

Introducing SCHOOLS UNITE NETWORK

Youth Safety Facts and Tips for Parents

BY JILL LASHLEY GREENBAUM, ESQ.

Picture yourself in the sandbox at your local playground with your not-quite-two-year-old daughter. It's a beautiful spring afternoon and there are several other small children with parents or caregivers, filling buckets and building castles. There is a gasp from the woman nearest you: her daughter has picked up a syringe! Suddenly an afternoon in the park is not so simple...

This happened to me, almost 18 years ago. I had already been uncomfortable seeing prostitutes on my lovely residential block late at night, as well as evidence of drug use on sidewalks in Riverside Park, but this was the proverbial "straw." From my first contact with our local police department, which supported my desire to rid my block and then my neighborhood of drug dealers and prostitutes, I had found my calling.

SUN disseminates current and timely information to subscribers, up to twice a week during the school year, and transmits "Special Alerts" when appropriate.

We incorporated the Police Liaison Group in 1993. Working with the police and community members, we found ways to improve the safety and quality of life of our neighborhood. Our most recent accomplishment has been the establishment of the Schools Unite Network, SUN, an interactive Internet-based network linking schools, parents, the police and community organizations to focus on safety for the children of our city.

In cooperation with the NYPD and other agencies, SUN disseminates current and timely information to subscribers, up to twice a week during the school year, and transmits "Special Alerts" when appropriate. We also provide "Confidential Alerts" to heads

Jill Lashley Greenbaum, Esq., is the founder and CEO of the Police Liaison Group, Inc., a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, established in 1993. The Schools Unite Network (SUN) is the major program developed and administered by the Police Liaison Group.

of schools upon request. There are thousands of parents from over 80 public and independent schools receiving alerts.

SUN receives reports from school administrators, parents, community members, non-profits and other organizations. Concerns submitted to SUN are rapidly relayed to the appropriate people in the NYPD for their action and assistance when applicable, on a confidential basis if desired.

Rumor: the "Bloods" are planning to slash 145 people near schools on Halloween.

This is an example of information we received in October 2009. But we had been pro-active: a few weeks earlier, SUN subscribers received a list of ten safety tips created by SUN and NYC Transit District 1 for parents to share with their teens when traveling around the city on Halloween.

In addition to this regular SUN Alert, heads of member schools received a confidential report with sensitive information to help protect their students and staff.

SUN's post-Halloween Alert answered the question on many parents' minds: what gang activity actually occurred in Manhattan on Halloween? The good news: according to the police, there were no gang incidents or any youth-related crimes reported in Manhattan that day.

The Alert went on to discuss strategies implemented by law enforcement, such as truancy sweeps, which help deter youth-related crime and yield unanticipated arrests, including those of a teenage girl wanted for a cell phone robbery, an unregistered sex offender who

YOUTH SAFETY CONTINUED

befriended a group of truants in Central Park, and an 18-year-old male with a loaded hand gun and 100 bags of marijuana in his backpack.

Rumor: a child was abducted at knife point on the Upper East Side on her way to school.

Concern reported by a subscriber: a man has been hanging around one of Manhattan's popular playgrounds, befriending children. Though no crime has been committed, could he be a pedophile or up to some other foul play?

Rumors and concerns such as these are quickly addressed by SUN in cooperation with law enforcement, and when necessary, through "Special Alert" to subscribers.

Because of our strict privacy policy, names of children and names of schools are never released in SUN Alerts or to the general public.

SUN is so effective in dispelling rumors and mobilizing the parent and school community when necessary, because all criminal activity and requests for information to help solve crimes are verified by the police before transmission.

SUN Alert: police are seeking information about a man wanted for the forcible touching of young boys on their way to or from school.

This Alert resulted in SUN's receipt of additional information reported by a victim's school, which was then provided to the police.

SUN also conducts safety conferences and workshops in cooperation with the NYPD; this fall we held one at Claremont Preparatory School and two at the 92nd Y, which were attended by more than 100 people representing over 50 public and private schools throughout Manhattan.



Schools Unite Network 'SUN'

by Police Liaison Group

5 Effective Ways to Protect Friends & Family

1. Report crime immediately to 911
2. To report to police anonymously through voice or text: 347-560-9110 or SUN's website SUNnyc.org
3. To help recover your cell/iPod if lost or stolen, register in NYPD's recovery program at SUNnyc.org
4. Don't talk/text in public. Go into a store or stand near a doorman.
5. Give up your property to a robber—it's not worth your safety.

Subscribe at SUNnyc.org for free safety alerts, maps and resources.

And, we are always available online. On our Web site, SUNnyc.org, you can report an incident or concern; read the latest alerts; register your cell phone and other electronics; find safety patrol maps with the locations and schedules of parent patrols, school crossing guards, and police-patrolled safe corridors; and get helpful suggestions and resources to help parents and schools in our goal of making New York as safe as it can possibly be for our children. ●

**"Be Involved, Be Informed, Be Connected"
...with Schools Unite Network**