

National



Photo by Angie Jones

She's an (early) elf to herself

Getting her Christmas present wrapping done early is Susan Robertson, a junior pre-med major. Robertson, a Krueger resident, doesn't want to be tempted by wrapping the packages during final exams week.

15 Atlanta children missing

City to seek clues by phone

ATLANTA — Public Safety Commissioner Lee Brown said Wednesday the city will use a computerized telephone system, featuring a plea from some grieving mothers, to seek clues in the disappearance and murders of 15 children.

Brown called a news conference with officials of Telephone Broadcasting Systems Inc. of Dallas and Willie Mae Mathis, mother of one of the missing children, to announce the new approach to electronic canvassing of neighborhoods where the children were last seen and where the bodies of some of the kids were found.

"We believe there's somebody somewhere out there who knows something that can help us," said Brown. "We aren't going to stop until we find the key to this investigation."

Brown said people contacted by the telephones would be guaranteed anonymity, but there would be a spot on the computerized tape for callers to identify themselves in the event their information was helpful and they wanted to claim a reward.

Over more than a year and a half, 11 children have been murdered and four others have vanished from low-income neighborhoods on the south side of Atlanta. A reward fund of more than \$150,000 has been created by local business and government interests and police have mobilized a special task force that has followed thousands of leads and checked out a daily barrage of clues—all fruitless, so far.

Seated before a city map with leadshots of the missing children pinned at various locations, Brown and Bob Adler, chairman of the Dallas-based telephone firm, demonstrated how the computer and eight tape recorders could dial a number and give the recorded plea for clues.

Adler said the system, which normally would rent for about \$150,000 for a 90-day campaign, was on loan to the city for "as long as it takes" to canvass every household in the areas where the murders took place or the children disappeared.

He said the equipment could make 2,200 calls in a 12-hour period and would operate from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day. Adler said computers would be programmed with telephone numbers of every home within a two-mile radius of the spot where a child was last seen or a body was found.

Each call would begin with a live attendant asking for the head of the household, then asking the listener to hold the line for Brown and a message about the children. Brown and the mother of the child being sought in each area would then ask the lis-

tener to recall anything that might help crack the case.

After each recorded question, a separate tape would pick up any responses made by those called. Adler said the tape would run as long as the resident wanted to talk, and that 1.2 seconds after the answer stopped, the other tape would cut in with the next question from Brown.

Mathis, whose 11-year-old son Jeffrey has been missing since March 12, said she would record a plea for assistance in the case. She said she had no written script for the recorded message but "I'm just going to let it come out. It's been 10 months now, and I want my child back home."

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Providence city workers end walkout over layoffs

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Nearly 1,900 city workers who went on strike to protest layoffs of 300 co-workers began returning to their jobs Wednesday after a compromise was reached with Mayor Vincent Cianci.

Public schools, where teachers refused to cross picket lines Tuesday, were also scheduled to have returned to normal Wednesday.

The compromise was reached late Tuesday night after the layoff dispute resulted in a four-day illegal strike by most city workers, disrupting municipal services.

Garbage collection and most other city services were halted abruptly by the walkout. Only police and firemen remained on the job, and they worked without the services of 200 civilian dispatchers and school crossing guards.

Water and sewage plants were staffed by supervisors and managers. Principals and other administrators staffed schools, which were kept open Tuesday despite picket lines that kept many teachers from reporting to work.

The heart of the two-month dispute was Cianci's layoff of 300 workers to help close a \$12 million budget gap.

Under the compromise, Public Service Employees Union Local 1033 and the city agreed to a new list of 240 workers who will remain laid

off. The city will be able to lay off other workers in the future, though the union will be able to file grievances if it disputes the action.

"We made some compromises and we were able to come up with a list agreeable to the city and to the union," Cianci said.

Local President Joseph Virgilio said earlier in the day, "We've made a lot of progress. I think we can get it settled."

About 90 percent of the union's 2,000 members joined 70 striking sanitation workers Friday and

walked off their jobs to protest Cianci's layoffs.

The union claimed Cianci did not follow seniority rules when trimming the payroll. A labor arbitrator set down the "last hired, first fired" rule, which was affirmed Monday by a Superior Court judge.

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