlight a need for DPS to educate and interact more with the students and make its presence known. Since Hall became director of public safety, she has required officers to attend a 16-hour in-service training on community policing, which promotes positive interaction between officers and community members to prevent crime. This summer DPS launched a neighborhood watch pilot program on South Campus to increase dialogue between residents and officers.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Laura M. Madelone, director of the new Office of Off-Campus Student Services on Ostrom Avenue, is working to build similar partnerships among students, area residents, and commu-

nity agencies to create a safe, friendly environment in off-campus neighborhoods. Each fall she organizes welcoming teams composed of University staff and faculty members, community residents, and city officials, to greet the nearly 8,000 students who live off campus. The teams provide students with a packet of information, including a guide to off-campus living that covers everything from garbage pick-up and landlord/tenant responsibilities to useful phone numbers and safety tips. "Students go from their parents' homes to the somewhat structured residential housing on campus," Madelone says. "By the time they're juniors or seniors, many live off campus and suddenly have to deal with issues they never thought about before."

Although safety concerns are perennial issues for permanent residents, police, and University employees, the population most vulnerable to being victimized or creating problems



Department of Public Safety (DPS) officer James Hill assists students at DPS's South Campus station in the Goldstein Student Center.

refreshes itself with new members every year. "Students change and the mood of campus changes," Hall says. "While we have many crime prevention and safety awareness programs, we have to continually assess them and be willing to try something different."

Even with the best policies in place, however, crime still occurs and students continue to make mistakes and take imprudent risks. "We're trying to fight against this trend by making sure we have proactive patrols, residence hall security measures, guest policies, I.D. checks, and a whole bunch of other things," Hall says. Yet the most significant deterrents to campus crime remain University community members who adhere to the policies and the safety guidelines. "We have to encourage students, faculty, and staff to work with us to report suspicious people, broken locks, and burned-out lights," Hall says. "When the whole community works toward the same goal, we reach solutions to problems that are much more satisfactory than the reactive response of officers after a crime has already been committed. Our goal is to build those partnerships."