

Mediation Program Fosters Brighter Futures

WINTER

“The next time you’re considering stealing a car, stop and think about the consequences.” That’s what the folks at the Good Shepherd Mediation Program (GSMP) and the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office have been teaching juvenile first-time auto theft offenders for the past 19 years.

GSMP offers an Impact of Auto Theft program that is designed to serve youth charged with auto theft and other auto-related offenses. Through an interactive workshop, juveniles have several opportunities to use critical reasoning to develop positive decision-making skills. The workshops are held on Saturdays at the Good Shepherd Mediation Center in Philadelphia.

So how do juveniles enter the program? First, the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office reviews the auto-related arrests from the day prior, searching for all first-time juvenile summary offenders charged with misdemeanors or minor felonies that would otherwise be heard by a judge in Juvenile Court. If the offending juvenile admits guilt and desires to enter into contract with the Youth Aid Panel, he/she is referred to one of 27 Youth Aid Panels in the city of Philadelphia.

There are two key elements of the Youth Aid Panel program; to give first-time offenders a second chance to avoid a criminal record and to make the offender understand the seriousness of his/her actions as well as the effect their crimes have on their victims and the neighborhood as a whole.

One of the necessary requirements of attending the workshops is to watch a DVD produced by the ATPA in cooperation with GSMP and the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office. It’s titled “What Do You Want?” and helps the viewer see the real consequences of auto theft.

In the DVD, several youth who have successfully completed the Impact of Auto Theft program recount their stories (i.e., why they stole a car, how it felt to be arrested and how it felt to be in jail), and their parents and victims



“What Do You Want?” DVD highlights consequences of theft

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message from the CHAIR

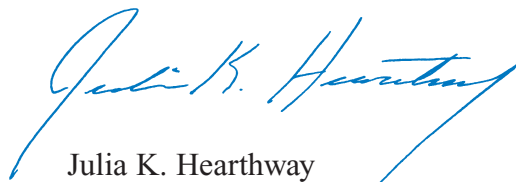
Season's greetings! It's been another busy year for the ATPA and our grantees. In 2006, we introduced VINgraving, a pilot program based in the Lehigh Valley where the number of auto thefts increased 80 percent between 2001 and 2005, despite a consistent decline in the number of auto thefts statewide during the same time period.

As part of this program, the ATPA made do-it-yourself VINgraving kits available to the public for \$8.99, via www.watchyourcar.org. We increased our presence in the Lehigh Valley, letting consumers know that the ATPA is aware of – and working to beat – the significant auto theft problem in their area. VINgraving also opened a new door for our existing event-based VIN-Etching program, which will continue in 2007.

“STOPS,” an ATPA-produced DVD for driver's education students, rolled into classrooms this fall with the goal of encouraging young drivers to implement simple safety habits as soon as they pass their driver's tests. And this holiday season, we spread the word about vehicle theft safety with the hope that consumers would remember to lock their vehicles, hide their packages in the trunk and protect their cars from thieves.

As the year comes to a close, we are ramping up for an exciting and successful 2007 under the direction of our new executive director, Michelle Staton, who is profiled in this issue. Many of you know that Michelle has been a dedicated anti-theft advocate since she joined the ATPA in 1996. From 2003 until last fall, Michelle served as associate director of both the ATPA and the Insurance Fraud Prevention Authority. We're very excited about having Michelle serve in this new capacity and are looking forward to continued success in the fight against auto theft.

Sincerely,



Julia K. Hearthway
Chair, Auto Theft Prevention Authority

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ATPA Announces New Executive Director



She's no stranger to the ATPA or the law enforcement community – but as of November, Michelle Staton became the ATPA's new executive director. Prior to her promotion, Staton served as the associate director for the ATPA as well as the Pennsylvania Insurance Fraud Prevention Authority. She joined the Authorities as an office manager in 1996 and was promoted to associate director in 2003.

“Michelle has clearly demonstrated her dedication and passion toward reducing auto theft in the Commonwealth. We are thrilled to announce her new role and look forward to this exciting new chapter for the ATPA,” said Julia K. Hearthway, chair of ATPA board of directors.

Just as the ATPA is excited to welcome Staton, she also expressed her enthusiasm for her new role.

“I am very excited to serve as executive director, and to lead the Auto Theft Prevention Authority into the next phase of the fight against auto theft,” Staton said. “I am happy to report that 2007 will be a great year for the cause and a bad year for auto thieves.”

Staton is extremely active in the law enforcement community. She is on the board of directors for the Northeast Chapter of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators (IAATI). She is also a member of the International Association of Special Investigative Units (IASIU), the North American Export Committee (NAEC), and the Pennsylvania Crime Prevention Officers Association.

In addition to her work with the ATPA, Staton has been pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in business management, which she will receive in February 2007. She lives in Dillsburg with her husband, son and their family dog.

ATPA Asks Drivers to Add Theft Prevention to Their Holiday To-Dos

Each November and December, thousands of excited shoppers across Pennsylvania head to shopping malls and big-box retailers to do their holiday shopping. Unfortunately, many of them are too concerned with hunting for a bargain to worry about the thieves that could be hunting for their vehicles or newly purchased holiday treasures. This year, the ATPA worked to spread an auto-theft safety message during the holiday season.

“Statistically, reported thefts rise during the last six months of the year, which is when most of us are doing our holiday shopping and errands,” said Michelle Staton, executive director of the ATPA. “But there are some very basic tips drivers can follow to prevent such thefts from happening to them. Sometimes, just being alert and aware can make all the difference.”

Staton says common sense precautions often are overlooked during the busy shopping season, particularly when malls and parking lots are crowded and shoppers are in a hurry. Remembering to properly lock cars or secure purchases in a trunk may take a back seat to the shopping mission at hand. But consumers need to know the holiday season is a ripe time for thieves to strike. Thieves will look for the easiest car to break into – or the car with the biggest bounty on the back seat.



Here are some tips the Auto Theft Prevention Authority shared with consumers this year:

- Lock your vehicle, close all windows and sunroof, and take your keys.
- Don't leave gifts and other valuables in plain view. Don't throw presents on the back seat. Items left in the open attract thieves. Lock purchases in the trunk of your car, or better yet, take them home before you go anywhere else.
- Don't leave car registration, credit card receipts from recent purchases or other important documents in your glove compartment. Finding these will make it easier for a thief to access your identity and account information.
- Never leave your car running unattended, even if it's only for a few minutes. Vehicles are commonly stolen at ATMs, convenience stores, etc.
- Always park in well-lit areas with plenty of pedestrian traffic, or when possible, park in attendant lots.

Additional auto theft prevention tips are available on the Auto Theft Prevention Authority's web site at www.watchyourcar.org.

License Plate Readers Join Fight Against Theft

Criminals who think they can hit the highway and get away with it might want to reconsider. A new tool is assisting law enforcement in a big way. License plate readers, or LPRs, are affixed to police cars and have the ability to constantly scan and process the license plate numbers of all nearby cars. License plates can be read anywhere in the camera's field of view at closing speeds in excess of 120 MPH.

Once an LPR has obtained a license plate number, it automatically runs it through crime databases and alerts the officer if the car or plate has been stolen, suspended or flagged for another reason, perhaps due to an AMBER Alert for a missing child or inclusion on a terrorist watch list. Vehicles found in the databases will alarm in milliseconds.



More than 160 agencies are using license plate readers nationwide, including ATPA grantees. In October, the Lehigh County Auto Theft Task Force made its first LPR stolen vehicle arrest. The individual was sentenced to 14-36 months in state prison and was ordered to pay \$9,792 to Nationwide Insurance and \$644 to the theft victims. This substantial state sentence resulted from a self-initiated arrest by Lehigh County detectives, whose interviewing techniques led to a complete confession by the defendant. The defendant admitted to stealing the car in Lancaster County, attempting to use stolen credit cards in Berks County and possessing the stolen vehicle in Lehigh County.

The ATPA is confident that LPRs will continue to assist auto theft units with arrests. Other states are also reporting success with LPRs. More than 100 LPRs are in use in New York State, and agencies there say LPRs help them identify anywhere from three to 400 suspended and revoked drivers each day, resulting in the removal of hundreds of unlicensed drivers and unregistered vehicles from the roads.



Mediation Program Cont'd

continued from the cover

also share how the youth's decision to steal affected their lives. Possibly the most compelling story of the DVD is about Charles, a boy who is now in jail for inadvertently killing two people in a car crash with a stolen vehicle.

Completion of the GSMP is one part of the juvenile's Youth Aid Panel contract. Once the juvenile fulfills all terms of the contract, his/her record is expunged. And the success rate for the program is through the roof! Eighty-eight out of 100 youth successfully complete their contracts and remain free of arrest.



The Good Shepherd Program is a hallmark of the Youth Aid Panel contract

The ATPA would like to thank GSMP and the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office for proactively keeping Philadelphia's streets safe and saving countless young people from lives of crime.

Good Shepherd

MEDIATION PROGRAM...Where Conflict Can Be Resolved

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Games Were Afoot

On Oct. 29, the Philadelphia Eagles held a home football game, and members of the Philadelphia Police Department Auto Squad set up surveillance to monitor game goers' automobiles. While checking out the scene, they observed a tow truck company hauling three legally parked cars from South Galloway Street to the company's storage lot. Auto Squad members went into action to arrest four of the company's employees, three of whom had criminal records. The investigation continues as Auto Squad members search for all of the involved parties.

— (Philadelphia Police Department)

Chop Shop Scandal

Pennsylvania State Police Auto Theft Task Force (Central Region) members located two vehicles with stolen engines, and through further investigation, identified a suspected chop shop. As the investigation began, a subject was apprehended in a stolen vehicle, which led to a search warrant being served on a garage in Reading City. The search resulted in the recovery of nine stolen vehicles in various stages of being stripped, along with five stolen ATVs and a stolen motorcycle.

Subsequent search warrants were served at a suspect's residence and a nearby storage facility, and two stolen retagged vehicles and another stolen vehicle were seized, along with parts from two additional stolen vehicles. As a result, three suspects were arrested for their part in the operation and another suspect was arrested for insurance fraud for falsely reporting his vehicle stolen. Authorities said the man delivered his vehicle to the chop shop prior to reporting it stolen. All subjects are awaiting sentencing. — (PSP Auto Theft Task Force Central Region)

Suspect's Escape Plan Goes South

On Sept. 14, a 22-year-old man allegedly abducted a woman at knifepoint at the Lehigh Valley Mall and drove away in her vehicle. Authorities said the man sexually assaulted the woman and she jumped from the speeding vehicle on Route 33 in Bethlehem Township, suffering extensive injuries. A Whitehall detective interviewed the woman in the hospital, and she said she remembered seeing the suspect sitting in a tan car next to her SUV moments before he approached.

Police found the car and traced it to the owner, who was the aunt of the suspect's girlfriend. Warren County (Miss.) police arrested the suspect, who was still driving the victim's SUV, on Sept. 16 just east of the Louisiana border. Along with the federal indictment, the suspect faces additional charges including robbery, kidnapping and attempted rape. — (Lehigh County District Attorney's Office)

Gang Member's Confession Leads To Six Vehicles

To date, members of the Philadelphia Police Department Auto Squad have identified nine young men who are part of a group that calls themselves the "Tiny Rascals Gang." Many group members have "TRG" as a tattoo, and the group is reportedly 50 people in size and is known for joy-riding and stealing the wheels and stereo equipment from some vehicles.

One of the most recent run-ins with the group occurred on July 17 in Bensalem. Philadelphia Police pursued two just-stolen Honda Accords, one into Philadelphia where it crashed into a tree, killing the operator. The Bensalem Police Department apprehended the operator of

the other stolen Honda. A detective from Philadelphia's Major Crimes Auto Squad went to Bensalem and interrogated the suspect, who gave a statement regarding the theft of six Honda Accords within Philadelphia, including the location of those stolen vehicles. Later that day, all six Honda Accords were recovered.

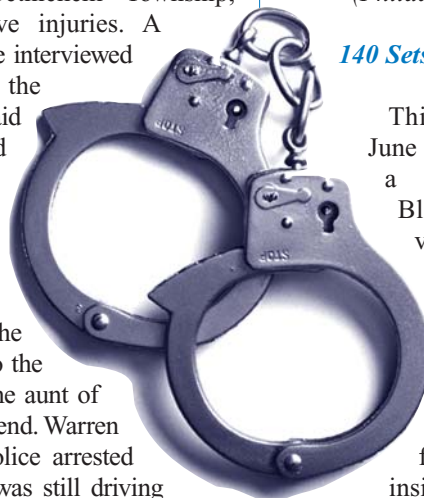
— (Philadelphia Police Department)

140 Sets Of Stolen Keys Located!

This investigation began on June 8 after authorities recovered a vehicle stolen from a Bloomfield dealership. The vehicle was stolen using a key that came from the dealership. Pittsburgh Police Auto Squad detectives were notified by Wikinsburg police when the vehicle was found and the two juveniles inside it were arrested.

The detectives learned that numerous keys and other items might be found in the juveniles' residence, and they secured a search warrant. A search of the residence resulted in the recovery of 140 sets of keys to new and used vehicles at the dealership, a flatscreen T.V., a camera, two Apple iPods with accessories, one laptop computer, 40 DVDs, four video games, two DVD binders, one vehicle battery charger and \$200. In addition, three vehicles that were stolen from the dealership (a 2005 Chevrolet Equinox, a 2005 Ford Taurus and a 2003 Toyota Corolla) were all recovered.

As a result of the search, detectives were able to clear a total of three burglaries at the dealership, one residential burglary and one theft. — (Pittsburgh Police Department Auto Squad)



theAUTHORITY's grantees

Allegheny County District Attorney's Office
Cumberland County District Attorney's Office
Delaware County District Attorney's Office
Erie Bureau of Police
Good Shepherd Mediation Program
Harrisburg Bureau of Police
Lancaster City Police
Lehigh County District Attorney's Office
Northeast Regional Task Force of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Anti-Car Theft Committee (PACT)
Pennsylvania State Police Auto Theft Unit (Central Region)
Pennsylvania State Police Auto Theft Unit (Eastern Region)
Pennsylvania State Police Auto Theft Unit (Western Region)
Philadelphia District Attorney's Office
Philadelphia Police Department
Pittsburgh Police Department Auto Squad
York County District Attorney's Office



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is published by the Pennsylvania
Auto Theft Prevention Authority.
The Authority and its grantees receive
operational funding from nearly 400
insurance companies operating in
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