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General Meeting

Monday, January 31st, 7 p.m.
Fuddrucker's Patio
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For further information call Claude Cunningham at 764-2989 or Jere Smith at 846-1565

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POSTAL WATCH DOGS

Mail carriers keep a look out for crime in neighborhoods

The Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — They move quietly down your street almost every day. They know where you live. They know what kind of car you drive.

For postal carriers, it comes with the territory, so why shouldn't they use their unique positions as lookouts for crime?

"Who better than mail carriers to be out there as concerned citizens with their eyes and ears open," said carrier Bill Pick, who began a Postal Crime Watch five months ago.

"Most carriers have been on their route for years — they know when things aren't normal."

Two months after St. Petersburg's crime watch began in September, Las Cruces, N.M., started equipping its 64 carriers with donated cellular phones to report suspicious activity.

Cab drivers, telephone installers and utility workers in some other cities also are participating in the war on crime, encouraged to use radios in their vehicles to report suspicious activity.

Not everyone is excited. Last month, Scott Witzke filed a federal lawsuit asking that the voluntary St. Petersburg program be stopped because the mission of the

Postal Service is delivering the mail — not police work.

"The Postal Service should stick to what Congress authorized it to do," said Witzke, who is studying to be a paralegal. "Anyone should report something if they happen to see it, but these carriers don't need to be receiving briefings on what people and cars to look out for."

The idea in St. Petersburg was born of a personal scare. Pick's children were approached last summer by a man who tried to lure them into his pickup.

The children backed away and the man sped off, but Pick began keeping an eye out for the stranger and the truck while delivering mail. He soon began asking other carriers to do the same.

The man was never found, but what evolved through months of meetings and planning was an arrangement with police that uses carriers as a citywide network of tipsters.

"Somebody has to do something," said carrier Candy Shaw, who helped organize the program and estimated more than 90 percent of the city's 600 carriers participate.

"People are fed up with crime. We no longer can say we don't have time to be bothered."

Carriers are asked to help only in missing persons cases and crimes against chil-

dren, the elderly or property, not murder or drug cases where they could be "put on the line," said police crime prevention officer Bob Ortiz.

Every morning, carriers at nine postal branches read police bulletin boards so they know what to look for when they hit the streets.

Notices have appeared about a child stalker in a light-blue truck, a roaming flasher driving a blue compact car, a band of burglars in cars with Illinois plates and a con man posing as "Jim Hobson from the bank" who tries to bilk the elderly.

So far, none of the tips from carriers has led to an arrest, but police crime prevention officer Bob Ortiz said it's only a matter of time.

A few carriers in high-crime areas object to publicity about the program, fearing all carriers could be viewed on the streets as "rats" or "narks" and become targets of retribution.

"There's nothing wrong with watching. We just don't need to let everyone know we're watching," said John Bourlon, president of the local chapter of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

"Why put somebody at risk? I wonder what's going to happen to this program when a letter carrier gets his head blown off."

Health Plan

Continued from Page 1

workers should be in the pool. That would be too small to spread the risks around, he argued.

Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., Energy and Commerce Committee chairman whose panel may be the first out of the gate on health reform, said the timetable for achieving universal coverage is open to friendly negotiation with the president.

The Clinton bill would require all Americans to be covered by Jan. 1, 1998.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.V., at a news conference where dozens from every state told a half-dozen Democratic senators their personal health care woes, said Clinton had added "some stress" to our spine.

Kennedy, the chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, recalled when his son, Teddy Jr., was battling cancer, the senator met with patients struggling to pay huge medical bills for their own children.

Genetics

Continued from Page 1

Brittany, who weighed 12 pounds, 12 ounces, was born about three weeks early because Mrs. Abshire developed a common gall bladder problem. She went into labor, said Gibbons, who also is chairman of obstetrics and gynecology at the Eastern Virginia Medical School.

The Jones Institute is part of the medical school. Doctors at the institute delivered the nation's first in vitro, or so-called "test-tube baby," in 1981.

David and Renee Abshire each carry the gene for Tay-Sachs, which killed their daughter at age 3.

Without the test, they have a 25 percent chance of having a child with Tay-Sachs.

Victims of Tay-Sachs are born without an enzyme necessary to remove fatty substances from the brain. Most victims are blind and paralyzed by age 2 and die by age 5.

There is no central registry of Tay-Sachs births, but about 100 Tay-Sachs children were believed born in the United States last year, said Debbie Gutter, director of National Tay-Sachs Allied Diseases, which sponsors research on about 40 genetic disorders.

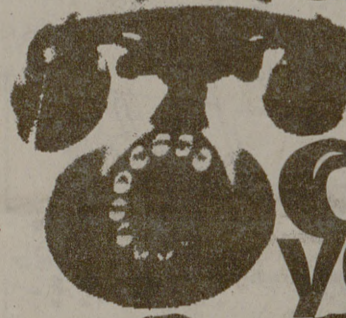
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