

# Security Check: Public Perceptions of Safety and Security

REPORT NUMBER 18

1997



Onondaga Citizens League



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## Preface

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In our community, as in many others, the dedication and active participation of volunteers is an essential ingredient in all civic enterprises. This is especially the case in regard to the work of the Onondaga Citizens League. The League is comprised of volunteers. Officers, Board members, committee chairpersons, and committee members give freely of their time and thought to planning and carrying out the work of the League.

In some respects, this 18th OCL study was quite different from, and more difficult than, previous studies. In an attempt to assist the Benchmarking project at the Maxwell School, this OCL study was more complex and less definite than others. It combined several focus group discussion sessions and the standard OCL study group meetings.

The leaders of the study, Michael Freedman and Corinthia Emanuel, deserve great credit for the organization of the study and their efforts to pull together the disparate elements and results.

The Board also appreciates the skilled and highly professional work of the Assistant Director, editor and writer of this report, Marcia Harrington.

As it has for 19 years, University College of Syracuse University generously provided staff support, office and meeting facilities, telephone, mailing and other forms of assistance as a community service to implement the work of the Onondaga Citizens League.

*Lee Smith*  
Executive Vice President

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## Focus Groups: Hosting Organizations

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ANCLA

Liverpool Chamber of Commerce

Manlius Triad Program

North Syracuse School District

Onondaga Citizen's League

Onondaga Community College

Syracuse Boys and Girls Club

## Weekly Topics and Speakers

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- January 15     **Introduction: In-House Focus Groups**  
*Michael Freedman and Corinthia Emmanuel, 1997 Study Chairs*
- January 22     **Law Enforcement**  
*Steven Thompson, Deputy Police Chief, Syracuse Police Department*  
*David Wall, Onondaga Sheriff's Department*  
*Ray Card, TOPS (Team Oriented Police) Unit, Syracuse Police Department*
- January 29     **Campus Security**  
*Robert Robinson, Syracuse University (SU)*  
*Sylvia Martinez-Daloia, Syracuse University*  
*Carol Cowles, Onondaga Community College (OCC)*  
*William Jones, Onondaga Community College*
- February 5     **Civil Rights and Public Safety**  
*Linda Hall (moderator), Human Rights Commission*  
*Barrie H. Gewanter, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)*  
*Peter Christ, Retired Police Officer*  
*Steven Thompson, Syracuse Police Department*  
*Nancy Rhodes, Human Rights Commission;*  
*Alan Rosenthal, Attorney*
- February 12    **Household Security**  
*Greg Carmen, Time Warner Cable & Security*  
*Jeff Banech, Time Warner Cable & Security*  
*Avery Sinclair, Sinclair & Andrews Insurance Company*  
*William Sylvester, Deputy, Syracuse Fire Department*
- February 26    **Physical Hazards**  
*William Sylvester, Syracuse Fire Department*  
*Ron Hernandez, Onondaga County Emergency Medical Services (EMS)*  
*Joe Snell, American Red Cross*  
*Tom Phelan, Emergency Planning and Employee Communications, Niagara Mohawk*  
*Kevin Wisely, Onondaga County HAZMAT (Hazardous Materials) Unit.*
- March 5        **Emergency Care**  
*Mike Adario, Rural Metro Medical Services*  
*Ben Renaldi, 911 Emergency Hotline*  
*Sue Paradiso, Onondaga County Department of Social Services (DSS)*  
*Amy Honig, Onondaga County Department of Social Services*

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- March 19      **Mid-Course Correction and Review**
- March 26      **Occupational Health**  
*Diane Brayden*, CNY OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)  
*Lin Golash*, NYSCOSH (New York State Council on Safety and Health)
- April 2        **Environmental Health**  
*Lisa Letteney*, Onondaga County Health Department (OCHD)  
*Brenden Meahaffy*, NYPIRG (New York Public Interest Research Group)  
*Dr. Brenda Nordenstam*, SUNY ESF (State University of New York College of  
Environmental Science and Forestry)
- April 9        **Focus Group Summaries**
- April 16      **The Media**  
*Fred Fisk*, Editor, Syracuse Post Standard  
*Tim Fox*, Executive Producer, WIXT Channel 9
- April 23      **Business and Economy**  
*Roger Evans*, Department of Labor  
*Carl Forte*, Forte Associates  
*Richard Knowles*, AFL/CIO Union
- April 30      **Women's Issues**  
*Annette Galias*, Spanish Action League  
*Kate O'Connell*, Rape Crisis Center  
*Rosetta Walsh*, Brick House
- May 14        **Children and Youth**  
*Diane Erne*, Deputy Commissioner, Onondaga County Department of Social Services  
*Judy Gilligan*, The Salvation Army  
*Peggy Liuzzi*, Executive Director, Onondaga County Child Care Coalition (CCC)
- May 21        **Neighborhoods**  
*Lucia Strail*, Spanish Action League  
*Eskew Young*, South Side Property Owner
- May 28        **Summing Up: Findings and Concerns**

## Acknowledgments

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Security Check involved the counsel and thoughtful cooperation of numerous individuals and organizations.

For helping organize and run the focus groups, a big “thank you” is in order to: Girls Incorporated of CNY; Onondaga Community College’s programs in Human Services and Criminal Justice, and in particular to Nick Poulos and Donna Stuccio; to Liverpool High School’s 11th Grade social studies class, and Dave Marten, the divisional head; to the Association of Neighbors Concerned for Latin Advancement, and to Katie Reed who facilitated their focus group; to the Manlius Triad group, and its organizer Ann Bolton; and to the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. To those who helped form these focus groups we are grateful.

To the 150 individuals who participated in these focus groups and those held at the League’s initial meeting, another vote of “thanks” is required.

The study and this report would have been far less than it is without the very generous participation of all our panelists and the agencies they represent. We here acknowledge our deep debt of gratitude to each and every one of them.

Our study participants, who faithfully attended the Wednesday meetings, posed searching questions to the panelists, offered insightful commentary, and helped guide the study to its conclusion, the co-directors acknowledge them here with heartfelt appreciation.

The co-directors also acknowledge with much gratitude and appreciation the able and inspired assistance of Marcia Harrington.

In organizing the focus groups, the facilitators, and the panels, the co-directors called upon dozens and dozens of individuals and organizations — too many to name here. Nonetheless, we appreciate the helpfulness that people routinely showed when called upon, which itself says something important and flattering about the quality of life in Syracuse and Onondaga County.

*Mike Freedman  
Corinthia Emanuel*



# Executive Summary

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## BACKGROUND

“*Security Check*” is an inquiry — a participatory inquiry — into what it is that community residents think about when they think about the safety and security of themselves and their families at home, in the workplace or elsewhere within the wider Syracuse community. It is also a report based on what the Onondaga Citizens League learned from local practitioners as to what is done here to ensure and to provide for the safety and security of community residents.

The project elicited residents’ views through focus groups. In all, thirteen focus groups were formed, comprising 151 participants. These groups included youngsters from the Boys and Girls Club, high school juniors from North Syracuse, juvenile justice and human services students from OCC, Liverpool Chamber of Commerce members, retired citizens from the Manlius Triad Program, ANCLA members, plus another five ad hoc groups that formed during an OCL meeting at University College.

Qualified panelists were invited to address the League on a dozen pre-determined topics bearing upon local safety and security: law enforcement and public safety, public health, the local handling of hazardous materials, domestic violence, workplace safety, economic security, emergency services. In addition, we heeded the recommendations of Board members and weekly participants who urged that we inquire specifically about safety issues affecting women, children, and youth and also those that relate particularly to neighborhoods.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

(1) *Personal Safety* The single, consistent, major concern expressed by participants in all focus groups was for personal safety in public and for security from violence in all its forms, whether from youth gangs, those involved in drug activities, or sexual predators. This is an issue about which people are unwilling to take a wait and see attitude as demonstrated by community meetings like the one held at Dr. King School and the candlelight vigils on the City’s South Side.

(2) *Diversity of Concerns* Alongside the common concern regarding personal safety, a marked diversity of experience is evident within our community. One’s sense of public safety varies by age, gender, ethnicity and race. It varies by income level and to some extent with personal character attributes.

Minority members participating in “*Security Check*” saw their own security undermined, of all things, by organized law enforcement. Minority members find their neighborhoods to be ineffectively policed as crack houses are allowed to stand, juvenile gangs and delinquent youths harass passersby, and unleashed dogs

menace pedestrians and befoul the streets. They feel that the standing laws are not being enforced where they live.

By the same token, minority members also believe they are unfairly subject to police scrutiny, more apt to be brutalized when arrested, and generally subject to adverse prejudice by the whole criminal justice system. Sometimes, though innocent of any wrong doing, they feel unsafe when the police are present.

A variant of this same perception sees inner city neighborhoods and minority populations as targets for the construction of polluting steam plants or other health-compromising projects.

(3) *Perception and Reality* A false sense of security leads us to ignore precautions we should take; unfounded fears impel us to yield to unnecessary anxiety and misguided caution. We heard specifically of single frightening incidents that leave victims with lasting and over generalized fears. On the other hand, students on campus sometimes exhibit too much trust.

Sometimes we believe a situation to be fraught with risk, when in fact it is not. Asbestos, for example, is not a significant health risk when it is in good shape and left intact. Conversely, the single greatest cause of home fires is cooking, which is evidently riskier than most of us appreciate.

We sometimes assume that we are protected when we are not. People expect that government agencies will ensure the protection of the foodstuffs we consume, air traffic, the workplace, and the welfare of children. Shrinking government, however, has spawned a series of safety problems, as regulations become increasingly difficult to enforce with fewer inspectors, and as legislatures are less inclined to regulate.

Different groups perceive the same apparent conditions differently. Parallel studies conducted at the Dunbar Center and at SUNY ESF revealed that each rated the same environmental risk factors quite differently.

Media reports can exaggerate or mask genuine risks. Media reports have made parents wary of strangers who might be predators, when in reality children are far more likely to be harmed by a family member or friend. To be sure, the media play an inestimable role in shaping our perceptions of safety, in influencing how we understand what makes us secure, and in clarifying what precisely the safety issues are.

(4) *Neighborhoods and Community* We encountered expressions of anxiety over changes in the fabric of our community. Some respondents fear that neighborhoods have lost their solidarity and cohesion.

Many participants urged that families need to become involved, and neighbors need to get organized. Indeed, throughout the city and county, Neighborhood Watch groups have become established, and quite a few are reportedly very effective. Participants argued that while we all depend upon government in different ways to protect and promote our well-being, "citizens must do for themselves" as well.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

“Safety” is a measure of risk. “Security” is the sense of control we feel in the face of risk. Purchasing improved police cars may improve street safety, but it is unlikely to raise our sense of security. Community policing, on the other hand, places officers back on the streets which has worked both to improve safety and to improve security because it has given residents a sense of control — a well-known officer to contact, a place to go when there’s a problem.

There is a direct link between perception of safety and our sense of security. Actions that both lower risk and give citizens increased control will have the greatest payoff in improving the quality of life. Therefore, we need to:

- (1) *Improve communication to the general population about issues that affect security, and develop regular channels for community input to the media, law enforcement, and other agencies and groups charged with protecting aspects of community safety.*
- (2) *Target improvement efforts at vulnerable groups and the vulnerabilities of each group.*
- (3) *Treat security enhancement as an “added value” consideration when we make safety improvements.*
- (4) *Enable citizens to take an active role in creating a safer community.*

In conclusion, the study revealed that our community is well served in many areas and that many of our efforts to improve safety have produced good results, but that we suffer from endemic problems among pockets of our population. These pockets do not exist separate from the rest of the community, and there is a widespread sense of insecurity about the issues faced by these groups even for those who are not directly affected. Drive-by shootings and child kidnappings are problems that affect ultimately all our citizens. We need to address the problems squarely; communicate with the community about our efforts to do so; and encourage widespread participation by citizens in the process to achieve a safe and secure community. In dealing with the safety and security problems faced by others, we also improve the safety and security conditions for ourselves; and in joining together in a mutual initiative, we improve the quality of life for the whole community.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## BACKGROUND

This 1997 study, *Security Check: Public Perceptions of Safety and Security*, is a departure from previous OCL studies in a number of ways. Where previous studies addressed a single community problem, studied the issue in depth, and made recommendations to the community for improvements, this study is ethnographic in its orientation. The study was designed to discover what, according to our fellow citizens, constitutes personal security; to what extent, for the diverse populations that comprise the overall community, it is realized; and where not, why not. This year's study also diverged from the usual procedure by gathering information through focus groups<sup>1</sup>. These met in various places throughout the county and allowed organizers to target constituencies, youth and the elderly for example, to gather their input. The study then proceeded much as earlier studies have, with topical study sessions, and has concluded with the preparation of this report.

The theme for the 1997 Onondaga Citizen's League study was developed at the suggestion of Bill Coplin, Chairman of the Public Affairs Department at Syracuse University's Maxwell School. His work on the Community Benchmarking Project led him to invite the Onondaga Citizens League to participate in the outreach portion of the project, looking at the role of police in the community. The OCL Board of Directors recommended that the study should instead focus on the larger issues of safety and security and look at the police only in the context of these themes. The OCL chose to participate in the project because safety and security are primary factors in determining the quality of life in any community. Michael Freedman, co-chair of this year's study, explained:

"Envisioning the future of our community calls upon us to examine the quality of life we wish for ourselves and our families. Surely one important dimension in gauging the quality of life is personal safety and security. If people live fearfully, if people's lives are cramped by fear and worry, then their lives are accordingly diminished, and a desired quality is wanting from their lives. The community too is thereby hurt, and its vitality compromised."

To improve the quality of life in the community, through improvements in safety and security—or any other area—we must first determine our current position and then develop an understanding of the critical areas where problems need to be addressed. This can take the form of community benchmarks. Over time, benchmarks can help to reveal that programs and initiatives have made a big difference in the overall picture—or that they have been ineffective in achieving community goals.

A primary task for any community attempting to improve its quality of life is to change the passive, consumer/client role for citizens into an active, creative/participatory role. In Onondaga County there are several initiatives to increase

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<sup>1</sup> The results of these focus groups, along with a sample of the survey instrument, are included as an appendix.

citizen participation. A county-wide quest for an new vision of what this area should become is called FOCUS (Forging Our Community's United Strength). It is patterned on a model used in cities like Chattanooga Tennessee that have successfully begun to reinvent themselves as places where people "love to live." The City of Syracuse has undertaken the major task of creating a new network of neighborhood based leadership councils. This program, called TNT (Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today), divides the city into eight sectors that will each develop five-year action plans to move the sector—and the city—into the next century. These three efforts, Community Benchmarks, FOCUS and TNT are working together to create a solid foundation for the future of our area.

## THE STUDY

At the outset the League outlined the project, its premise and design:

### *Premise*

To contribute to the current community visioning project, OCL proposes to undertake a searching examination of what individuals across the social grain of Syracuse and Onondaga County understand to be the key conditions that make them feel that they and their families are safe and secure. And conversely, we want to learn what circumstances within our community are deemed to be threatening, and lead people to feel unsafe and insecure.

### *Study Design*

- (1) We seek to discover how in fact different constituencies in our community *define* personal security; what factors, circumstances, conditions they spontaneously name. We shall intentionally ask open questions to invite answers that express indigenous interests, conceptions, and experiences—not pre-conceived ideas brought to the exercise by the OCL Board or a panel of experts. Where, for example, individuals on their own are inclined to see security in terms of employment or income, that fact will be disclosed in the course of the study. Similarly, should some members of our community construe security (or its absence) in terms of political discourse or other forms of legitimate public expression, the OCL project would be designed to discover that, as well as more conventional understandings of personal safety and security.
- (2) We anticipate that "safety" and "security" will be defined differently by different groups within our community; what some find to be secure, others see as problematic, worrisome, and possibly threatening. The OCL study will add to the community visioning a rich and subtle picture of the conditions people here find pertinent and necessary to a safe and secure life.
- (3) Because the OCL report is concerned to gather diverse opinions and experiences that bear on personal security as a quality of life, we intend to include in our study the viewpoints and suggestions of the police and other institutional authorities responsible for personal safety and security.
- (4) As the study evolves and specific issues emerge and are probed, concrete problems no doubt will come to light. The present study, as those in the past, will seek to gather recommendations from all constituencies for constructively addressing, improving, and hopefully curing them.

## Chapter 2: Overview of Local Conditions

### COMMUNITY CONTEXT

At the outset, the framers of this study recognized a range of safety considerations worthy of investigation. They worked within the limitations of the Onondaga Citizens League purview and focused the study on safety concerns related to Onondaga County. Specific study topics were identified from these broad safety considerations and a panel was composed to address each topic. The choice of topics was supported in part by the results of the focus groups, and also through discussions with the OCL membership. The list of topics was not comprehensive, due in part to the time limitations of the study, and there were "notable absences" from the panels, again, most often because of time and scheduling constraints. But despite these limitations, the panels did an excellent job of presenting the current state of affairs in their respective areas and the topics serve to give a sense of the range of concerns we explored. In many cases, panelists described ways in which their organizations connected with other groups to enhance their effectiveness through cooperative action. The organizations and institutions we studied do not stand alone, but rather are parts, often significant parts, of a network of supports that address the community's overall safety and security needs. Because of the local focus, larger safety and security issues such as international terrorism or the stability of the stock market were not addressed, even though these issues concern us all.

We live in an media-rich cultural environment that provides us with an inexhaustible supply of information about crime. But we often have trouble assimilating that information into a meaningful understanding of our own personal security or the relative safety of our local area. Headlines<sup>1</sup> such as "SHOTS MAKE STREETS TARGET FOR WORRY," "VIOLENCE ISN'T NEW IN CITY NEIGHBORHOOD," AND "SOUTH SIDERS FEARFUL, NEED HELP" shape our perceptions of public safety. Our perception of youth is transformed by reports such as "9-YEAR-OLD SHOT BY A 15-YEAR-OLD." And our confidence in the legal system is eroded when we read "CORRUPT TROOPERS SHOWED NO FEAR" and "STATE DEC OFFICERS DEALT GUNS." Though we would like to be encouraged by the knowledge that steps are being taken to improve our safety, headlines like "POLICE PATROLS TARGET ONE OF CITY'S TOUGHEST NEIGHBORHOODS" also remind us that we have a need for such patrols — and in more than one neighborhood. Perhaps because our diet is so rich with such fare, we are not able to shed much concern even when we read "ONONDAGA COUNTY CRIME SHOWS DECLINE IN 1996" or "VIOLENT CRIME FALLS 7%." It is in the context of these continual reminders about crime that we conducted our focus groups. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand that the single most significant concern

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<sup>1</sup> These headlines were selected from Syracuse Herald Journal and the Syracuse Post Standard newspapers, November 1996–August 1997.

TOPICS		
Law Enforcement	Campus Security	Neighborhoods
Physical Hazards	Emergency Care	Environmental Health
Occupational Health	Business and Economy	Household Security
The Media	Women's Issues	Children and Youth
Civil Rights and Public Safety		

## HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS

The information in this chapter was provided by the speakers from the weekly panel discussions. Panelists described current local conditions, areas where they have had recent success, and areas where there are problems or controversy. In each of the following sections we begin by describing the current practices used by these groups and their activities in the community, we report significant statistics as they were presented in the panel discussions, and conclude with the concerns and recommendations that were raised by the panelists.

### *Law Enforcement*

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#### OVERVIEW

- The Syracuse Police Department has focused on improving its policing strategies and improving service to the community. Major initiatives from the Department include four police storefronts, one on each side of town where officers participate in community functions and perform community service; community policing, including the TOPS (Team Oriented Police) units where officers concentrate on building neighborhood relationships and enforcement of quality of life ordinances; street policing where officers walk the streets of downtown and Armory Square to give visitors a sense of safety and encourage them to enjoy these areas after dark; direct deployment teams assigned to three strategic zones, each team consisting of six officers who are trained and mobilized to immediately address street crime on all levels; and city bike patrols and walk-and-ride patrols targeted at small business districts. The Syracuse Police Department also has a highly trained domestic violence unit that often works directly with the County's Social Services Department. Syracuse has several other safety related programs including Weed and Seed, a program designed to "root out" drug activities and "replant" healthier neighborhoods, as well as an extensive system of Neighborhood Watch groups that has been very effective at extending the eyes and ears of law enforcement. The Syracuse Police Department received statewide recognition for their community policing programs and was honored with an invitation to speak to the New York Coalition of Mayors about these programs.

eyes and ears of law enforcement. The Syracuse Police Department received statewide recognition for their community policing programs and was honored with an invitation to speak to the New York Coalition of Mayors about these programs.

- The County Sheriff's Department reported that during the past five years there has been a downward trend in most crime categories — although many crimes still go unreported and many lives are touched by crime. Like the Syracuse Police Department, they too have concentrated efforts on improving service through community policing activities. The Sheriff's Department operates throughout the county and is patterned on the State Police model with headquarters, sub-stations, and processing offices strategically positioned so officers can work expediently. The Sheriff's Department has also recently expanded its role to serve an incarceration function. The Department has responded to the needs of the community by establishing offices in shopping malls, both for the convenience of citizens and to serve as an on-site crime deterrent. Officers work out-of-uniform in the malls to break up groups of youths and control their activities. The Sheriff's Department operates the COMBAT unit on the city's North Side that works with the city's Police Department and its community policing units.

#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- The local population has been in decline over the past decade — down from 470,000 to 463,000 — but the number of households has increased by 15-20,000.
- Onondaga County, including the city of Syracuse, spent \$115 million on crime prevention in 1996 for police, jails, probation, etc.
- To give a sense of proportion to the size of our jail population, the Sheriff's Department reported that approximately 1 in 500 county residents are currently incarcerated.
- Last year, out of 175,000 calls to the police department, there were 11,000 serious crimes (homicide, rape, armed robbery, etc.). A large proportion of the remaining calls were problems with so-called quality of life crimes — disorderliness, code violations, noise violations, graffiti, menacing dogs, and other disruptive, destructive behaviors.
- As a measure of the effectiveness of the Domestic Violence Unit, calls were down from a high of 13,500 a few years ago to 10,000 calls last year.
- Last year, the four officers who comprise the North Side TOPS unit spent 866 hours walking the streets and answered 10,065 community policing calls.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Officers with both the Police Department and the Sheriff's Department discussed the difference between perception and reality. They told stories of how a single criminal event can have a profound influence on an individual's perception of personal safety. They noted that even one such incident can result in lasting feelings of insecurity that are not easily mended.

Participants were cautioned against the problems created by misinformation. For instance, although children are much more likely to be hurt by a family member or friend, the public fears the "unknown predator" more, which influences where we



Panelists also cautioned against another form of mis-perception, the “transplanting” of problems from other areas. They noted, for instance, that problems with police brutality are not equal in all parts of the country and it is important to judge each department on its own merits.

Officers acknowledged that the fear of retribution may prevent people from reporting incidents, as may underlying doubts that anything can really be done. Participants were encouraged to resist these feelings because it is impossible to know in advance what bit of information may solve the crime and prevent future criminal activity.

The Sheriff’s Department urged the public to understand the need for law enforcement agencies to consolidate — a difficult topic — and to share resources.

## *Campus Security*

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### OVERVIEW

Campus communities are microcosms that reflect both the strengths and the problems of the larger community. Like other forms of localized crime, most campus crime is not committed by outsiders, campus crime is most often perpetrated *by* members of the college community *on* members of the college community. Campuses feature small areas that are densely populated with people who really don’t know each other, but who behave with perhaps too much trust. Students want personal freedom, and although they are not always ready for the full responsibility of being on their own, they still must be treated as adults.

- The Syracuse University Public Safety Department has an array of tools and programs to protect the safety of the University community. These include: a video to introduce incoming students to the Department’s activities, programs, and campus safety features; computer access for the dispatching officer to immediate information about life safety systems, physical plant features, a student/staff database, as well as direct access to 911; a peer group of student marshals who patrol campus and offer safety escorts; workshops to deter students from problem behavior and to develop good personal safety habits; a “blue light” system that features emergency alarms directly connected to the dispatch office — identified by glowing blue lights — at strategic locations across campus, card-key entry systems for campus living centers (dorms); student ID cards with a magnetic strip (like a credit card) that allow access to campus facilities; public telephones that also function as “emergency phones” and can reach campus security by dialing “11”; and a program for cell phones that allows students to call security toll free by dialing “\*SU”.
- Public Safety at Onondaga Community college shares some features with SU, but is different in many ways. OCC has a pro-active freshman orientation program to give students information about many things including campus security and to develop a clear understanding of community expectations. As is true for all institutions of higher education, OCC is required by law to tell students the campus crime statistics — cases of drug arrests, assaults, etc. These are reported in a brochure sent to students. The demographics of the community college population is different from that of residential colleges. The average community college student is somewhat older, the students are

education, OCC is required by law to tell students the campus crime statistics — cases of drug arrests, assaults, etc. These are reported in a brochure sent to students. The demographics of the community college population is different from that of residential colleges. The average community college student is somewhat older, the students are primarily from the local area, and they sometimes bring interpersonal disputes of long-standing — perhaps dating back to high school — with them to school. A student who has a personal problem with another student will need to work it through, perhaps with the diversity officer, because it is important to the quality of life for other students to have these issues dealt with effectively.

The OCC campus security department consists of three staff people, a director and two officers. They have all had security training in criminal justice, either from school courses or the Sheriff's Department. OCC contracts with an outside agency (Doyle) to provide additional security personnel. OCC relies on technology to enhance safety and has security cameras in strategic positions around campus as well as an emergency phone system much like the one at SU.

Both SU and OCC also rely on governmental law enforcement agencies. The Syracuse University Public Safety Department enjoys good relations with the Syracuse Police Department and collaborates with them both on and off campus. In addition, Syracuse University has been granted enhanced authority for officers who complete additional training. As part of the "county family" Onondaga Community College has close ties with the Sheriff's Department and they provide backup for any serious problems on campus.

#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- Syracuse University Public Safety Department watches over a resident student body of over 7,000 students — the largest in the state — and patrols over 961 acres through 360 buildings.
- Last year, SU's Public Safety Department responded to 1,100 blue light calls with only a dozen actual events taking place, the rest were false alarms.
- The department received 167,000 calls for service, provided 4,000 escorts, and made 18,000 community contacts (where officers get out of the car to meet people so they are not viewed as "foreign" on campus).
- The average age for OCC students is 28 and administrators report that this additional life experience often results in more respect for security issues.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Panelists noted that the Syracuse Common Council recently authorized enhanced authority" for Syracuse University security officers which they believe will make officers more effective and better able to handle crisis situations as they arise. It will allow them, among other things, to carry batons and chemical spray and to take suspects into custody. But the panel also explained that only officers who receive an additional 281 hours of training, pass a background check and drug screening, and are individually approved by the chief of the Syracuse Police Department will have these enhanced powers.

## *Civil Rights and Public Safety*

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### OVERVIEW

There are threats to security that are not necessarily tied to safety, specifically threats to our civil liberties, that many people are unaware of. The Constitution's Bill of Rights sets out the checks and balances of freedom, but fear can make people willing to give up basic rights — whether to police or to their doctors, to an employer or an insurance company — and fear motivates individuals to want restraints on these rights for others. Although the limits on personal freedom ultimately effect everyone, these limits are often proposed to ensure special protections for those already in power.

The American Civil Liberties Union litigates violations of constitutional freedoms. Most calls to the local ACLU office involve freedom of speech and employment issues as well as cases where the courts, police, or schools go beyond their authority and thereby deny basic rights. Many other groups are dedicated to watching the police both locally and nationally, including the Maxwell School Benchmarking Project. The Citizen's Review Board was started after the work of a Community and Police Relations Task Force indicated a need for such a board.

The police have a need for reliable community feedback. One way that police get information about community experience is to speak with groups like the OCL and gather input. Another is to put a policeman in every high school and junior high school to both protect and interact with the students. They report that information does "filter up" through the chain of command to the chiefs, but claim that the best information comes from tracking the volume of calls and reports of problems with the police. The Syracuse Police Department representative agreed that there is an ongoing need for enhanced cultural awareness for those entrusted with law enforcement responsibilities.

### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- Syracuse Police note that out of 200,000 calls, a very small number — under 1,000 — were internal affairs complaints.
- Most cases of police misconduct do not occur when there is a crisis. These events usually happen when police feel their authority is challenged.

### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Panelists warned that those who enjoy the greatest privilege in society are often the least realistic about threats to civil liberties. People are often more concerned about threats to their person and property than to their constitutional freedoms. They warned that defending civil liberties is difficult because "one person's solution becomes another person's problem."

They noted that crime can be unpredictable, violent, disproportionately experienced, and is significantly influenced by race. It is often dealt with ineffectively by the courts, and no solution has been forthcoming. They ascribed these same characteristics to the experience some groups have with the police. Those who fear the police often believe they have no control over potential abuses of police power.

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Panelists acknowledged race to be an undeniable factor, noting that it is striking how people of different races can have widely different perceptions of the same conditions. Some saw the Rodney King video and saw nothing wrong being done while others were outraged. In the case of Jonny Gammage, panelists suggested that even if there had been a video to document his arrest it would not change the differing perceptions brought to the actions of police, or the actions of Gammage himself, by different groups in the community.

The panel cautioned that we are at risk whenever we frame issues as polar opposites because there are more than two points of view or two choices.

They explained that it is not uncommon for police to unquestioningly view their actions as legitimate. Often when incidents of abuse occur, police have acted wrongly for all the "right" reasons. They rightfully act to protect society and apprehend criminals but sometimes knowingly choose to ignore the rights of those they believe are guilty.

The panel was concerned that we currently accept a level of unprofessionalism from police around issues of brutality that we don't accept anywhere else. They encouraged participants to demand that the police aim for excellence in this area as in others. Panelists noted that the police are known to handle themselves very professionally in critical situations. It is when their authority is challenged that police are most likely to be abusive. In some situations the simple statement of rights by an accused has been treated as a challenge. Panelists insisted that for community policing to work, police must first "lay down the weapon of fear."

## *Household Security*

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### OVERVIEW

- The threats to household security include fire, floods, crime, and natural disasters. Both public agencies and private companies work to lessen these risks. In recent years, the Syracuse Fire Department has expanded its role in the community. The Department does in-home inspections to alert homeowners and tenants to possible fire hazards, although those most in need are often the most reluctant to use this service. The Fire Department may enter a multiple occupancy dwelling at-will, but they are not permitted to enter one- or two-family homes without permission of the occupants. The Fire Department has also taken on the role of first response for many emergency situations and fire trucks are now equipped with lifesaving defibrillators. In an effort to protect at-risk families from fire hazards, the Department is currently engaged in a program sponsored by the Red Cross to provide low income families with smoke detectors.
- Time Warner Security Company sells security systems, intrusion and fire alarm systems, to homeowners and businesses. Company representatives noted that no

alarms — temperature sensitive alarms, gas alerts, water system failure warnings, etc. — for clients with special needs.

Security systems operate through sensors located throughout the house, at doors and windows etc. In the event of a problem a signal is sent to a central location. An attempt is then made to contact the home and confirm the alarm while police or fire departments are notified. The panel noted that most security alarms are false alarms, and most false alarms result from improperly secured houses.

- Both homeowners and renters can benefit by investing in insurance. Insurance companies can provide customers with a list of conditions known to be hazardous. The list identified wood burning stoves, for instance, as a common hazard in winter. Insurance companies offer significant discounts for lower risk customers: for those with newly constructed, more fire- and intrusion-safe homes; for mature homeowners who are likely to be at home more often than younger customers; for homes with deadbolt locks; and for non-smokers. The panel cautioned that insurance policies do have limits, and individuals who purchase insurance should read policies carefully and be aware that under most policies valuables such as jewelry and rare antiques require special additional coverage, and that calamities such as war are not covered.

#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- In 1996 there were approximately 19,000 fire alarms and 1,429 actual fires in structures and buildings in Syracuse.
- The single largest cause of fire is unattended cooking which was the cause of 306 of the 905 total household fires in the past year.
- The second most common type of fire came from incendiary sources, which caused 186 fires last year.
- Careless smoking was the third most prevalent cause, and this resulted in 127 fires last year. These fires often were the result of smoking while under the influence of drugs or alcohol and/or simple carelessness.
- Other causes that resulted in fewer fires but still present a community concern were "broken parts" — gas leaks, faulty wiring, etc.
- Unattended children using matches or lighters resulted in 54 fires and caused 11 major local fires last year. This problem alone had a local cost of \$604,000.
- The total cost of local fire was \$5 million dollars.
- In the Syracuse area, 15 percent of homes feature security systems. This is significantly less than the 70 percent coverage in some areas of the country.
- In the past five years there has been a notable change in requests for security systems from customers who want systems installed preventively rather than as a response to a problem event. Only a few years ago security systems were sold almost exclusively to those who had already been victims of crime or fire, now the ratio is approximately 50/50.
- Response time to alarms can vary, but "call-back" is timed to take from 13-15 seconds after the alarm signal, and the police are notified immediately after that.

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- Losses from crimes and fires to homes with security systems are, on average, 1/3 to 1/2 the amount recorded for unprotected homes.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fire Department cautions that while the benefits of smoke detectors are well publicized, 30-40 percent of all households are not protected with adequate smoke detectors. This can be the result of not having protectors located in the proper positions, having smoke detectors without functioning batteries, or simply not having a smoke detector present in the home.

Property owners were advised to keep leaves and papers away from structures and to keep gasoline in a locked storage area.

The panel cautioned that when buying insurance customers should be aware of the coverage they desire, usually for replacement costs of their property; of the list of hazards that could increase the cost of insurance; and of the limits on policies for losses due to natural and manmade disasters for which policyholders are not covered.

A difference in perceptions was noted between the Fire Department's view of the hazards of woodburning stoves and that of insurance companies. While insurers listed these stoves as an increased risk, the Fire Department has not found that stoves are among the significant contributors to home fires.

#### *Physical Hazards* \_\_\_\_\_

##### OVERVIEW

- The City of Syracuse has a strategic plan, trained personnel, and special equipment dedicated to emergency services. Under the strategic plan, additional firefighters are called in as needed to handle an emergency. The Emergency Preparedness Unit is specially staffed with seven rescue workers and the Hazardous Materials Unit (HAZMAT) is staffed with eight workers trained specifically to handle dangerous materials: chemicals, flammables, gasses, etc. And in an emergency, the Fire Department has additional trucks and ladders reserved to handle the situation. The Department is prepared for virtually any type of emergency, including building collapse, carbon monoxide leaks, and floods. They will also pump water from basements in the case of a water main break, although in the case of sewer backups, the Public Works Department must be called.
- Onondaga County has twenty-two ambulance service providers including their primary provider, Rural Metro, several independent providers, and numerous local fire departments that have their own ambulance services. Most emergency medical service

- Casualty Reception Teams were developed during Desert Storm to treat war wounded. Hancock Airport is a destination for this type of situation. Now, these teams — that feature Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and nurses — are on call at the airport in case of a national disaster and are available to take the load off local hospitals.
- The Onondaga County HAZMAT unit treats emergency situations throughout the county in all areas except the city of Syracuse. It is an all volunteer team with six core fire departments located strategically around the county. They provide both the personnel and equipment needed in emergency situations. There are approximately sixty members of the unit and all are trained for emergency medical conditions (EMC). There is a full supply of protective suits for each team member as well as special equipment (monitors etc.) for each core unit. The HAZMAT unit meets monthly to learn more about specific hazards. Ten core leaders form the planning council for the unit and serve to review procedures and incidents and to set planning goals. Emergencies that require HAZMAT mobilizations are first identified by local fire departments. The request for HAZMAT assistance is made by the local fire chief or senior officer on the scene. Last year was free of major HAZMAT emergencies and the agency concentrated instead on consultations with local fire departments about such problems as chlorine leaks and sulfuric acid spills.
- The Red Cross operates as a network of independent units. In times of large scale national disaster the many branches of the Red Cross can supply necessary volunteers on short notice. In local situations they are notified by the 911 center to dispatch help for victims and they work in partnership with the fire department and emergency medical services. The Red Cross responds to all fires and sends social workers to scenes of fatal automobile accidents and other crises. In these situations they provide limited, "Band-Aid," relief at the time of the crisis but not long term assistance. However, in the case of large scale disasters the Red Cross does help with long term needs for shelter and acts as advocate for victims, helping them find resources etc. Local emergencies are often family emergencies and may require mass feeding and shelter. In these cases the Red Cross works in partnership with other agencies to provide relief. They have agreements with American Legion Posts and local public schools to provide short term emergency shelter. The Red Cross also provides a disaster inquiry hotline that families of victims can call if a loved one is missing in a large scale disaster. The Red Cross tracks these victims and keeps families informed.
- Niagara Mohawk works with people around the world to develop power control grids like the one used in our region. In this system, energy can be moved flexibly across the grid so outages in one area do not result in loss of power on a large scale. Each local part of the system is coordinated at the corporate level, each has a crisis task force to keep everything up to date, and the system has its own emergency energy plan that is rehearsed annually. Similar plans have been developed for other disasters including gas emergencies, oil spills, and nuclear events. Niagara Mohawk controls power for the all of the eastern states and has back-up plans for virtually any type of emergency including acts of terrorism. They work with the state SEMA agency to coordinate the multiple needs that arise in emergency situations, including the physical needs of work crews. When mutual aid is required Niagara Mohawk can call upon other providers in the state, providers from neighboring states, and even Canadian providers as needed.

The company is now receiving world-wide attention for its consistent service and is studied for its methods of dealing with our annual snow emergencies. And they are

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#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- Last year alone 843 individuals were affected by disaster in our community.
- The major cause of local disaster is fire.
- Local facilities can accommodate shelter for 1,500-3,000 people and up to 1,400 meals as needed.
- The American Red Cross has over 300 volunteers trained for emergency situations.
- The Red Cross is the only not-for-profit agency charged by FEMA to care for the physical and emotional needs of victims.
- Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation controls power through an energy grid over an area reaching from Niagara Falls to Glens Falls and employs 8,700 personnel.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Red Cross, like many volunteer service organizations, is faced with an aging of its volunteer pool and is uncertain how future needs will be met.

In times of large scale emergency there is a critical need for effective management systems as disaster scenes are often overrun with uninvited volunteers. A small, well-trained team is more effective than large groups of well intentioned but untrained volunteers.

Niagara Mohawk advised using the proper procedure in case of a power outage in the home. Residents should first check to see if neighbors have power before calling the emergency hotline. If a large area is without power detection devices will already have been activated and the phone system may become overwhelmed if all households try to contact the emergency number at once. If, however, the problem is confined to only one home it is appropriate to call immediately and request assistance.

They cautioned that the street light system is very complex with responsibility for lights divided inconsistently across many small districts. In some areas Niagara Mohawk has the entire responsibility for lights, and in other cases they are only responsible to replace bulbs. In cases of street light outages, high-crime areas have priority for re-establishment of service.



they start work and then spend an additional 10–12 weeks working with an on the job trainer. The 911 team also does training for Neighborhood Watch groups. The 911 hotline receives both emergency and non-emergency calls (if the situation warrants less urgent attention it will be transferred as necessary) and they dispatch to every locale in the county except Skaneateles. Calls to the Syracuse Police emergency line are also routed through 911. When a call comes in to 911 it is coded with the address and phone number of the phone used to make the call. The operator first dispatches to the police and then to our local ambulance provider, Rural Metro.

- Rural Metro is the primary emergency ambulance service provider for the area. Each Rural Metro ambulance runs with a paramedic/EMT team that can administer oxygen and over 300 medicines and also do some invasive procedures including intubations and cardiac pacing. Rural Metro offers additional services that don't include transport for patients. They are part of the Volunteer Center's Social Service referral service and assist when there is a need for guidance for seniors in the system. Many patients don't need medical attention but do need other services. The ambulance team is trained to recognize these needs. Rural Metro also does training in CPR — both in-house and at locations throughout the area.

- The County's Elder Abuse and Protective Service for Adults unit works with individuals who are mentally or physically impaired and either suffer some form of abuse or who have needs that aren't met and have no other means of support. The Elder Abuse Unit helps individuals over the age of sixty who suffer from abuse or neglect. This can include self-neglect, as when someone won't eat, or heat the home, or answer mail, or get medical help when necessary. They noted that a variety of problems can arise with Alzheimer's/dementia patients that create the need for emergency services. Families can have difficulty handling the situation, or the affected individuals can become unstable and unable to care for themselves. For involuntary treatment to be initiated, patients must first be diagnosed by two physicians. If a patient is deemed to be a potential harm to themselves or others, police are then responsible to transport the patient to a treatment facility. If the dementia is a result of medical causes, the patient is admitted to the hospital; if caused by psychiatric causes the patient is transferred to Hutchings.

#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- The 911 emergency hotline receives over 700,000 calls annually, which translates to 2,093 calls per day on average. Only one-third of these (212,867 last year) are made directly to 911, the majority of the calls come from the police emergency line.
- Rural Metro Medical Services ambulance service answered 42,000 calls last year and the number of calls is growing 2-4 percent per year. Of these, 54 percent were medical calls, 34 percent were injuries (including accidents and assaults), and 12 percent were for miscellaneous accidents (fires, drownings). Of the medical calls, 24 percent were heart related and 50 percent resulted from general illness (diabetes etc.). Of the trauma calls, a relatively low number — approximately 7 percent — resulted from violent crime.
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#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 911 operators emphasize that people need to be aware that it is important to answer all the questions the 911 operator asks, even if it seems unnecessary. For instance, callers are always asked to verify their address even though this information is displayed to the operator. Computers can and do report errors and such mistakes could cost lives.

Too often the weak link in getting effective care is a lack of information. Effective emergency care begins with helping people to recognize symptoms that require help and to develop basic first aid skills.

Local Volunteer Fire Departments are facing problems with the growing expense of equipment and meeting the increasing skill level required for volunteers.

A persistent gap in services results when patients suffer from “dual diagnosis” of mental illness and a second critical condition. These patients are difficult to serve within existing programs.

### *Occupational Health*

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#### OVERVIEW

- The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is charged by Congress to care for the safety of those employed by private businesses (public employees are covered by other agencies) and to balance the roles of education, support, and enforcement. OSHA was established to protect worker safety and therefore regulation is directed at the employer, not the employee. OSHA fines are based on several factors including the number of violations, the size of the workforce (and therefore the number of individuals placed at risk by unsafe conditions), and the number of things that could go wrong as a result of the violation.

In recent years OSHA has modified its random, single-site inspection approach and instead conducted targeted, industry-wide reviews in an attempt to protect workers in the most dangerous environments—workplaces that expose employees to multiple exposures or high-level risks. Once a target industry has been selected, OSHA begins with preliminary education for the entire group of employers, to explain the rules to them all and to assist them in becoming compliant with these rules. After the education phase is completed, and once businesses have been given time to implement any necessary changes, then OSHA conducts random inspections of a small number of these businesses. As many as ten times the number of corrections are accomplished this way, through the combination of education and select enforcement, than by unannounced single-site inspections.

OSHA also sponsors a Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) for businesses that want to invest in a high level of safety. Lockheed Martin chose to participate in this

designed equipment, poor posture positions imposed by the task and/or the physical environment, as well as unrelieved repetitive motions required to do the job. OSHA is trying to develop guidelines for employers to help them make simple changes that can help workers avoid these injuries. In its role as educator, OSHA attempts to identify critical areas where injuries are likely to occur and offers special programs to educate employers about specific hazards. For instance, mechanical power presses have proven to be a source of many workplace injuries, so OSHA has conducted special training and education programs for operators of this equipment.

- The New York State Council on Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) covers an area from Canada to the Pennsylvania border and works with disability cases for unions. Workers gave up their right to sue employers with the passage of the Workers Compensation laws. They are not protected from losing their jobs because of a disability, and numbers of workers have been fired for becoming disabled on the job with an injury that forces them to be out of work for longer than one month. The recently passed Family Leave Act has been of great service to workers. It guarantees workers an additional twelve weeks of unpaid leave, which has helped many people keep their jobs.

The attitudes about safety in the workplace vary widely. Some employers are committed to worker safety. They continually upgrade employees awareness and safety skills through monthly meetings or other means. While in other places workers live in fear — both of the unsafe working conditions and of losing their jobs for reporting these conditions. Workers find it especially difficult to collect awards for damages for occupationally caused illness, even when there have been longtime exposures to carcinogenic chemicals or heavy metals. Workers must prove that the worksite exposure *caused* their illness, not just that the illness is more prevalent among individuals exposed to these substances. And, when workers who are injured on the job file a compensation claim to be awarded damages, they are questioned about personal habits that could have been contributors to the injury. This is especially true of repetitive motion injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome.

#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- On average, 154 workers die every day and 16,000 are injured. On a nationwide level, eight in every hundred workers will be injured on the job. In New York State the statistics show that six in every hundred employed by private business, and thirteen in every hundred in public employment will be injured.
- During the past twelve months two workplace fatalities have occurred in Onondaga County and were investigated by OSHA. There were other deaths in the workplace, but when the death happens to someone who is self employed or when there is no employment relationship, OSHA is not called in and no inspection is done.
- According to OSHA, Central New York does not have a comparable cohort area for purposes of comparison. But looking nationwide, we are not unusual — neither safer nor more at risk than the average. Looking at the statistics on a statewide basis, we have some business that are much safer than in other parts of the state. For instance, our construction industry is much safer than in New York City, in part because we have fewer job sites and a higher ratio of enforcement officers.

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- There are health and safety risks specific to some groups of workers. Health care workers have a high rate of back injury, especially those workers who are required to lift patients. Violence in the workplace is an often unrecognized source of occupational hazard. Violence is an issue in small retail stores, in taxis, for delivery people, and for home health care workers.
- State-wide it costs \$84 million dollars annually to administer Workman's Compensation. And the annual cost of compensation for disability — which includes the loss of productivity etc. — is 3.6 billion dollars.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel reports that people are often surprised to find out that the law does not always protect workers. For instance, no law requires employers to heat or cool their buildings, so employees can be forced to work in extremely uncomfortable temperatures. Only when there is the potential for a threat to health can OSHA step in.

OSHA reports that there is political pressure to ignore ergonomics as a major cause of disabilities. The last Congress did not want OSHA to even do research into the problem; and attempted to prevent them from doing so by law. While the law was not passed, OSHA is nevertheless treading very carefully in this area.

Panelists informed participants that New York State is in the bottom quartile of all states for payment of Worker's Compensation claims — and in the top quartile for collection of premiums. This works against both workers and businesses.

#### *Environmental Health*

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##### OVERVIEW

- The Onondaga County Health Department is charged with protecting the public from environmental hazards. Their responsibilities include testing for asbestos and radon and distribution of information about these hazards; advice about testing such as where to get radon testing kits (NYS Health Dept.); and answers about how to cure problems with these environmental hazards. They also help with testing of indoor air quality and well testing. For the hazards associated with asbestos, the Department distributes informational pamphlets and ordinarily recommends leaving asbestos in place when it is in good condition. The Department answers citizens' questions regarding the environment, hazardous chemicals, safety procedures, etc. And the County Health Department works with people who live near toxic sites to inform them about, and protect them from, these hazards. In a new initiative, the County is conducting a "Healthy Neighborhood" program to survey lead and asbestos hazards in

- A survey conducted at the Dunbar Center showed that residents' top environmental concerns (along with drugs and crime) were Onondaga Lake, air quality and the nearby incinerator, lead in the home, cleanliness and trash, and having enough "green space" in the form of parks etc. for healthy activity. When asked specifically about contaminated wastes, 90 percent of the participants rated this as a "high concern." These findings were compared to responses from ESF students, who also participated in the study, and only 40 percent of whom rated contaminated wastes a "high" concern.
- The New York State Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) defines its role as a link between the Legislature and the community. The agency also hopes to foster good government by acting as a watchdog over campaign contributions, noting who is giving money to whom. They are currently working toward the passage of a lead protection bill requiring lead workers to be certified (like asbestos workers) because most exposures occur during abatement and most severely impact children. And, in a recent success, a bill was passed last year requiring businesses to disclose all use of pesticides on lawns and on food. This is designed to track the results of exposure to such substances as organochlorines and to try to account for such unusual circumstances as the higher instances of breast cancer on Long Island.

#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- At this time, the one known health hazard from radon is an increase in lung cancer risk that has been documented when exposures are above 4 picocuries/liter.
- More hazards are faced when asbestos is removed incorrectly than if it is allowed to remain undisturbed.
- The primary site of local environmental pollution is Onondaga Lake and there are approximately 30 additional designated hazardous sites around the county.
- Since national testing began in this century, there has been a documented 50 percent drop in sperm counts for American men, and a lower fertility rate for animals, that has been traced to endocrine disrupters (found in plastics and chlorine).

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Panelists noted that environmental justice issues have been found to be particularly important to poor communities which often bear a disproportionate share of environmental burdens. This can result from the siting of hazardous facilities, from multiple exposures in the home and the neighborhood, or from activities such as eating fish from contaminated waters.

When panelists compared the responses from the Dunbar study to the ESF study, it was clear that different groups have different concerns. The panel felt that as a community we need to target our responses to match these concerns and these groups.

They cautioned participants to consider the economic impact of all regulation and abatement requirements as part of the "trade-offs" we face in the community. Lead abatement, for instance, can be prohibitively expensive for many homeowners and the hazards caused by abatement need to be weighed against other methods such as improved hygiene through the frequent washing of hands and household surfaces.

They cautioned participants to consider the economic impact of all regulation and abatement requirements as part of the “trade-offs” we face in the community. Lead abatement, for instance, can be prohibitively expensive for many homeowners and the hazards caused by abatement need to be weighed against other methods such as improved hygiene through the frequent washing of hands and household surfaces.

They also noted the importance of informed consent. This may require increased testing of children and reporting of known hazards to help families assess the degree of risk they face when they make housing choices.

The panel explained that many of the conditions we now face are the result of our own spending habits, and as we demand such things as safer emissions standards on cars by buying cars with safer emissions, then demand will create a market for these cars.

They advised participants about the “new” focus of research on endocrine disruptors which act as sex hormones in the body. These chemicals are primarily found in water and imitate estrogen and so have an impact on male reproduction. Nationally, this is a billion-dollar issue.

Another environmental issue is the concern over multiple exposure and the synergistic effects of multiple contaminants. Most studies are done on single chemicals but this does not mirror real-world risks from the effects of chemicals in interaction with one another. These studies have not been done because they would be very costly.

Panelists raised serious concerns about the validity of risk-assessments in general. These studies often find only what they want to find (as when the tobacco companies consistently find no demonstrated risk from cigarettes in their risk assessment studies). And information on risk issues is “soft” — how many PPB’s (parts per billion) of a given substance are safe? What is the graduated risk as exposures increase? The need for informed value/cost/risk tradeoffs was discussed, and the importance of “evaluating the source” for information was emphasized.

## *The Media*

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### OVERVIEW

- The Syracuse Newspapers have a newly expanded mission that includes “reinventing” local news. This has been made possible by the combination of staffs from the Post Standard and Herald Journal so that the Syracuse Newspapers can now bring 35 experienced reporters to cover local news. The issues of safety and security relate to virtually every story — to creating peace of mind and a sense of control. Editors consider the new “records” page to be revolutionary in local journalism. Most significant is the level of detail that the page provides for the community. It includes a map of the area, listings of traffic accidents, a calendar of local events, a police blotter section, and features a specific daily focus. The page will serve as a community resource, tracking such things as the number of 911 calls processed, school enrollment,

- Many broadcast news services now take the “half full” not the “half empty” approach (USA Today, CBS evening news) and try to offer solutions. At Channel 9 they have translated this approach into giving people “action information” that may include phone numbers, tips, safety information, etc. They believe these bits of information are especially important in times of crisis — such as the weather emergencies so common in Syracuse winters. But, they do not believe it is their responsibility to make people feel safer by limiting the frequency or the content of crime reporting.

The panel explained that the increase in reporting of information essentially enlarged their role as journalists, but that it was important to separate reporting from advocacy, and agreed that advocacy belongs in an editorial format.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel recommended that people be realistic in understanding the role and the limitations of the media, and to assume a level of personal responsibility for assessing the information that comes to them when making decisions. It is also important to understand that the media is a business, that it does serve a role as “entertainment,” and that while this role should not supersede the role of news, it is still the headline that sells the paper.

They warned that some people feel the media reports too much about troubling things or about issues that don't pertain to their lives. They suggest that while most people feel that issues at the Justice Center are far removed from their lives, it is important to remember that anyone can be arrested and that jailhouse conditions are the same whether you are guilty or falsely accused.

The panel acknowledged that the public sometimes feels that the media demonstrates less concern for victims than for convicted criminals. But, they argued, it is not the role of the media to “make whole” the victim of a crime. However, when an individual is incarcerated, society takes on the role of caretaker, and those charged with that responsibility need to be watched.

Panelists warned participants to guard against threats to our understanding of the issues and to look for all sides before making judgment. Be wary, they cautioned, of what PR people tell the public; it is their job to put the best possible face on the facts. Demand that our public officials, including the military, be prevented from hiding the truth. And watch out when the “juices run too high,” the truth can get lost in the rhetoric.

They also noted that despite the popular condemnation of the media for unbalanced reporting, a lot of what happens every day is simply not news. It is not news, for instance, when 100 planes land safely. It is news when *one* doesn't.

## *Business and Economy*

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### OVERVIEW

- The reality of the job market often has little bearing on public perceptions. While the rich may question the strength of the stock market, the poor often ask: “is there a job for me?” and “will there be jobs for my children?” Strength in the lower-skilled job sector eases these fears and improves perceptions. While there *are* opportunities in the area for jobs, prospective employees need to be prepared for these jobs. Employers are looking for skilled workers, and those are the workers who left for the west and south when our economy weakened. There are, and will be, plenty of low-wage jobs to ease the welfare-to-work transition — though the entrance of these workers into the job market may make it tougher for teenagers to get their first jobs.
- In AFL-CIO President John Sweeney’s writings about America, he asked, “what *is* economic security?” According to Sweeney, we need to look at shrinking numbers of jobs; lower wages, pensions, and benefits; and at under- and unemployment. We also need to look at history. Once, working people knew that they could live on the wages they earned and employers knew the local economy provided customers whose wages could afford the goods and services business produced. In 1975 the economy did a U-turn, and productivity began to rise as wages and job security dropped and pensions and benefits declined. A contingent workforce of low-paid temporary workers replaced union workers in the 1980’s, and these workers rarely enjoyed the benefits and legal protections characteristic of the union workforce. Concurrently, executive salaries soared. Most households began to require two wage earners, and many families suffered enormous mid-career setbacks at exactly the time when living costs were critically high. These families were fighting for economic security and spending less and less time on family and child-rearing needs. Panelists cited the decline in organized labor as a contributing factor in the decline of salaries and benefits in this period. American workers have been forced to compete with child labor in overseas markets and a growing world economy. Average American wages have been kept flat and the “new right” has strongly discouraged union involvement.
- Professional financial planners help individuals develop a strategy for providing for their present financial needs as well as their future financial goals. The common belief that Social Security will “drop dead” in the year 2011 is not universally shared. But it is unclear who will fund the baby boomers’ retirement. In the next decades 80 million baby-boomers will retire. They have saved at a rate of 4.6 percent as compared to 11.5 percent for the previous generation. The average household has only 1.9 children so we are not producing a sufficient stream of new providers. Those now receiving Social Security are very politically active and demand a large share of the dollars we currently collect. The baby boomers have thrown their money at the stock market with what Alan Greenspan describes as “irrational exuberance.” It remains to be seen if these investors will panic when the widely predicted market correction occurs and their funds drop appreciably — it could be an unparalleled disaster.

### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- There are more jobs in the local economy at this time than there were a year ago — although there are fewer jobs compared to 1990. The manufacturing sector is strong and manufacturing jobs continue to be created. Jobs are available in the “visible” sectors of local economy and hiring has increased in small companies.



- Some areas where job growth was predicted have not proved to have the desired impact. The developers touted the many entry-level jobs that would be created by the Carousel Mall, but little impact was actually felt.
- Lower income people will derive the majority of retirement income from Social Security. Currently, 38 percent of retirees get at least 50 percent of their retirement income from Social Security. And, although Social Security may still be around when the baby boomers retire, at the current rate of savings 96% will retire in poverty.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Panelists recommended that workers who hope to capitalize on recent openings in the job market learn the skills that employers need most.

According to John Sweeney, president of AFL-CIO, the American economy needs unions to raise productivity and promote economic security for all, to shift power back to the worker, who will then buy the goods that keep factories open. Panelists described the areas of focus for unions: an end to corporate welfare in the form of tax credits and loopholes; a demand that corporate tax benefits result in more jobs; and a living wage campaign that aims to make work pay (through public subsidy if need be).

The panel recommended that to ensure financial security in retirement, individuals need to have a sound savings plan, and to diversify their holdings to include more than stock investments. What investors need is a balanced portfolio of stocks and bonds to weather the storm.

#### *Women's Issues* \_\_\_\_\_

##### OVERVIEW

- The Rape Crisis Center fights to change public perceptions about sexual violence towards women. One tool they use for educating the public is a video that presents first-hand victim's accounts of acquaintance rape. Graphic in its detail, the video is not for general use, nor is it suitable for young people, but it serves to effectively dispel the common perception that "she deserved it." In the case of acquaintance rape women often do not come forward because of shame, fear, and doubts that they will be believed.
- The Domestic Violence Unit at the Spanish Action League works primarily with local Latinas who have come to Syracuse from many places. Cultural differences exist between those from Cuba or Puerto Rico, Mexico or Central America and these differences need to be addressed when helping women with issues of personal safety. While domestic violence knows no boundaries and anyone can be affected, the Latina population has special needs. They often don't speak English and frequently either they, or another member of their household, have a tenuous legal status which may be used against them.

Latino women often stay at home and it takes a lot for them to admit to a problem. The stereotypical abused women "needs a black eye" to prove violence, but violence

can be physical, emotional, or economic. Economic violence is not well understood in the community. It can occur in situations when scarce financial resources are directed away from needs of the family and the woman has no control over the situation. Commonly, the husband forces the wife to sell the family's food stamps for alcohol or drugs.

The Domestic Violence Unit is currently addressing several critical issues, including outreach to youth in the high schools, to help educate them about issues of family violence. The Unit is also concerned about effect the of domestic violence on children in the home, and the rise in adolescent dating violence. Locally, we have a well trained Domestic Violence Unit in the Police and Sherriff's Departments who can get help to women in need within 24 hours.

- Brick House takes a behavioral approach to helping drug dependent women and uses managed care techniques to tailor programs to individual needs. All the women in the program suffer from chronically unmet needs. They enter with a diagnosis of addiction and are often actively using drugs as they begin the program. They turn to Brick House because they have no stable home environment to turn to while they deal with their problems. At Brick House they are treated individually and are provided with a specific plan that suits their needs — medical attention, routine gynecological exams, help with mental disorders, eating disorders, etc. Women at this halfway house often have a long history of abuse and have layered fears — it takes a long time for them to be able to trust. A high number of women at Brick House have had a sex-abuse problem. Many have an education problem, most an employment problem, and 90 percent have outstanding legal issues. Brick House provides them with a safe, clean environment while they get treatment, and offers 24 hour, one-on-one addiction counseling on site.

#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- It is estimated that only 1 woman in 10 reports rape when it happens, and that actual occurrence is probably much higher. It is *the* most underreported crime.
- Women come to Brick House from around the state for help. The program now has 14 beds — and a long waiting list. The average stay is 3-6 months, but they are able to accommodate women for up to a year if necessary.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel identified the safety issues of greatest concern for women as violence in the home, rape, incest, and street violence.

The panel emphasized that rape happens to all kinds of women, but students — high school and college — are the most vulnerable. Programs are needed to educate youth, both young women and young men.

Panelists also reported that there is a need to educate the courts about the issues surrounding sexual offenses. Too often, sex offenders are able to plead down to non-sex charges like simple assault, and nothing goes on their record indicating the true nature of the crime.

Panelists were concerned that too often law enforcement agents are not properly trained to handle rape and sexual assault cases, and can make matters worse for the victim.

They report that Latina women often return to the violent home because of factors such as language barriers and a cultural distrust of authority. Often, these women are unable to detail the truth of their situation to nurses at the hospital, who in turn sometimes show a lack of sensitivity in dealing with these patients.

Panelists advocated working with nursing students to change attitudes and increase the sensitivity of the next generation of nurses toward Spanish-speaking patients who have been victimized by sex crimes and family violence.

Panelists noted that we all need to develop increased cultural sensitivity and to recognize that there are many different cultures in the Spanish-speaking world.

They identified an urgent need for care similar to that found at Brick House for mothers with small children.

The panel noted that gaps in services to abused women include the need for better ways to identify patients, the need for more outpatient programs, and for additional services available to those being treated for addiction in halfway house settings.

They cautioned that the issue of domestic violence is a "24 hour" problem, unlike being afraid on the street. Alcohol abuse contributes to the volatility of domestic violence and adds to the general feeling of unsafety for both women and children in these situations. They "go on full alert" when the first beer can opens. In incest situations, the child most often fears the unpredictable rages of the parent more than the assault itself.

The panel identified the need for money to be spent on programs not prisons, the need for better program evaluations, and the need for well trained people throughout the system — police, medical personnel, and judges.

## *Children and Youth*

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### OVERVIEW

- Onondaga County Department of Social Services (DSS) has sought to upgrade services continually and equips its caseworkers to handle all specialties (6-7 different services), and thereby allow children and families to deal consistently with one caseworker. Federal dollars have been appropriated, along with IBM assistance, to automate the County DSS's antiquated record keeping. Now every caseworker has a computer; a once computer-illiterate staff is being trained in the use of software; and each agency is equipped with at least some hardware. But, despite advances in technology, we are experiencing an unprecedented period of profound and rapid change affecting children — most particularly abused and neglected children. The year 1995 marked the first time since the enactment of Welfare laws that child protection is no longer an entitlement.

- Statewide, changes are happening that will effect children. Recently the State has created opportunities for increased public scrutiny of DSS Protective records; the governor has recommended ending the program of Income Maintenance; the Health Department has assumed responsibility for Medicaid; there is an initiative to create a department for Children and Family services that would combine the Division for Youth and Child Welfare; and the Vacco Commission advanced the cause of children's rights relative to parental rights insofar as a protective investigation is now automatically initiated when a child is found to have a positive toxicology reading.

Since 1988, the large volume of reports of abuse and neglect forced local child welfare providers into a crisis. The County has adopted a primary strategy to increase resources dedicated to "prevention" (i.e., keep kids safely out of foster care) that has resulted in a major reduction of reports. They also actively seek foster care placement with a relative, and have opened the Family Support Center to help these families. By encouraging family placements, a significant reduction in formal foster care was realized. The number of foster care days has also been reduced dramatically. Other efficiencies include a dramatic increase in termination of parental rights orders which has moved children from long-term foster care and allowed them to be placed for adoption.

But as funding cuts have taken place, so too has an increase in reporting of problems. Many agencies (like the Salvation Army) have been forced to turn clients away. Shrinking dollars have meant fewer subsidized preventive care days which threatens the safety of children, while the overall use of day care for protective or preventive reasons has increased markedly. The greatest utilization is for income eligible families but the waiting list today is over 900. Funding for prevention has been cut despite proof that in the long term it is financially cheaper to fund preventive care than foster care. The bottom line is that with these cuts no money has been saved and the quality of life for the most vulnerable children has significantly declined.

- Current daycare funding is predicated on the need to move parents to work, not the child's needs. (Pre-K and Headstart, by contrast, are based on child's needs.) But, given that policy, should increased funding for child care be used to support transitioning the welfare population to the workplace, or job retention for the working poor? The cost of care is acknowledged as the strongest factor in the choice a family makes in selecting regulated, unregulated, family care, or placement in a day care center. The costs vary by the child's age, but these expenses are especially hard for young parents with limited earning capacity to afford, making access to regulated care difficult without a subsidy.

- The Child Care Coalition has been a conduit of complaints about problems with informal care such as children playing unsupervised in the street, too many children with only one adult, and providers "scamming parents" by providing less than the promised level of care. There are some informal caregivers whose own children have been removed to foster care! The CCC is also concerned for quality within the regulated system. A study in California revealed that 12 percent of regulated facilities provided less than even minimal care—meaning children's health and safety were jeopardized, there were few if any learning experiences, and there was little warmth exhibited. The situation can be most critical for infants and toddlers.

- Teen experience mirrors adults at equivalent rates for behavior such as pregnancy, substance abuse, and violence. Similarly, with preventive measures such as such accessible education the pregnancy rate declines for all — both adults and teenagers. Increasingly conservative policies that limit access to information and prevention have

influenced the rise in the rate of pregnancy. The two outstanding predictors of teen pregnancy are childhood sex abuse and poverty. Poverty predicts a sense of "no future," and where there is no future there is no delayed gratification, which makes early childbearing more likely. Teens experiment with independence. If the community is supportive, there's no great risk in their experimentation. If not, then drugs, sex, and violence become the fields for experimentation.

Youth run away because their homelife is not safe, or not stimulating, or because of family conflicts. Runaways are not only teens, they can be younger children also. The panel noted that abuse of alcohol and drugs by the parents of runaways is "astronomically high." The key time for runaways to hit the streets is 3-6 p.m. and that's when predators — the drug dealers, the pimps — also take to the street. The Salvation Army has its outreach van traversing the streets during those hours. It runs two centers, Booth and Barnabas, for runaway youth, and it now has a new shelter for young adults aged 16-21. The waiting list for transitional housing is 4 months long. The agency continually tries to recruit more volunteer families to take in young people overnight or for a few days. And they run a transitional program for 16-21 year-old females who cannot live with their own family because of sex abuse, abandonment, or overcrowded living conditions.

#### STATISTICS REPORTED BY THE PANEL

- \$4.2 million dollars has been cut locally in our total block grant allocation and costs once borne by the state have been shifted to local jurisdictions. This profound reduction has translated into 1,000 children being cut from services. Combined with additional cuts to Federal funding through Title XX, Onondaga County has experienced a total loss of \$6-\$7 million.
- In 1997, the cost for a 3 year old in regulated non-family care averages \$85/wk and \$104/wk at a day care center.
- A 1993 study of child care needs reported that 44,000 children aged 0-13 needed out-of-home care but there are only 11,400 regulated slots.
- The rate of pregnancy for both teens and adults has been creeping up since 1980, but what is little recognized is that the rate is still lower than it was in the '50s and '60s.
- Overall in New York State, including NYC, the leading cause of death for 15-19 year olds is homicide. Locally, suicide is the leading cause of death.
- It is hard to estimate the total number of runaways locally, but Booth House hotline receives 700 calls/year from Onondaga county alone. Last year 250 kids showed up for help, and of these 57 needed the aid of Child Protective Services.
- Young women, aged 15-19, have the fastest growing rate of HIV infection. They are most often infected (as they are most often impregnated) by older males.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel was concerned for parents trying to find good, affordable child care. Finding care for times other than the 9-5 weekday schedule is difficult, and for those working on second shifts finding childcare is especially difficult. Overnight,

regulations require the supervisor to be awake even if the child is asleep, making regulated care hard to find. School-age children need before- and after-school care as well as care during school-breaks, on conference days, and in the summertime.

Panelists identified transportation to and from childcare as an enormous problem that is even worse outside the city. School buses won't transport children outside the catchment area to a child care center.

Self-care is utilized by desperate parents, who find no alternative to leaving their young children home alone unsupervised. Even for young teens, it is unwise to leave them alone for protracted periods while parents are at work. In the hours after school, teen pregnancy, juvenile crime, and arson all occur.

The panel emphasized that the real issue in teen sex is America's unwillingness to acknowledge and to address the issue constructively. Puberty occurs earlier than even a generation ago. It doesn't make "physical sense" that our culture expects a long period, as much as 25 years, to occur between puberty and marriage without preparing youth for the challenges of their own sexuality.

The panel was concerned that the County, owing to insufficient funding, is forced to decide who should get day care — the working poor? the welfare population? the troubled family? There is no long term plan for children and families.

## *Neighborhoods*

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### OVERVIEW

- The problems of street safety and neighborhood security are very relevant to people living in the neighborhoods. In some sections people are truly concerned about their safety when they walk down the street. Drive-by shootings have occurred during daylight hours. One recent event happened at 5:15 PM — a time when children and families are likely to be on the street, returning home from school or work. The panel noted that when police drive by street corners filled with gangs of youths they often do not even leave their cars and the kids just stay on the corner and continue harassing the neighbors.

The panel explained that some feel that a sense of security varies by the individual, that we need to focus on ourselves first, not on youth, to overcome our feelings of insecurity in our neighborhoods. They raised the issue of perceptions vs. reality. Since most youth crime is directed at other youth, do we *feel* insecure or *are* we unsafe? They postulated that those who have led more sheltered lives, with limited world experience, may react with fear to situations that others find unthreatening. Crime is everywhere, not just in the cities. But some see that people are vulnerable to the reality of aggression and violence of the streets, and recognize that these people have legitimate fears that they cannot address alone.

Some communities now have daytime, school-hour curfews and take children off the streets and keep them at a safe, central location until their parents pick them up. At these locations social service agencies provide on-site counseling to help families work through their problems. But at this time our local truancy office is understaffed and it is impossible for them to do an effective job, much less expand programs.

#### PANELISTS' CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel was convinced that we need to address the need for police to "walk the beat" not just drive by. When a program was started in East Boston to get police walking through neighborhoods, they became involved with the residents — and residents became more involved themselves as a result.

Panelists felt that police need to live in the neighborhoods they protect. Too often they ignore quality of life crime they would never tolerate in their own neighborhoods.

They addressed a mis-perception that there is not enough for kids to do and we need to give them something to do. This misses the reality that many youth programs do exist — Boys and Girls Clubs etc. — but the youth on the corner are older and don't want to participate in such programs. They *want* to be on the corner, and they have a right to be on the corner. The question is then, what about the rights of those who live in the area, to walk the streets unafraid?

The panel saw a need for truancy laws to be stiffened and policies revised. Parents often aren't told about a child's absence from school until the child has missed weeks of school. Parents need to be informed immediately to intervene effectively, and the laws already on the books — affecting delinquency, trash, disorderly conduct, code violations — need to be consistently enforced.

## Chapter 3: What We Learned

### UNEXPECTED RESULTS

While the framers of the this year's study approached the subject without a preconceived idea of what local residents would find to be the most significant safety and security concern, they did expect that there would be a variety of responses from different constituencies. The questions for the focus groups were therefore formulated to approach the subject without prejudice.<sup>1</sup> But remarkably, the single, consistent, major concern was for personal safety in public from violence in all its forms, whether from youth gangs, those involved in drug activities, or sexual predators. This was demonstrated not only by what people said, but also by how they said it. Everyone had something to say about street safety. Everyone, in fact, had a lot to say about street safety; their comments often had profound content. And they felt these concerns urgently—this is an issue about which people are unwilling to take a wait and see attitude. People are concerned and for many this has already had a demonstrated impact on their lives. They have demonstrated this concern at community meetings like the one held at Dr. King School and the candlelight vigils on the City's South Side.

However, within that commonality of concern there was marked diversity of experience in our community. The general experience of public safety varies by age, by gender, by ethnicity and race. It varies by income level and to some extent with personal character attributes. Later in this chapter we will detail some of the significant differences in experience we discovered across the community. But it is precisely this diversity of experience that makes the common desire for safety in the public realm all the more significant. People want to be able to move freely and fearlessly in the world, to know that their children are safe to do so, and to know that in their old age they will still be able to freely enjoy public spaces. Along with this diversity of experience we also discovered that there is a pervasive gap between perception of safety and reality of personal security that can lead to unnecessary anxiety and misguided caution. These perceptions are also shaped by cultural factors and have a large impact on individual and community behavior. Some of the most significant gaps are also detailed later in this chapter.

And finally, there was a somewhat unexpected expression of anxiety over changes in the fabric of our community. Whether, like Aristotle who lamented the lack of character demonstrated by the younger generation of his day, this is a form of universal experience and all citizens of any era believe the community fabric is dangerously frayed or if this is a true reflection of our place in history and the fabric is indeed unraveling, it is nevertheless a widely held belief and contributes to many people's general sense of unsafety in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II for the questions asked at the focus groups.



## UNDERSTANDING SAFETY AND SECURITY

The themes of safety and security involve compelling social and personal issues. From the outset, the OCL discussion was framed by both of these words — safety and security — in the knowledge that the words themselves are charged with multiple meanings. Our attempts to devolve a distinction between the two through focus group discussions brought a variety of responses—but no single definition of the difference. But after months of listening to many groups from around the county we were finally able to identify a significant distinction between the safety and security. Safety is a measure of risk. Safety can be improved by taking action to lower risk. Security is a relative sense of control in the face of risk. Security can be improved by improving the level of control one has over risks. Safety and security are not the same and though they are closely linked, actions to improve one do not necessarily affect the other. They each require different approaches to obtain improvement.

Improving safety can be a fairly straightforward task. Installing a handrail, leveling a sidewalk, or checking tire pressure can all improve one's safety. Safety is also relatively easy to measure: there was an increase in traffic fatalities—or a decrease. Improving safety may mean changing long-time practices, so initiating the improvement can require rethinking of the way things are done. Community policing has placed officers back on the streets where both the police and the residents must once again learn how to build trusting relationships. This change has worked to improve safety and can be measured in reduced street crime. But it has also served to improve security because it has given residents a sense of control—a well-known officer to contact, a place to go when there's a problem—that residents never experienced with an anonymous face in a patrol car. Safety could also have been improved by purchasing newer, faster patrol cars, but for residents, no improvement in security would be derived from this improvement because they would not have readily experienced this change and therefore would not have gained any additional sense of control through this improvement.

Security is a far more complex issue. One's sense of security is affected by components of actual risk; cultural factors such as age and race; individual psychological makeup and level of awareness; and personal experience. In fact, security can be affected by anything that has an impact on an individual's ability to assert control. Some components of security are accessible for improvement through outside action, others are relatively inaccessible. A person who is highly apprehensive by nature and feels at risk without cause may be helped with therapy to lower the level of apprehension. But this is not a component of security that is highly accessible to improvements through outside action. Areas of experience under cultural control can also play a part in the experience of security. Race, gender, age, and many other cultural factors contribute to the experience of security and can be targeted successfully to create improvement. The creation of fully bilingual police teams to cover a Hispanic neighborhood could help to improve the sense of security of Spanish-speaking residents who are not fully trusting of those who do not share their language and culture. Although this alone would not necessarily improve their immediate level of safety, in time it could improve crime rates because individuals would be better able to report crime.

Taken in combination, actions to both lower risk and give increased control will offer the highest level of improvement in quality of life in regards to safety and security. Programs that deal only with improving safety still improve the lives of those

who will have a lower risk, but risk itself is not experienced and has no impact on one's sense of ease or anxiety. Conversely, it is both appropriate and necessary to take steps designed specifically to alleviate insecurity through such actions as targeted outreach and better communication. However, improved communication without real reductions of risk in the long run cannot improve people's sense of security because perceptions are not wholly detached from reality.

## PERCEPTION VS. REALITY

The difference between perception and reality was evident from the focus groups and noted in some way by all the panels. Many reasons for this gap were described.

*Single frightening incidents can disproportionately affect an individual's perception of safety.* After one officer's mother discovered an unknown trespasser shining a flashlight through her window she became permanently fearful in her own home despite the assurances of her son, a policeman, to the contrary.

*Media reports can create exaggerated fears that sometimes mask genuine risks.* People have grown to fear unknown predators, the unknown child abductor for example, largely because of shocking media reports. In reality, children are far more likely to be harmed by a family member or friend.

*People bring too much trust to some situations.* Students believe they are safe on campus, bringing a false sense of security and too much trust to an environment where they are in reality surrounded by virtual strangers. We may be willing to give up personal freedoms to gain a sense of security assuming that "those in charge" would never abuse their authority and that the new rules would never be selectively applied to hurt us.

*Sometimes risks are assumed when in reality there is little risk.* Insurance companies list wood burning stoves as a significant added risk when in reality, at least locally, fires caused by these stoves are rare. Asbestos in a home is not a significant health risk when it is in good shape and left intact. The risk is high, however, during abatement processes.

*Conversely, we do not appreciate the significance of some risks we commonly face.* Home fires are most often started by cooking, perhaps in part because people do not understand how significant the risk is to leave cooking unattended. We have invested in the stock market with "irrational exuberance" despite predictions of an imminent market correction.

*We sometimes assume that we are protected when we are not.* People believe that government regulatory agencies are keeping a close eye on things like our food supply, when in reality, budget cuts prohibit all but the most cursory inspections. OSHA standards do not protect workers from many things, including extreme temperatures, unless there is a threat to life or health. Standard insurance policies do not cover many things we often assume are covered. Homes were destroyed by a mudslide in Tully and were not protected from this calamity by their insurance policies.

*Different groups have different perceptions of the same conditions.* Parallel studies conducted at the Dunbar center and at SUNY ESF revealed that these groups rated the same environmental risks factors as having different significance. People of different races often have different experiences with the police that create different perceptions of safety in their community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The gap between perception and reality can lead to unnecessary fears or unfounded confidence and thereby cause inappropriate behavior. As we look for ways to improve our quality of life, it is important that we address these gaps whenever possible. There is a direct link between perception and our sense of security, and as a community we have not adequately addressed security issues as separate from safety issues. To improve security we will need to improve the level of control people have over their circumstances and to do this we will need to:

1) *Improve communication to the general population about issues that affect security and develop regular channels for community input to the media, law enforcement, and other agencies and groups charged with protecting aspects of community safety.* The media in particular, as the primary provider of information about crime and the community, needs to recognize the security/perception link and do their utmost to report context with content. When a single violent incident occurs, it is important to help people understand that this does not represent a trend, that their relative safety remains constant. Citizens need to be informed about community safety initiatives and to have opportunities to develop a dialogue with law enforcement about local issues.

2) *Target improvement efforts at vulnerable groups and the vulnerabilities of each group.* Traditionally we have recognized that "vulnerable groups" include such categories as children, the elderly, and women. But these broad generalizations do not reflect the specific issues that create the vulnerabilities for these groups. As we begin to target our efforts we need to refine these categories and address problems specifically. After refining our understanding of what makes a group vulnerable, categories will include groups such as after-school youth, low-wage earning parents, dual-diagnosis elderly patients, and young women who are beginning to date. Recently developed targeted programs have proven to be very successful. The Domestic Violence Unit of the combined Syracuse Police Force and the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department received high marks from panelists representing women's issues. The targeted focus of this unit built much higher levels of community confidence than the previous — more generalized — efforts had achieved.

3) *Treat security enhancement as an "added value" consideration when we make safety improvements.* Law Enforcement needs to continue to work toward excellence in areas of cultural awareness and community outreach because these areas will affect the overall sense of security for residents, and improve the community's confidence in the police force. The police also need to expand their existing community policing efforts and address specific needs of ethnic- and racially-based populations. Further, they need to recruit officers from the neighborhoods they serve.

4) *Enable citizens to take an active role in creating a safer community.* Individuals need to address their own perceptions and mis-perceptions and question themselves when their beliefs are in opposition to reality. They need to take more responsibility for keeping their homes and neighborhoods safe through regular household safety checks and participation in groups such as Neighborhood Watch. They also need to participate as citizens in shaping the activities of government agencies and programs, to contribute to the local visioning and planning initiatives, and to develop good personal safety habits.

In conclusion, this year's study revealed that our community is well served in many areas and that many of our efforts to improve safety have produced good results, but that we suffer from endemic problems among pockets of our population that are widely reported. These pockets do not exist separate from the rest of the community, and there is a widespread sense of insecurity about the issues faced by these groups even for those who are not directly affected. Drive-by shootings and child kidnappings may not have happened on every street, but these problems are real for all our citizens. To achieve the results we desire we need to deal with these problem areas, communicate with the community about our efforts to do so, and encourage citizen participation in the process. And we need to recognize that when we deal with the safety and security problems faced by any group, we improve the quality of life for ourselves and by joining together in a mutual initiative to address these issues we improve the quality of life for the whole community.

## Appendix 1: Minutes of Weekly Sessions

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### January 22 Law Enforcement

*Steven Thompson, Deputy Police Chief, Syracuse Police Department*

*David Wall, Onondaga Sheriff's Department*

*Ray Card, Sergeant TOPS (Team Oriented Police) Unit, Syracuse Police Department*

- Chief Steve Thompson discussed the difficulty of separating the idea of “safety” from the idea of “security,” noting that they both need to be measured by more than crime statistics. He agreed that these issues play a major role in the quality of life for individuals and the community. He explained that quality of life is shaped, in part, by the environment and that the environment can shape behavior. An unsafe or insecure environment can cause people to lock their doors, draw the shades, and begin to fear each other. Unlike in the past when neighbors watched each other’s children, people today often fear youth. They try to protect themselves by ignoring problems. He noted the importance of family relationships in creating a sense of safety and security—or the lack of it — and suggested that people living in families with internal problems of family violence are rightfully more fearful, and that those living alone may be more fearful than those in larger families.

Thompson explained how the police track community safety through statistics. Police record data for “Part 1” crime (serious crimes including homicides, rapes, burglaries, and assaults) and “Part 2” crime (less serious crimes) separately. These statistics are used to determine rates of crime and this information is reported to the federal government. Last year, out of 175,000 calls to the police department, there were 11,000 Part 1 crimes. Many of the remaining calls were problems with conditions that can cause neighbors to feel insecure, so-called quality of life crimes —disorderliness, cars parked in the yard, boom boxes and other noise violations, graffiti, and other disruptive, destructive behaviors. He noted that while we all want to have compassion for the homeless, it is a problem when citizens feel at risk from panhandlers on the street. He suggested that there are many things police can do to remedy the situation including walking the beat and other community policing initiatives.

The Syracuse Police Department has received statewide recognition for their community policing programs and they were honored with an invitation to speak to the New York Coalition of Mayors about these programs. Major initiatives from the department include Police Storefronts (4), one on each side of town where officers work with a volunteer office staff allowing officers to participate in community functions and perform community service; Community Policing, including the TOPS (Team Oriented Police) Units where officers concentrate on quality of life enforcement; and Street Policing where officers walk the streets of downtown and Armory Square to give visitors a sense of safety and encourage them to enjoy downtown after dark.

Chief Thompson described a landmark community policing experiment conducted in Kansas City in 1972. For this experiment the city was divided into 3 sectors each was assigned a different policing strategy: one was serviced only by answering calls, the second was given "normal" drive through service, and the third was flooded with patrol cars. The result was surprising, there was no change in actual crime or community perceptions of safety with *any* of the three strategies. The police were forced to reexamine their practices, and as a result the first direct deployment team was developed to address quality of life crime. These teams are positioned to handle crimes immediately. They support, and are supported by, the other community-based policing units. Syracuse now has three direct deployment zones with six offices in each zone ready to address street crime on all levels.

Syracuse has several other safety related programs including Weed and Seed, a city Bike Patrol, and Walk and Ride patrols targeted at small business districts. Syracuse also has an extensive Neighborhood Watch program that is very effective. It acts to extend the capacity of the police because they cannot be everywhere at once and can only see so much. The Syracuse Police department also has a highly trained domestic violence unit that often works directly with social services. As a measure of the effectiveness of this unit, domestic violence calls were down from a high of 13,500 a few years ago to 10,000 calls last year.

Chief Thompson concluded by commenting on the difference between perception and reality, noting that exaggerated fear is sometimes the fault of sensational media reporting. Using the Sarah Anne Woods case as an example, he explained that although children are much more likely to be hurt by a family member or friend the public fears the "unknown predator" more. He assured the participants that the incidence of acts perpetrated by unknown juvenile predators is not as prevalent as the media portrays. He also assured the participants that problems with police brutality are not equal in all parts of the country and it would be wrong to judge all police by the problems found in one department.

- Sheriff Dave Wall addressed his comments to the activities in the County Sheriff's Department. He noted that during the past five years there has been a downward trend in most crime categories but many crimes still go unreported and many lives are touched by crime. The fear of retribution often prevents people from reporting incidents together with a feeling that nothing can really be done. But, he explained, it is important for people to step forward when they have information because it is impossible to predict which bit of information can solve the crime.

The local population has been in decline over the past decade—down from 470,000 to 463,000—but the number of households has increased by 15-20,000. Onondaga County (including the city of Syracuse) spent \$115 million on crime prevention last year (policing, jails, probation, etc.). With a decline in the tax base there has been a decrease in spending on quality of life features in the area—parks, roads, etc. There has also been an increase in calls for service at the Sheriff's Department which now also serves in a housing / custodial function for offenders. To give a sense of proportion to the jail population, Sheriff Wall reported almost 1 in 500 county residents are currently incarcerated.

The Sheriff's Department's infrastructure is patterned on the State Police model with headquarters, sub-stations, and processing offices positioned so officers can work expediently. The Department also has offices in shopping malls, both for the convenience of citizens and to serve as a crime deterrent. In the malls officers work out of uniform to break up groups of youths and control their activities. He also praised the Northside group, COMBAT, for its effectiveness. He urged participants to understand the need for agencies to consolidate—a difficult topic—and to share resources.

In closing he then told a personal story of how perception and reality don't always coincide. His mother was awakened one night by a bright light shining through the window of her home and she called the police. Although this was not a random act, and though she was informed that this was related to specific drug activity in the neighborhood and not targeted at her, she experienced it as a threat to her own safety. When a second, unrelated, event occurred—the shattering of her mailbox—it combined with the first event to create a much larger sense of danger than either individual act would have created. As a result, she completely lost her sense of safety in the neighborhood. Now her curtains are drawn, doors locked. Statistically, in reality, she may be as safe as ever, but she perceives herself as unsafe and feels insecure.

- Sergeant Ray Card discussed community policing from his vantage point as officer in charge of the TOPS unit on Syracuse's North side. The unit has operated for three years and continually looks for ways to offer better service to the neighborhood. In response to a need to create safer conditions for children on the way to school, Sergeant Card changed the unit's hours of operation to coincide with of school hours. Now officers start the workday at the schoolyard as children arrive. TOPS unit officers walk the beat every day, sometimes going for miles, getting to know neighbors and business owners. They work on mostly non-emergency matters that can often mean the most to neighbors—code enforcement, trash in the streets, menacing dogs, hazardous properties, etc. They spent 866 hours last year walking the street keeping an eye on the neighborhood and answered 10,065 community policing calls with just four officers. They work collaboratively with Social Services, neighbors and businesses, Neighborhood Watch, COMBAT, churches, community groups, and code enforcement officers, and Weed and Seed—whoever and whatever it takes to make things better. He concluded with praise for the Direct Deployment teams who answer high level crime calls and also work with his unit on quality of life issues.

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January 29      **Campus Security**

*Robert Robinson, Syracuse University (SU)*  
*Sylvia Martinez-Daloia, Syracuse University*  
*Carol Cowles, Onondaga Community College (OCC)*  
*William Jones, Onondaga Community College*

- Robert Robinson, Director of public Safety at Syracuse University, presented a video that is used as an introduction to the Public Safety Department for incoming students. It reviewed the activities and responsibilities of the Department and detailed important

security programs and campus safety features. At SU the dispatching officer has access to computers that can provide immediate information about life safety systems, physical plant features, a student / staff database, and direct access to 911. The University uses a "blue light" system that features emergency alarms—identified by glowing blue lights—at strategic locations across campus. These push-button alarms are directly connected to the dispatch office and when an alarm is activated an officer is immediately sent to the site of the alarm. Living centers (dorms) are equipped with card-key entry systems. Student ID cards have a magnetic strip like a credit card that identifies the student, giving them access to the buildings and other facilities on campus. The living centers are always locked after 8:00 p.m. and will then only accept card keys of building residents. After midnight, resident supervisors check everyone entering the building and require guests to sign in. South campus has over 1,000 apartments and is patrolled routinely. The Public Safety Department enjoys good relations with the Syracuse Police Department and collaborates with them both on and off campus. They also collaborate with student marshals who patrol campus and offer safety escorts. Prevention is important, so the Public Safety Department offers workshops to deter students from using false ID's, discourage substance abuse, and to develop good personal safety habits.

Robinson offered this snapshot of Syracuse University: it has a resident student body of over 7,000 students—the largest in the state—and extends over 961 acres with 360 buildings. Every year Public Safety offers orientation to new students to familiarize them with campus safety features. Public telephones are now equipped as emergency phones that allow students to reach campus security by dialing "11". There is also a program for cell phones that allows students to call the Safety Department toll free by dialing "\*SU." Robinson stated that it is never necessary for anyone at the university to walk alone since the university offers a 24 hour escort service. But it does require individuals to plan ahead and make the call for an escort well before it is time to leave.

Public Safety cannot be a baby-sitter, Robinson explained, but if a student utilizes all the safety features in place at SU he or she can virtually be assured an uneventful four years. However, knowing that it is impossible to completely protect even the President, absolute security is impossible to guarantee. Most campus crime is not committed by strangers, it is committed by members of the community. Campuses feature small areas with lots of people who really don't know each other but who behave with perhaps too much trust. Students want their freedom and although they are not always ready for the responsibilities of being out on their own they still deserve to be treated as adults. Last year, Public Safety responded to 1,100 blue light calls with only a dozen actual events taking place, the rest were false alarms. They received 167,000 calls for service, provided 4,000 escorts, and made 18,000 community contacts where officers get out of the car to meet people so they are not viewed as "foreign" on campus.

- Sylvia Martinez-Daloia described the importance of Syracuse University's Public Safety Department for neighbors in areas surrounding the University. Public Safety answers calls to the south, east, and west of SU.

"They say security arrives quickly whenever there's a problem," she reported, "and security officers often wish they could do more."



Recently the Syracuse Common Council authorized “enhanced authority” for the University (carrying batons and chemical spray). This will allow officers to be proactive and handle whatever comes up, Martinez-Daloia explained. Only officers who receive an additional 281 hours of training, pass a background check and drug screening, and are individually approved by the chief of the Syracuse Police Department will have these enhanced powers.

- Carol Cowles, Dean of Students at Onondaga Community College, contrasted the issues of safety and security at SU with those on a non-residential campus such as OCC. Since it is part of the “County family,” she explained, OCC has close ties with the Sheriff’s Department. The average student age is 28 and this additional life experience often results in more respect for security issues, but the 18 year-old students may need to learn the norms. OCC has a pro-active orientation to give students information and to develop a clear understanding of community expectations. As is true at SU, most incidents happen between students, not with outsiders. Like all colleges, OCC is required by law to tell students the crime statistics on campus—cases of drug arrests, assaults, etc. These are reported in a brochure sent to students. Parents use these statistics, Cowles noted, when making decisions about where to send their children to school. In ways *not* similar to SU, OCC students sometimes bring disputes of long-standing with them to school. Students who have interpersonal problems with another student, from the neighborhood or dating back to high school, sometimes need to work with the diversity officer. It is important to the quality of life for *other* students that these issues are dealt with effectively.

- William Jones, Director of Safety and Security at OCC, continued the discussion of the differences between OCC and SU. He acknowledged that residential campuses present a “big headache” for security departments. He described OCC as having an urban-type campus with students arriving by vehicle, via private or public transportation, not by foot. His department consists of three full time staff, the director and two officers. The officers have had security training in criminal justice, from school or the Sheriff’s Department. OCC contracts with an outside agency (Doyle) to provide additional personnel. Jones noted that there have been some problems with this strategy even though outside personnel must pass state requirements including drug testing, problems including training, age, and personnel turnover rates. He explained that OCC relies on technology to enhance safety and has security cameras in strategic positions around campus. He would like to implement a blue light system like the one in place at SU, and is glad to already have a similar emergency phone system, but he acknowledged the problem of trying to function on limited resources. He concluded by noting that with such a small staff to handle an array of security responsibilities, he sometimes faces unexpected problems. He described one such situation when the site plan for a new building featured plantings that were attractive but would make it impossible to monitor the building with cameras. He needed to work with the project planners to develop a new model that served both sets of needs.

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February 5    Civil Rights and Public Safety

*Linda Hall* (moderator), Human Rights Commission

*Barrie H. Gewanter*, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

*Peter Christ*, Retired Police Officer

*Steven Thompson*, Syracuse Police Department

*Nancy Rhodes*, Human Rights Commission;

*Alan Rosenthal*, Attorney

- Barrie Gewanter from the American Civil Liberties Union explained her understanding of the difference between safety and security, that safety is “real” and based on the nature of one’s physical surroundings and security is based on the perceived potential for physical harm to one’s person or surroundings. She cautioned that there are additional threats to security that are not necessarily tied to safety—specifically threats to our civil liberties—that many people are unaware of. The Constitution’s Bill of Rights sets out the checks and balances of freedom and the ACLU prosecutes violations of these freedoms. Most calls to Gewanter’s office involve freedom of speech and employment issues as well as cases where the courts, police, or schools go beyond their authority and thereby deny basic rights. Fear makes people willing to give up basic rights she cautioned—whether to police, to employers, or to their doctors—and fear motivates individuals to want restraints on these rights for others. The more power and privilege a society or an individual possesses, the lower the anticipation of violations of civil rights. But those with the greatest privilege are often the least realistic about the outcomes of limiting basic freedoms. Although the limits on personal freedom ultimately effect everyone, these limits are often proposed to ensure the protections of class privilege for those already in power.
- Peter Christ was a twenty-year police veteran. He entered the field “because of the benefits” and he credited this for his perspective on police issues. He was not a “white knight” driven by ideals to enter police work, but he did believe in upholding the constitution first, and then, “whatever else.” We talk about liberty, he explained, but liberty can be defined in two ways: if we don’t experience things in society that we find offensive then *someone else’s* rights are probably not being respected; and, if we have true liberty then we can be as stupid as we want as long as we don’t hurt anyone else. He noted that “what we find stupid is usually what we don’t agree with—but maybe the stupid ones know something we don’t.” He believed that the officers who arrested Jonny Gammage were not in it just for their retirement—they believed in the job they were doing. They violated people’s rights for all the “right” reasons. Cases like the recently discovered new evidence in the twenty-year old Sam Shepard case show that we need police review boards. The once-wild, but now aging, baby boom generation is “joining religion” in record numbers because they are experiencing the need for increased security as they age. He questioned whether their perception of insecurity was valid or based on fear.
- Moderator Linda Hall agreed that we all experience things through our own filters and described having her car stolen and missing for nine hours. She felt that she would have experienced something different if her car had been stolen from the south-side

rather than a suburban neighborhood or if she had been recently victimized in some other way.

- Chief Steve Thompson posed the question of how police get information about community experience. One way, he suggested, is to speak with groups like the OCL and gather input. Another is to put a policeman in every high school and junior high school to both protect and interact with the students. Information filters up, he explained, through the chain of command to the chiefs. But the best information, he explained, comes from tracking call volumes. He noted that out of 200,000 calls a very small number—under 1,000—were internal affairs complaints. He agreed that there is an ongoing need for enhanced cultural awareness.

- Alan Rosenthal looked at the overarching topic of safety and security in relation to perceptions. “Someone’s solution is someone else’s problem” he stated. As noted by the first speaker, he explained, when someone enjoys more rights, someone else enjoys fewer. He described his daily work with young people, mostly of color, who feel threatened by authority. He questioned why some people feel more secure with increased police activity and some feel less? He drew a parallel: Crime is unpredictable, violent, disproportionately experienced, influenced by race, dealt with ineffectively in the courts, and no solution has been forthcoming. These same characteristics also describe the experience some groups have with the police. Race, he acknowledged, is an undeniable factor. Those who fear the police often feel there is no control on the actions of officers. It is striking that we can have widely different perceptions of the same conditions. Some saw the Rodney King video and saw nothing wrong being done—others were outraged. Even if there had been a video of Jonny Gammage it would not have changed the differing perceptions we bring to the understanding of the act.

- Linda Hall commented that we struggle with this in many ways. Do inmates, for instance, have some unalienable rights or are they stripped of their rights for their crimes? What about those who are simply arrested not convicted? Don’t they still have rights? We may be willing to strip “those others” of their rights upon arrest but we need to remember that we all vulnerable to errors in prosecution, that we are all presumed innocent until found guilty, and that any of us could be subjected to the inhumane conditions we now ignore.

- Nancy Rhodes agreed that those convicted of crimes are still human beings deserving of basic human rights. The Citizen’s Review Board was started after the work of a Community and Police Relations Task Force, chaired by Charles Anderson, indicated a need for such a Board. Many other groups are dedicated to watching the police both locally and nationally, including the Maxwell School Benchmarking project. Individuals have addressed this issue in the media. *Pride* interviewed Narvis Gammage, Jonny Gammage’s mother and an eloquent woman, regarding police accountability. After the Gammage case the city of Pittsburgh is now trying to create a police review board but the issue is very divisive in that community.

We are at risk when we frame issues as polar opposites, she cautioned. There are more than two choices. For community policing to work police must first “lay down the weapon of fear.” Most cases of police misconduct do not occur when there is a crisis. These events happen when police feel their authority is challenged. Sometimes

simply stating ones rights can seem to be a challenge. We currently accept a level of unprofessionalism (I couldn't help myself) from police that we don't accept anywhere else. What we need is for the truth to come out, for the police to aim for excellence in this area as in others.

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## February 12 Household Security

*Greg Carmen, Time Warner Cable & Security*

*Jeff Banech, Time Warner Cable & Security*

*Avery Sinclair, Sinclair & Andrews Insurance Company*

*William Sylvester, Deputy, Syracuse Fire Department*

- Deputy William Sylvester of the City of Syracuse Fire Department began with statistics about fire hazards. In 1996 there were approximately 19,000 alarms and 1,429 actual fires in structures and buildings in Syracuse. The single largest cause of fire is unattended cooking he reported and was the cause of 306 of the 905 total household fires in the past year. The second most common cause, with 186 fires, was incendiary fire and he cautioned participants to keep leaves and papers away from structures and to keep gasoline in a locked storage area. Careless smoking was the third most prevalent cause and this resulted in 127 fires last year. These fires often were the result of smoking while under the influence of drugs or alcohol and / or simple carelessness. Other causes that resulted in fewer fires but still present a community concern resulted from "broken parts" including gas leaks faulty wiring etc. Children playing with matches resulted in 54 fires last year, 11 of them major fires. Locally, this problem resulted in a cost of \$604,000 and a nationally the cost was 5 million dollars.

Deputy Sylvester reported that 30-40 percent of all households do not have adequate smoke detectors, either not having one present in the home or having one without a functioning battery. He asked participants to check the smoke detectors in loved ones' homes and to look for dangerous circumstances around the home. He explained that the fire department has expanded its role in the community and often did in-home inspections to alert homeowners and tenants to possible fire hazards but noted that those most in need were often the most reluctant to use this service. The fire department may enter a multiple occupancy dwelling at will but are not permitted to enter one- or two-family homes without permission of the occupants. The fire department has also taken on the role of first response in many situations and trucks are now equipped with lifesaving defibrillators. He concluded by informing participants of a program sponsored by the Red Cross to provide low income families with smoke detectors.

- Jeff Banech, from Time Warner Security, explained that his company sold mostly intrusion and fire alarm systems to homeowners and businesses but also provided specialty alarms—temperature sensitive, gas alerts, water system failures, etc.—for clients who needed them. A notable change in customer requests he reported, came from customers who wanted systems installed preventively rather than as a response to a problem event. A few years ago security systems were sold almost exclusively to

those who had already been victims of crime or fire, now the ratio was approximately 50 / 50.

The systems operate through sensors located throughout the house, at doors and windows, etc. In the event of a problem a signal is sent to a central location and an attempt is made to contact the home and confirm the alarm while police or fire departments are notified. Most alarms are false alarms he reported, and most false alarms result from unsecured houses. He cautioned that no system makes a home 100 percent safe—if there is something someone wants badly enough they will get past the most elaborate system. But homes with security systems are well protected from the most common random crimes of burglary and theft.

The other frequently requested service was for medical alerts. These systems often feature a push-button signal and are of special use to the elderly. He was asked about the time until response and he explained that call-back was timed from the alarm signal to take from 13-15 seconds and that police were notified immediately after that. Police response times varied. He noted that the sound of the alarm itself often caused perpetrators to flee and that losses to system equipped homes were on average 1/3 to 1/2 the amount of unprotected homes. In this area, 15 percent of homes feature security systems. This is significantly less than the 70 percent coverage in some areas of the country.

- Avery Sinclair presented participants with a list of conditions and features that insurance companies considered to be hazardous. Wood burning stoves, he noted were a common hazard in winter. He recommended that both homeowners and renters invest in insurance. He noted that there were significant discounts available for newly constructed homes, for mature homeowners (who were likely to be at home more than younger customers), for deadbolt locks, and for non-smokers. He believed most homeowners wanted to have replacement coverage and noted that most clients were concerned primarily with issues of fire and security. Insurance policies have limits he cautioned and individuals who purchase insurance should read policies carefully and be aware that under most policies valuables such as jewelry, rare antiques, and cash are not covered and also that calamities such as war and floods are also not covered.

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## February 26 Physical Hazards

*William Sylvester, Syracuse Fire Department*

*Ron Hernandez, Onondaga County Emergency Medical Services*

*Joe Snell, American Red Cross*

*Tom Phelan, Emergency Planning and Employee Communications, Niagara Mohawk*

*Kevin Wisely, Onondaga County HAZMAT (Hazardous Materials) Unit.*

- Deputy Chief William Sylvester from the Syracuse Fire Department described the city's strategic plan, personnel, and equipment dedicated to emergency services. The Emergency Preparedness Unit is staffed with seven trained rescue workers and the Hazardous Materials Unit (HAZMAT) is staffed with eight rescue workers trained specifically to handle chemicals, flammables, gasses, etc. There is a plan in place to call in firefighters as needed in an emergency and the Fire Department has additional

trucks and ladders reserved for emergency situations. The Fire Department is prepared for virtually any type of emergency, including building collapse, carbon monoxide leaks, and floods. The fire department will also pump water from basements in the case of a water main break but DPW must be called in the case of sewer backups. Chief Sylvester offered suggestions for residents to enhance their own preparedness. He suggested that residents keep an operating flashlight, canned foods, bottled water, and extra blankets on hand for emergencies.

- Ron Hernandez, Director of Onondaga County Emergency Medical Services, explained that the county has twenty-two ambulance service providers including one commercial provider, Rural Metro; several independent providers; and numerous local fire departments that have their own ambulance services. Most of these providers take part in disaster drills conducted year-round. These drills train participants in the different methods of dealing with emergencies and how to perform triage in the case of disaster when the ratio of medical personnel to injured does not allow for immediate attention for each victim. A crisis management course is taught at OCC bringing groups together to act out crises using an HO model railroad scale to learn important aspects of strategic planning in a variety of scenarios.

Casualty Reception Teams were developed during Desert Storm to treat war wounded. Hancock Airport is a destination for this type of situation. Now these teams—that feature Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and nurses—are on call at the airport in case of a national disaster and are available to take the load off local hospitals. Mr. Hernandez noted that the local area has been spared from major crisis and there have been no “standout” incidents in the past two years. He illustrated the kind of response his office is prepared to make by describing an emergency situation at the Veterans Administration Hospital a few years ago. The building’s basement was flooded with water during the July 4th weekend. Critical systems began to short out and it was necessary to evacuate the entire hospital. Emergency protocols were used and local ambulance services were activated to move patients to other facilities very effectively. In another situation two busloads of church picnickers were struck with serious food poisoning while traveling on the Thruway. Emergency teams responded and provided medical attention and coordinated transportation to local hospitals for the sick.

- Kevin Wisely, volunteer with Onondaga County HAZMAT, explained that the county’s HAZMAT unit treats emergency situations throughout the county in all areas except the city of Syracuse. It is an all volunteer team with six core fire departments located strategically around the county. They provide both the personnel and equipment needed in emergency situations. There are approximately sixty members of the unit and all are trained for emergency medical conditions (EMC). The unit meets monthly to learn more about specific hazards such as pesticides. There is a full supply of protective suits for each team member as well as special equipment (monitors etc.) for each core unit.

Emergencies that require HAZMAT mobilization are first identified by local fire departments. The request for HAZMAT is made by the local fire chief or senior officer on the scene. The past year was free of major HAZMAT emergencies and the agency concentrated instead on consultations with local fire departments dealing with such problems as chlorine leaks and sulfuric acid spills. Ten core leaders form the planning

council for the unit and serve to review procedures and incidents and to set planning goals.

- Joe Snell, Director of Disaster Services at the local chapter of the American Red Cross, explained that the agency has over 300 volunteers trained for emergency situations. The Red Cross is the only not-for-profit agency charged by FEMA to care for the physical and emotional needs of victims. The local chapter is independent but supported by the state and national Red Cross organizations. In times of large scale national disasters the many branches of the Red Cross can supply sufficient volunteers on short notice.

The major cause of local disaster is fire and the Red Cross now responds to all fires. The 911 center notifies the Red Cross to dispatch help for victims and they work in partnership with emergency medical services and the fire department. They also send social workers to the scene of fatal automobile accidents and other crises. Here they provide "Band-Aid" relief at the time of the crisis but not long term assistance. However, in the case of large scale disasters the Red Cross does help with long term needs for shelter and acts as advocate for victims, helping them find resources etc.

Last year alone, 843 individuals were affected by disaster in our community. Local emergencies are often family emergencies and often involve fire, snow, wind storms, floods, or ice. Emergencies may require mass feeding and shelter and in these cases the Red Cross works in partnership with other agencies. They have agreements with American Legion Posts and local public schools to provide short term emergency shelter. Local facilities can accommodate shelter for 1,500-3,000 people and a local Baptist Church kitchen can prepare up to 1,400 meals as needed. The Red Cross also provides a Disaster Inquiry hotline that families of victims can call if a loved one is missing in a large scale disaster. The Red Cross tracks these victims and keeps families informed. The local chapter works together with other chapters in the area and is very careful selecting and training volunteers. Snell noted that in times of emergency there is a critical need for effective management systems as disaster scenes are often overrun with uninvited volunteers. He explained that a small, well-trained team is more effective than large groups of untrained but well intentioned volunteers. Mr. Snell also noted that the Red Cross, like many volunteer service organizations, is faced with an aging of its volunteer pool and wondered how future needs will be met.

- Dr. Tom Phelan from the Emergency Planning and Employee Communications Department at Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation offered a view of the complexities of the energy grid and how it functions to offer continuous power for consumers. It is an enormous undertaking to control power in an area reaching from Niagara Falls to Glens Falls and requires the efforts of 8,700 personnel. Each part of the system is coordinated at the corporate level and has a crisis task force to keep everything up to date. Each part has its own emergency energy plan that is rehearsed annually. The system works to implement an operating plan when local personnel are insufficient to handle an emergency. When mutual aid is required, Niagara Mohawk can call upon other providers in the state, providers from neighboring states, and even Canadian providers as needed. There are similar plans for gas emergencies, oil spills, and nuclear events.

Niagara Mohawk works with people around the world to develop power control grids like the one used locally. In this system, energy moves flexibly across the grid so outages in one area do not result in loss of power on a large scale. They control power for the all of the eastern states and have back up plans for any type of emergency including terrorism. They work with the state SEMA agency to coordinate for the multiple needs that arise in emergency situations including the physical needs of work crews.

Mr. Phelan distributed brochures to inform participants about how to prepare for storms with advice such as keeping a supply of water and canned food on hand. He described the special provisions available for individuals with special needs who would be served on a priority basis in the case of emergency. He outline the proper procedure to follow in case of a power outage in the home. Residents should first check to see if neighbors have power before calling the emergency hotline. If a large area is without power, detection devices will already have been activated and the phone system may become overwhelmed if all households try to contact the emergency number at once. If, however, the problem is confined to only one home it is appropriate to call immediately and request assistance. He also noted that in cases of street light outages, high-crime areas have priority for re-establishment of service and explained that the street light system is very complex with responsibility for lights divided inconsistently across many small districts. In some areas Niagara Mohawk has the entire responsibility for lights, and in other cases they are only responsible to replace bulbs. The company is now receiving world-wide attention for its consistent service and is studied for its methods of dealing with our annual snow emergencies. And the company is now working with industry to prevent potential problems through strategic planning and partnership.

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March 5      Emergency Care

*Mike Adario*, Rural Metro Medical Services

*Ben Renaldi*, 911 Emergency Hotline

*Sue Paradiso*, Onondaga County Department of Social Services (DSS)

*Amy Honig*, Onondaga County Department of Social Services

- Ben Renaldi gave a brief description of the 911 facility explaining that it is located in the town of Onondaga outside the city limits, on Onondaga hill near OCC. They take both emergency and non-emergency calls and dispatch to every locale in the county except Skaneateles. They first dispatch to the police and then to local ambulance provider, Rural Metro. He posed the question "when should someone call 911?" and explained that, if there's any doubt—go ahead and call. If the situation warrants less urgent attention it will be transferred as necessary. Calls to the Syracuse Police emergency line are also routed through 911. When a call comes in it is coded with the address and phone number of the phone used to make the call. He asked that people be made aware that it is important to answer all the questions the 911 operator asks, even if it seems unnecessary. For instance, callers are always asked to verify their address even though this information is shown to the operator because computers *can* make



mistakes and these errors can cost lives. Over 700,000 calls come to 911 annually which translates to 2,093 calls per day on average. Only 1/3 these (212,867 last year) are made directly to 911 and the majority of the calls come from the police emergency line. Operators undergo six weeks of training before they start work and then spend an additional 10–12 weeks working with an on the job trainer. The 911 service also does training for Neighborhood Watch groups.

- Mike Adario is operations Manager for Rural Metro Medical Services. The ambulance service provider answered 42,000 calls last year and the number of calls is growing 2-4 percent per year. Fifty four percent of these were medical calls, 34 percent were injuries (including accidents and assaults), and 12 percent were for miscellaneous accidents (fires, drownings). Of the medical calls, 24 percent were heart related and 50 percent resulted from general illness (diabetes etc.). Of the trauma calls, a relatively low number—approximately 7 percent—resulted from violent crime. Each ambulance runs with a paramedic / EMT team. The paramedics receive 1,200 hours of training and the EMTs receive 400 hours. They can administer oxygen and over 300 medicines and can also do some invasive procedures including intubations and cardiac pacing. Rural Metro offers additional services that don't include transport for patients. They are part of the Volunteer Center / Social Service referral service and assist when there is a need for guidance for seniors in the system. Many patients don't need medical attention but do need other services and the ambulance team is trained to recognize these needs. The company also does training in CPR—both in house and throughout the city. Mike noted that too often the weak link in getting effective care is a lack of information. Care begins with helping people to recognize symptoms that require help and to develop basic first aid skills.
- Amy Honig works with senior Citizens in the County's Elder Abuse and Protective Service for Adults unit. Through the Protective Service unit she works with individuals who are mentally or physically impaired and either suffer some form of abuse or who have needs that aren't met and have no other means of support. Through the Elder Abuse unit she works with individuals over the age of sixty who suffer from abuse or neglect. This can also include self-neglect as when someone won't eat or heat the home, or answer mail or even get medical help when necessary. Through the intake process the agency can recommend either immediate or delayed care although an individual can always fight the recommendation and refuse care. If a person threatens suicide however, the intake is done at St. Joseph's Hospital and the patient is then referred to Hutchings. One gap that is now almost "plugged" is the problem with Alzheimer's / dementia patients and the need for emergency services. Either of two problems can arise, the family can have difficulty handling the situation, or single individuals can become unstable and unable to care for themselves. These situations are handled by a variety of means, but most patients are treated at Upstate. To diagnose / define dementia, patients are seen by two physicians and deemed to be a potential harm to themselves or others. After this is determined, police transport the patient. If the dementia is a result of medical causes, the patient is admitted to the hospital, if caused by psychiatric causes the patient is transferred to Hutchings. A persistent gap in service results when patients suffer from "dual diagnosis" of mental illness and another critical factor. These patients are difficult to serve within existing programs.

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March 26      Occupational Health

*Diane Brayden, CNY Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)*  
*Lin Golash, New York State Council on Safety and Health (NYSCOSH)*

• Diane Brayden, Executive Director CNY OSHA, opened the panel with an explanation of the responsibilities given to the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) by Congress. The agency is charged to care for the safety of those employed by private businesses (public employees are covered by other agencies) and to balance the roles of education, support, and enforcement. OSHA was established to protect worker safety and therefore regulation is directed at the employer, not the employee. To demonstrate OSHA's limitations, Brayden noted that during the past twelve months two workplace fatalities occurred in Onondaga County and were investigated by OSHA. She explained that there were other deaths in the workplace, but when the death happens to someone who is self employed or when there is no employment relationship, OSHA is not called in and no inspection is done.

OSHA sponsors a Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) for businesses that want to invest in a high level of safety. Lockheed Martin is an example of a local company that has chose to participate in this plan became certified at the highest level. They offered to be a mentor to help other companies achieve high levels of workplace safety. On the other side of the scale, three sets of citations at the highest level of penalties were leveled against companies in Onondaga county last year. Landis Plastics—which has been prominent in the local news for safety and labor disputes—was one of these companies. The other two were foundries with safety violations that were discovered as part of an industry-wide review process.

Brayden explained that in recent years OSHA has conducted reviews targeted at specific industries or businesses, and last year OSHA selected foundries for review. These reviews are an attempt to protect workers in the most dangerous workplaces, environments that place workers at highest risk either through multiple exposures or high-level risks. Since OSHA cannot get to all places at once, it now targets a single industry, educates employers about current regulations, assists them in becoming compliant, and then randomly selects individual companies for full inspection. This helps to ensure that all the employers implement the necessary changes on the chance that they will be chosen for inspection and face stiff penalties for deliberate non-compliance. Fines are based on several factors including the number of violations, the size of the workforce (and therefore the number of individuals placed at risk by unsafe conditions), and the number of things that could go wrong as a result of the problem.

Our area, Onondaga County / Central New York, does not have a comparable cohort area for purposes of comparison. But looking nationwide, we are not unusual—neither safer nor more at risk than the average. Looking at the statistics on a statewide basis, those in some occupations are much safer here than in other parts of the state. For instance, our construction industry is much safer than in New York City, in part because we have fewer job sites and a higher ratio of enforcement officers.

OSHA is now looking nationwide at ergonomics as a major cause of disabilities. The study of ergonomics looks at body position and tasks that require repetitive motion as causes of injury. These injuries can result from a variety of aggravating factors including poorly designed equipment, poor posture positions imposed by the task and/or the physical environment, as well as unrelieved repetitive motions required to do the job. OSHA is trying to develop guidelines for employers to help them make simple changes that can help workers avoid these injuries, but there is political pressure to ignore this class of hazards. Brayden noted that the last Congress did not want OSHA to even research the problem, and attempted to prevent them OSHA doing so by law. While the law was not passed, OSHA is nevertheless treading very carefully in this area.

Locally, there are specific problems for some groups of workers. Health care workers have a high rate of back injury, especially those workers who are required to lift patients. Violence in the workplace is an often unrecognized source of occupational hazard. Violence is an issue in small retail stores, in taxis, for delivery people, and for home health care workers. In these cases OSHA works with guidelines, not regulatory standards, to help employers keep these workers safe. In its role as educator, OSHA attempts to identify critical areas where injuries are likely to occur and offers special programs to educate employers about specific hazards. For instance, mechanical power presses have proven to be a source of many workplace injuries so OSHA has conducted special training and education programs for operators of this equipment. After businesses complete the education phase and are able to implement any necessary changes, then OSHA does inspections of a random sample of these businesses. Diane estimated that as many as ten times the number of corrections are accomplished this way, through the combination of education and select enforcement than by unannounced, single site inspections.

- Lin Golash from NYSCOSH presented some statistics about workplace death and injury nationwide. On average, 154 workers die every day and 16,000 are injured. On a national level, eight in every hundred workers will be injured on the job. In New York State the statistics show that six in every hundred employed by private business, and thirteen in every hundred in public employment will be injured. NYCOSH covers and area from Canada to the Pennsylvania border. Statewide it costs \$84 million dollars annually to administer Workman's Compensation. And the annual cost of compensation for disability—which includes the loss of productivity etc.—is 3.6 billion dollars. Lin explained that cases are reported to NYCOSH through Workman's Compensation claims files.

The attitudes about safety in the workplace vary widely. Some employers are committed to worker safety and continually upgrade employees awareness and safety skills through monthly meetings or other means. In other places, workers live in fear, because of very unsafe working conditions—or of losing their jobs for reporting these conditions. Some problems are difficult to correct and people are often surprised to find out that the law does not protect workers from all hazards. For instance, no law requires employers to heat or cool their buildings so employees can be forced to work in extreme temperatures. Only when there is the potential for a threat to life or health can OSHA step in. Workers are not protected from losing their jobs through disability and many have been fired for suffering a disability on the job that forces them to be out

of work for longer than one month. The recently passed Family Leave Act has been of great service to workers. It guarantees workers an additional twelve weeks of unpaid leave, which has helped many people keep their jobs.

Workers gave up their right to sue employers with the passage of the Workers Compensation laws. Private insurance companies protect individual businesses and are a very powerful force in New York State politics. New York is in the top quartile of states for collection of Workers Compensation premium, yet in the bottom quartile for payments to claimants. Insurance companies have the right to raise company premiums after only one or two claims. And, when workers who are injured on the job file a compensation claim to be awarded damages, they are questioned about personal habits that could have been contributors to the injury. This is especially true of repetitive motion injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome. Workers are asked to identify hobbies or other activities that could also have contributed to the condition and compensation will be decreased if contributing factors exist. Workers find it especially difficult to collect awards for damages for occupationally caused illness, even when there have been longtime exposures to carcinogenic chemicals or heavy metals. Workers must prove that this worksite exposure *caused* their illness, not just that the illness is more prevalent among individuals exposed to these substances.

## April 2 Environmental Health

*Lisa Letteney*, Onondaga County Health Department (OCHD)

*Brenden Meahaffy*, New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)

*Dr. Brenda Nordenstam*, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF)

Lisa Letteney from OCHD explained that the responsibilities of her office include testing for asbestos and radon, distribution of information about these hazards, providing advice to consumers about testing such as where to get Radon testing kits (NYS Health Dept.), and providing answers about how to cure problems with these environmental hazards. At this time the one known health hazard from Radon is an increase in lung cancer risk that has been documented when exposures are above 4 picocuries / liter. For the hazards associated with asbestos, the department distributes informational pamphlets and ordinarily recommends leaving asbestos in place when it is in good condition. More hazards are faced when the asbestos is removed incorrectly than if it is allowed to remain undisturbed. Removal requires the use of trained professionals and can be quite costly.

The primary site of local environmental pollution is Onondaga Lake and there are approximately 30 additional designated hazardous sites around the county. The county works with people who live near the sites to inform them about, and protect them from, these hazards. The department answers citizens questions regarding the environment, hazardous chemicals, safety procedures, etc. And they also help with testing of indoor air quality and well testing. In a new program, the County conducts a "Healthy Neighborhood" program to survey lead and asbestos hazards in older neighborhoods (currently focused on the near-southwest neighborhood). They are currently looking for volunteers to conduct surveys in this neighborhood and are working with local non-

profit groups—South West Community Center (SWCC) and Syracuse United Neighbors (SUN) to do these surveys.

- Dr. Brenda Nordenstam conducted an environmental risk study (pilot for a larger study) at the Dunbar center to ask parents about their environmental concerns. The top concerns (in addition to drugs and crime) were Onondaga Lake water, air quality and the incinerator, lead in the home, cleanliness and trash, and having enough “green space” in the form of parks etc. for healthy activity. When asked specifically about contaminated wastes, 90 percent of the participants rated this as a “high concern.” These findings were compared to responses from ESF students, who also participated in the study, and only 40 percent of whom rated contaminated wastes a “high” concern. This made it evident that different groups have different concerns and that as a community we need to target our responses to these concerns and these groups. Environmental justice issues were particularly important to poor communities who often bear a disproportionate share of environmental burdens. Families in poor communities for instance, sometimes rely on natural fish resources for a significant share of their food source and if these fish are contaminated it has a disproportionate impact on these families.

A “new” focus of research is on endocrine disrupters (as found in plastics and chlorine) which act as sex hormone disrupters. Since testing began in this century a documented 50 percent drop in sperm counts for men and a lower fertility rate for animals has been traced to these contaminants. Nationally, this is a billion-dollar issue. These chemicals are primarily found in water and imitate estrogen and so have an impact on male reproduction. But, Brenda predicted, it will take a long time to sort out the extent and severity of these hazards.

- Brenden Meahaffy noted that the previously discussed dangers are all issues that NYPIRG is working on. He explained that NYPIRG’s role is to provide a link between the Legislature and the community. NYPIRG also hopes to foster good government by acting as a watchdog over campaign contributions, watching who is giving money to whom. They are currently working toward the passage of a lead protection bill and are trying to inform citizens about the differences between two “competing” bills that are designed to address the issue. The bills are designed to prevent injury by requiring lead workers to be certified (like asbestos workers) because most exposures occur during abatement and most severely impact children. But one bill places a higher disclosure requirement on homeowners than the other. It was pointed out that this can have an impact on both the real estate industry (that opposes this bill) as well as on individual homeowners. Another issue that has spawned recent legislation, is the use of pesticides. A bill was passed last year requiring businesses to disclose all use of pesticides on lawns and on food. This is designed to track the results of exposure to such substances as the organochlorines mentioned by Dr. Nordenstam, and to try to account for such unusual circumstances as the higher instances of breast cancer on Long Island.

The economic impact of all regulation and abatement requirements needs to be considered as part of the “trade-offs” we face as a community. We need to acknowledge that many of the conditions we now face are the result of our own spending habits, and as we demand such things as safer emissions standards on cars by buying cars with safer emissions, then demand will create a market for these cars.

Likewise for pesticide-free organically grown foods, as we change our demand from unblemished fruits to ones that are free of pesticides then that's what we'll get.

Lead abatement can be prohibitively expensive for many homeowners and the hazards caused by abatement need to be weighed against other methods such as improved hygiene through the frequent washing of hands and household surfaces. The importance of informed consent was noted—that this country has a long history of expecting individuals and communities to weigh all the factors and decide for themselves what needs to be done. This may require increased testing or other methods to know the degree of risk we face.

Another “hot button” issue is the concern over multiple exposure and the synergistic effects of multiple contaminants. Most studies are done on single chemicals but this does not mirror real-world risks from the effects of chemicals in interaction with one another. These studies have not been done because they would be very costly. And there are serious concerns about the validity of risk-assessments in general. They often find only what they want to find — as when the tobacco companies have consistently found no danger from cigarettes in their risk assessment studies. And information on risk issues is “soft”—how many PPB's (parts per billion) of a given substance are safe? What is the graduated risk as exposures increase? The need for informed, value/cost tradeoffs was discussed, and the importance of “evaluating the source” for information was emphasized.

April 16      The Media

*Fred Fisk*, Editor, Syracuse Post Standard  
*Tim Fox*, Executive Producer, WIXT Channel 9

- Fred Fisk agreed that there is a often a gulf between perception and reality and that the media serves as a bridge between the two. He added that this goes to the heart of the journalistic mission. He explained that in his role as teacher at the Newhouse School of Journalism he asks his students to examine what are the values their work represents. What makes it “news”? What makes it worth reporting? Every new reporter must learn to make these critical judgments. When choosing what to report, reporter must ask: Does it answer the question: am I safe? Is my family, neighborhood, home, work, property, city, county, country safe? And how do we need to act to make it safer? Fisk noted that no other community partner has a larger role in shaping perceptions about these issues than the media. Yet reporting is different than action and it is essential that the media remain separate from law enforcement. The media's credibility would decrease if there was even an impression of an alliance with law enforcement. So the media serves as a watchdog, jealous of its reputation for independence, filling in the gaps and reporting on the activities of law enforcement.

The Syracuse Newspapers have a newly expanded mission, made possible by the combination of staffs from the Post Standard and Herald Journal, and now can bring 35 experienced reporters to cover local news. Fisk described this as “reinventing” local news. The issues of safety and security relate to virtually every story—to creating peace of mind and a sense of power over our lives. A new “records” page is

revolutionary in local journalism. It may not be graphically exciting, he explained, but it is significant in its details. In the words of the paper's publisher, "the most interesting news may be in the smallest print." It includes a map of the area, listings of traffic accidents, a calendar of local events, a police blotter section, and a specific daily focus. As an example, the April 16 edition featured a story about the Sheriff's helicopter service and the current debate about the need for a new helicopter—how much use is for law enforcement business and how much duplicates services already provided commercially. The records page reflects a commitment to the community, it takes a lot of work to compile and it offers no bylines. The page will serve as a resource, tracking such things as the number of 911 calls processed, school enrollment, minority hiring, etc. Some of the information is not easy to get and it sometimes requires a consultation with the District Attorney's office to ensure that legally protected confidentiality is maintained when appropriate. Information about local news gives power to citizens and it also serves to make agencies such as law enforcement keep better records, knowing they are likely to be questioned on a regular basis. The Syracuse Papers hopes to be the major player in bringing information to the public about safety and security, and they encourage readers to give their input.

- Tim Fox has been at Channel 9 for sixteen years and in the Syracuse community for twenty years. In an "unscientific poll" he asked his co-workers about the role of the media and got a number of responses. One journalist believed the media is a mirror of society—when crime goes up, reporting of crime goes up. Another believed that it is important to understand that the media doesn't have a responsibility to make people think they're safe, rather to report accurately and fairly. Tim noted that many news services now take the "half full" not "half empty" approach (USA Today, CBS evening news) and try to offer solutions. At Channel 9 they try to give people "action information" that can include phone numbers, tips, safety information, etc. These are especially important in times of crisis—such as the weather emergencies so common in Syracuse winters. He noted, however, that weather reporting in particular can be a difficult task. He reminded the group of the "storm that never came." The storm had been predicted early in the day, schools and businesses closed, the community waited but nothing happened. Many were angered by the disruptions the prediction caused. It is always important for the media to assess information before it gets reported, not engage in "garbage in / garbage out" reporting. He also cautioned against threats to our understanding of the issues. Be wary, for instance, of what "PR people" tell the public, it is their job to put the best possible face on the facts. Demand that our public officials, including the military, be prevented from hiding the truth. Watch out when the "juices run too high," the truth can get lost in the rhetoric. And look for all sides before making judgment.

Not everyone agrees about what it is appropriate for media to do. Some levels of government think it best to keep people in the dark, he noted. It is the media's job to correct that. The media can sometimes become an intrusion in personal life. Think for instance, he asked the participants, what it would be like to live in Dryden, where two high school girls were murdered, or Oklahoma City, where the Federal building was bombed. What would it be like to live through a personal tragedy surrounded by reporters? Some people feel the media reports too much about troubling things or about issues that don't pertain to their lives. The issues at the Justice Center may seem far

removed, he noted, until the day you end up there yourself. Remember, he cautioned, that anyone can be arrested, that arrest and conviction are not the same thing, but the jailhouse conditions you'll find yourself in are the same if you are guilty or innocent. The public sometimes feels that the media demonstrates less responsibility to "protect" the victim and the community through reporting than for convicted criminals. But, the panel argued, it is not the role of the media to "make whole" the victim of an act by an individual. However, when an individual is incarcerated, society takes on the role of caretaker and those charged with that responsibility need to be watched.

- The panel explained that the increase in reporting of information essentially enlarged their role as advocates, but that it was important to separate reporting from advocacy about a specific issue. Such things belong in an editorial format. It is also important to understand that the media is a business, that it does have a role of "entertainment" and that while this role should not supersede the role of news, it is still the headline that sells the paper. It is also important to note that a lot of what happens every day is simply not news. It is not news, for instance, that 20 planes landed safely — it is news when *one* doesn't. People need to be realistic in understanding the role and the limitations of the media and to assume a level of responsibility for assessing the information that comes to them when making decisions.

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April 23      Business and Economy

*Roger Evans*, Department of Labor  
*Carl Forte*, Forte Associates  
*Richard Knowles*, AFL/CIO Union

- Roger Evans, in his position with the Department of Labor, has studied the labor market in Central New York for many years. He now predicts that conditions will improve locally by the end of 1997 and explained that there was already some good news to report. At the time of the session, there were more jobs in the local economy than at the same time a year earlier—although there were fewer jobs than in 1990. For reasons he could not explain, the manufacturing sector is strong and manufacturing jobs continue to be created. Jobs are available in the "visible" sectors of local economy and hiring has increased in small companies. He cautioned that the reality of the job market often has little bearing on public perceptions, but that perceptions are good. While the rich may question the strength of the stock market, the poor often ask: is there a job for me? will there be jobs for my children? Growth in the lower-skilled job sector eases these fears and improves perceptions. Some areas where job growth was predicted have not proved to have the desired impact. Carousel Mall developers touted the many entry-level jobs that would be created by the creation of this mega-mall, but little impact has been felt. There *are* opportunities in the city for jobs but prospective employees need to be prepared for these jobs. Employers are looking for skilled workers, but these are the workers who left for the west and south when our economy weakened. There are and will be plenty of low-wage jobs to ease the welfare-to-work transition but the entrance of these workers in the job market may make it tougher for teenagers to get their first jobs.



- Richard Knowles cited AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's writings about America, using the same words to describe Syracuse. He asked, what *is* economic security? We need to look at shrinking numbers of jobs, lower wages, pensions, and benefits; at under- and unemployment. We need to look at history. Once, working people knew that they could live on the wages they earned and employers knew the local economy provided customers whose wages could afford the goods and services business produced. In 1975 the economy did a U-turn and productivity began to rise as wages and job security dropped and pensions and benefits declined. A contingent workforce of low-paid temporary workers replaced union workers in the 1980's and these workers rarely had the benefits and legal protections characteristic of the union workforce. Concurrently, executive salaries soared. Most households began to require two family earners and many families suffered enormous mid-career setbacks at exactly the time when living costs—for children's education and retirement savings—were critically high. These families were fighting for economic security and spending less and less time on family and child-rearing needs. He cited the decline in organized labor as a key factor in the decline of salaries and benefits in this period. American workers were forced to compete with child labor in overseas markets and a growing world economy. American wages were kept at poverty levels and the "new right" strongly discouraged union involvement. Unions are now being revitalized. Knowles believes that the economy needs unions to raise productivity and ensure economic security for all, to shift power back to the worker—who will then buy the goods that keep factories open. He described two areas of focus for unions: 1) an end to corporate welfare in the form of tax credits and loopholes that create tax giveaways without a demand that these result in more jobs; and 2) a living wage campaign that aims to make work pay through public subsidy.

- Carl Forte has spent 12 years in the business of financial planning. The common belief that Social Security will "drop dead" in the year 2011 is not one he shares. He predicts that the lower income worker will still get the majority of their retirement income from social security, but 96 percent will retire in poverty. He explained that 38 percent of the people get half of their retirement income from social security. Who, he asked, will fund the baby boom's retirement? In 12-30 years 80 million baby-boomers will retire. They have saved at a rate of 4.6 percent as compared to 11.5 percent for the previous generation. The average household has only 1.9 children so we are not producing a sufficient stream of new providers. Those now receiving Social Security are very politically active and demand a large share of the dollars we now collect. The baby boom has thrown their money at the stock market with what Alan Greenspan describes as "irrational exuberance." Forte cautioned that these investors have persistently invested in index funds despite the fact that the overall market—by any index, Dow Jones to NASDAQ—is getting beaten up. There is a big reckoning coming and it remains to be seen if these investors will panic when their funds drop by 20 percent—it could be an unparalleled disaster. What investors need is a balanced portfolio of stocks and bonds to weather the storm.

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April 30      Women's Issues

*Annette Galias, Spanish Action League*  
*Kate O'Connell, Rape Crisis Center*  
*Rosetta Walsh, Brick House*

- Kate O'Connell began the session with a video presentation entitled "Someone You Know" which featured first-hand accounts by victim's of acquaintance rape. She cautioned that the video was graphic in its detail and would be difficult to watch, but it was powerful to hear in the victim's own words how their lives were affected. She also cautioned that the video was not intended for general use, nor is it suitable for young people, and it must be shown carefully because it is impossible to tell if a viewer may herself have been a sexual assault victim. But the tape clearly dispels the common perception that "she probably deserved it."

One woman featured in the video said that she didn't know it *was* a rape and called it an assault when she reported it. She didn't think she'd be believed because she knew her attacker. After the rape she responded with dramatic lifestyle changes. She went into isolation and lived in the woods surrounded by her dogs. She cropped her hair close to her head so it could never be used to restrain her again. Other women in the video expressed feelings of depression, self-contempt, and perpetual fearfulness. All the featured women spoke of flashbacks, terrible dreams, and an inability to sleep for days on end. Even when the event of rape had happened years before their lives continued to be profoundly affected.

After the presentation was over, O'Connell explained that her first concern was for the audience—what do you feel? The participants answered: "Shock," "it was as if I experienced it with them," and "I empathize so thoroughly." Consider, O'Connell suggested, that it is estimated that only 1 woman in 10 reports the crime, that the actual statistics are probably much higher. It is *the* most underreported crime. Women do not come forward because of shame, fear, and doubts that they will be believed. This crime happens to all kinds of women, but students—high school and college—are the most vulnerable.

There is a critical need to educate both the public and the courts. Too often, sex offenders are able to plead down to non-sex charges like simple assault and nothing goes on their record indicating the true nature of the crime. Too often law enforcement agents are not properly trained and can make matters worse.

- Annette Galeas works with the Domestic Violence Unit at the Spanish Action League. She works primarily with local Latinas who come to Syracuse from many places. What is often not recognized is the variety of cultural differences that exist between those from Cuba or Puerto Rico, Mexico or Central America. While domestic violence knows no boundaries and anyone can be affected, the Latina population Annette works with has special needs. They often don't speak English and frequently have a tenuous legal status and may fear deportation. Currently, if a woman is in a violent situation and

has legal status (is married or has other eligibility) she can apply for residency. There is concern that new laws enacted in several states will have an impact on this eligibility.

Latino women often stay at home and it takes a lot for them to admit to a problem. The stereotypical abused women “needs a black eye” to prove violence, but violence can be physical, emotional, or economic. Economic violence is not well understood in the community. It can occur in situations where the woman has no control, when scarce financial resources are directed away from needs of the family. In a common situation, the husband forces the wife to sell the family’s food stamps for alcohol or drugs.

There are a number of local initiatives to address these problems in the Latino Community. Galeas is currently doing outreach to youth in the high schools and is seeking a grant to help educate these youth and the community about issues of family violence. A major concern is the effect of domestic violence on children in the home. Another concern is the rise in adolescent dating violence. Locally, the Domestic Violence Unit in the Police Department is very well trained. They can get help to women in need within 24 hours. But it is discouraging to know that Latina women often return to the violent home because of factors such as the language barrier and a cultural distrust of authority, even when “authority” attempts to intervene on behalf of the woman. Often, these women are unable to detail the truth of their situation to nurses at the hospital, who in turn sometimes show a lack of sensitivity in dealing with these patients. Galeas has worked with nursing students to change this and increase the sensitivity of the next generation of nurses. But, she noted, we *all* need to develop increased cultural sensitivity and to recognize that there are many different cultures in the Spanish-speaking world.

- Rosetta Walsh explained that Brick House takes a behavioral approach to helping drug dependent women and uses managed care techniques to tailor programs to individual needs. All the women in her program suffer from chronically unmet needs. They enter with a diagnosis of addiction and are often actively using drugs as they begin the program. They turn to Brick House because they have no stable home environment to turn to while they deal with their problems. Here they are treated for their problems on an individual basis with a specific plan that suits their needs that can include medical attention, routine gynecological exams, help with mental disorders, eating disorders, etc. A high number of these women have had a sex-abuse problem. Many have an education problem, most an employment problem, and 90 percent have outstanding legal issues. They need a safe, clean environment while they get treatment. They are referred out for treatment of everything but addiction control. For this they have 24 hour, 1:1 counseling on site. Women come from around the state for help. There is an urgent need for similar care for mothers with small children. The program now has 14 beds—and a long waiting list. The average stay is 3-6 months, but they are able to accommodate women for up to a year if necessary. Women at the halfway house often have a long history of abuse and have layered fears— it takes a long time for them to be able to trust.

- Asked about gaps in the system the panel identified several needs. They recognized the need for a better way to identify patients; the need for more outpatient programs and for additional services for those in treatment for addiction at the halfway house; and the need for programs to educate youth. Asked what are the safety issues of greatest

concern, the panel listed violence in the home, rape, incest, and street violence. The issue of domestic violence is a "24 hour" problem, unlike being afraid in public. Alcohol abuse contributes to the volatility of domestic violence and adds to the general feeling of unsafety for women and children in these situations. They "go on full alert" when the first beer can opens. In incest situations, the child most often fears the unpredictable rages of the parent more than the assault itself. Asked for recommendations the panel identified the need for youth outreach, for money to be spent on programs not prisons, the need for better program evaluations, and the need well trained people throughout the system—police, medical personnel, and judges.

May 14                      Children and Youth

*Diane Erne*, Deputy Commissioner, Onondaga County Department of Social Services

*Judy Gilligan*, The Salvation Army

*Peggy Liuzzi*, Executive Director, Onondaga County Child Care Coalition (CCC)

- Diane Erne, Deputy Commissioner of Onondaga County Department of Social Services, explained that we are experiencing a period of profound and rapid change affecting children—most particularly abused and neglected children—that she described as unprecedented in her 30 years of professional experience. While there is no "clear center" to the changes that are occurring, 1995 marked the first time since the enactment of welfare laws that child protection is no longer an entitlement, in part because the affected population has few advocates or lobbies. These changes have been implemented quietly through cuts to block grants. The block grant system was designed to reduced the problem of multiple categorical funding streams, but \$4.2 million dollars has been cut locally to our total block grant allocation and costs once borne by the state have been shifted to local jurisdictions. As a result of this profound reduction, 1000 children have been cut from services and Child Protective Service has had to resort to triage. Combined with additional cuts to Federal funding through Title XX, Onondaga County has experienced a total cut of \$6-\$7 million.

Onondaga County DSS has sought to continually upgrade services. The County equips its caseworkers to handle all specialties (6-7 different services), and thereby allow children and families to deal consistently with one caseworker. Recently, as a result of the Elisa Izquedero case, the State has created opportunities for increased public scrutiny of DSS Protective records. And Federal dollars have been appropriated, to automate the County's antiquated, "mom and pop shop" DSS record keeping with assistance from IBM. Now every caseworker has a computer; a once computer-illiterate staff is being trained in the use of software, and each agency is equipped with at least some hardware. Onondaga County today can boast of operating the largest local area network, (LAN) in the area, that connects the County's many facilities electronically.

Statewide, changes are happening that will effect children and under Governor Pataki sweeping changes of DSS are in the works. The governor recommends an end to Income Maintenance. The Health Department has now assumed responsibility for Medicaid. There is an initiative to create a department for Children and Family services

that would combine the Division for Youth with the Child Welfare Division. The Vacco Commission advanced the cause of children's rights relative to parental rights by requiring an automatic protective service investigation when a child is found to have a positive toxicology reading. Welfare Reform is already affecting children and it was noted that eighty to ninety percent of the youngsters in Child Welfare are also on Public Assistance.

Since 1988, the large volume of reports of abuse and neglect forced local child welfare providers into a crisis. The County has adopted several strategies that have had very positive results. The primary strategy was to increase resources dedicated to prevention—i.e., keep kids safely out of Foster Care. The strategy appears to have worked and has resulted in a major reduction of reports. The County also began to more actively seek foster care placement within the natural family and opened the Family Support Center to help these families. By encouraging family placements, a significant reduction in formal foster care was realized which has saved the County some money. And there has been a dramatic increase in orders of Termination of Parental Rights which freed up children for adoption and helped move children from foster care into permanent families.

At the same time that funding cuts have taken place, reports of abuse and neglect have increased and as a result there has been an increase in the need to place children in protective care. Many agencies, like the Salvation Army, have been forced to turn clients away. Budget cuts have forced the reduction of funding for preventive care which further threatens the safety of children. The use of day care for protective or preventive reasons has increased markedly and the waiting list today is over 900. The County is forced to decide who should get priority—the working poor? the welfare population? the troubled family? There is no long term plan for children and families. Funding for prevention has been cut despite proof that in the long term it is financially cheaper to fund Preventive care. The bottom line is that with these cuts no money has been saved and the quality of life for the most vulnerable children has significantly declined.

- Peggy Liuzzi, Executive Director, Child Care Coalition of Onondaga County, explained that the Government's interest in child care is in regulation and funding. Current funding is predicated on the need to move parents to work, not the child's needs. (Pre-K and Headstart, by contrast, are based on child's needs.) But the question remains whether increased funding for child care should be used to support transitioning the welfare population to the workplace, or to aid job retention for the already working poor. A 1993 study of child care needs reported that 44,000 children aged 0-13 needed day care but there are 11,400 regulated care slots. Half of these children have care from a family member—grandparent, etc. Most of the remaining care is unregulated and often paid "under the table." It is somewhat surprising to note that unregulated care is used as much by high income groups as by low. The cost of care is acknowledged as the strongest factor in the choice a family makes—unregulated, regulated, family care or day care center. The costs vary by the child's age. For a 3 year old, regulated non-family care averages \$85/wk and average cost at a day care center is \$104/wk. These expenses are especially hard for young parents with limited earning capacity to afford making access to regulated care difficult without a subsidy.

The quality of day care is a major concern. Informal care sometimes gives cause for concern. The Child Care Coalition reports problems such as children playing unsupervised in the street, too many children with only one adult, and by not providing the promised level of care. There are some informal care givers whose own children have been removed to foster care! Costs tend to drive the decisions parents make. Information also affects these decisions to some degree, but we have a complicated child care system and choices are often made to use what's most familiar even though this may not be what is best for a child. The CCC is also concerned for the quality within the regulated system. A study in California revealed that 12 percent of regulated facilities provided less than minimal care. This means that children's health and safety were jeopardized; that there were few if any learning experiences going on; that there was little warmth exhibited. The situation is often most dangerous for infants and toddlers. As long as affordability rather than quality drives the system we can expect problems to continue. On the other hand, where quality is the chief consideration, as with O'Brien and Gere's facility for its employees, "Cadillac Care" can be achieved. But good care is costly and by any standard care givers are inadequately compensated.

Finding child care for times other than the 9-5 weekday schedule is difficult. Finding childcare for those working on second shifts is especially difficult. Overnight regulations require the supervisor to be awake—even if the child is asleep—making regulated care hard to find. School-age children need before- and after-school care as well as care during school-breaks, on conference days, and in the summertime. Transportation is an enormous problem that is even worse outside the city. Schools won't transport children outside the catchment area to a child care center. Self-care is sometimes utilized by desperate parents, meaning children may be left home alone. This is especially dangerous for young children, but even for young teens, it is risky to leave them alone for protracted periods while parents are at work. In the hours after school unsupervised youth engage in sexual activity, juvenile crime, and arson.

- Judy Gilligan from the Salvation Army noted that all the issues discussed by the panel are connected. She also noted that society stops treating the needs of children once they reach puberty. Teenagers are caught between childhood and adult life. They are seen as able to care for themselves and therefore to blame if they get into trouble. On the other hand, "teen evils" such as pregnancy, substance abuse, and violence are conceptualized as distinctly teen-related. But these issues are not unique to adolescence, they are adult issues as well. Teen behavior mirrors adults for all of these phenomena and at equivalent rates. Similarly, preventive measures (such as sex education to reduce rates of unplanned pregnancy) work for both adults and teenagers. The rate of pregnancy for both teens and adults has been creeping up since 1980s, but what is little recognized is that the rate is still lower than it was in the '50s and '60s. Increasingly conservative policies that limit access to information and prevention have influenced the rise in these rates. The two outstanding predictors of teen pregnancy are childhood sex abuse and poverty. Poverty can create a sense of "no future," and where there is no future, there is no reason to delay gratification which makes early childbearing more likely.

Teens experiment with independence—that's what adolescents do. If the community is supportive, there's no great risk in their experimentation. If not, then drugs, sex, and violence become the fields for experimentation. Statewide statistics show the leading cause of death for 15-19 year olds is homicide, but locally, suicide is the

leading cause of death. Youth run away because their homelife is not safe or not stimulating. They most often leave because of family conflicts that are aggravated by physical abuse, sex abuse, alcohol, and drugs. The abuse of alcohol and drugs by the parents of runaways is "astronomically high." Runaways are not only teens, they can be younger children also. The Salvation Army runs two centers, Booth and Barnabas, for runaway youth, and it now has a new shelter for young adults aged 16-21. The waiting list for this transitional housing is 4 months long. It is hard to estimate the number of runaways but the Booth House hotline receives 700 calls/year from Onondaga county alone. Approximately 250 youth asked for help from the shelter and 57 of these needed the aid of Child Protective Services. The key time for runaways to hit the streets is 3-6 p.m., and that's when predators take to the street—the drug dealers, the pimps. The Salvation Army has its outreach van traversing the streets during those hours. A recently busted Utica drug ring was staffed with runaways held hostage. Volunteer families take in young people overnight or for a few days. The Salvation Army is recruiting more families for these host homes, but it is difficult to recruit. And they run a transitional program for 16-21 year-old females who cannot live in their own family because of sex abuse, abandonment, or overcrowded living conditions.

The real issue is teen sex and America's unwillingness to acknowledge and to address the issue constructively. Puberty occurs earlier than even a generation ago. It doesn't make "physical sense" that our culture expects a long period, as much as 25 years, to occur between puberty and marriage without preparing youth for the challenges of their own sexuality. It is *not* a mixed message to say "It's best if you don't, but if you do...." Today's young people need additional education about HIV. Young women, aged 15-19, have the fastest growing rate of HIV infection. They are most often infected, as they are most often impregnated, by older males. These young women need honest information and support.

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May 21

## Neighborhoods

*Lucia Strail, Spanish Action League*  
*Eskew Young, South Side Property Owner*

- Lucia Strail noted that the problems of street safety and neighborhood security—as it is understood and experienced by many inner-city residents—was not included in the earlier sessions. The discussion, for instance, of campus safety at SU was important to one portion of the population but not very relevant to people living in the neighborhoods. The people Strail works with are truly concerned about their safety when they walk down the street. She noted that there had been a 5:15 PM drive-by shooting just one week earlier, a time when children and families are likely to be on the street, returning home from school or work. The police drive by, she explained, but do not even leave their cars and the kids just stay on the corner. What can neighbors do, she asked, in these conditions?

- Eskew Young told the group that he regularly drives by the Kentucky Fried Chicken on Forman Street and is not intimidated. Security, he explained, is “who” first. He feels safe wherever he goes. We need to focus on ourselves first, not on youth, to overcome our feelings of insecurity in our neighborhoods. He asked, does youth crime directly effect us in our daily lives? Isn’t most youth crime directed at other youth? Are we talking about *feeling* secure or *being* secure? He explained that he had lived in his south-side neighborhood for eleven years and never once experienced feelings of insecurity. Those feelings, he acknowledged, vary by the individual. Perhaps, he suggested, his lack of fear was the result of traveling widely and experiencing other cultures. Those who have led more sheltered lives, with limited world experience, and those who live in rural areas and who have never lived with Black people may react with fear to situations that others find normal. Crime is everywhere, he noted, not just in the cities and the newspapers have just begun to give people a picture of the whole community and explain what’s happening everywhere.

The problem is not the vacant house, Eskew noted, it’s the individuals using it. There is not enough for kids to do, he argued, we have become too liberal. If we see a group of youths on the corner we need to give them something to do. Lucia added that people often say that there’s nothing to do, which misses the reality that many youth programs exist—Boys and Girls Clubs etc. But the youth on the corner are older and don’t want to participate in such programs. They *want* to be on the corner, and they have a right to be on the corner. But what about the people who need to walk or drive by that corner, what rights do they have? Lucia noted that she does not stop at stop signs, she rolls through them and takes her chances for getting ticketed rather than risk being assaulted.

- It was noted that these problems are found in specific areas and these can be targeted for action. What happens on Shonnard Street doesn’t happen in Marcellus. Youth suffer from a lack of self respect and respect for others. It is visible in their dress and attitude. Some communities now have daytime, school-hour curfews and take children off the streets and keep them at a safe, central location until their parents pick them up. Several social service agencies are on site to work with the family and address the problem. Our local truancy office is very understaffed and it is impossible for them to do an effective job. Truancy laws also need to be stiffened and policies revised. Parents often aren’t told about a child’s absence from school until the child has missed weeks of school. Parents need to know immediately to intervene effectively.

We also need to address the need for police to “walk the beat” not just drive by. When a program was started in East Boston to get police walking through neighborhoods they became involved with the residents—and residents became more involved themselves as a result. And police need to live in the neighborhoods they protect. Too often they ignore quality of life crime they would never tolerate in their own neighborhoods. Another problem, it was suggested, is with parents who don’t take control. We should blame who ever is in charge. And the problem is that people think the problem is only in the city—they don’t think about the suburbs. It was noted that in California people get ticketed for jaywalking. We need to enforce our laws.

Young told the story of one of his tenants when he found she was dealing drugs. The police had done nothing to stop her so he took action himself, removing all the doors from the home. Asked if this wasn’t that vigilante justice he replied that



sometimes citizens need to act themselves. He agreed that it was best to try to work through existing channels first however. Lucia noted however, that a 55 year old woman living with a retarded son cannot act so impulsively. They are forced to be house-bound when the police don't do their job and live in fear when the police do not respect the confidentiality of sources.

## Appendix 2: Focus Group Survey Materials

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*Onondaga Citizen's League*

### Security Check: Perceptions of Personal Safety

*A Study of the Quality of Life in Syracuse and Onondaga County*

1. **Definition:** How do *you* define “safety” and “security”? In other words, what do these terms mean to you?
2. **Concerns:** Do you have any safety or security concerns for yourself or for your family? If so, what are they?
3. **Seriousness:** How serious do you regard these concerns (on a scale of 1-5)?
4. **Source of concern:** How have you come to have this concern?
5. **Action taken:** What have you done about it?
6. **Actions to take:** What should be done about it? And who should do it?
7. **Objective measures:** What would be a good gauge of progress in correcting that concern? In other words, suppose we wanted to have a report card that would indicate how much improvement we have produced over a year, what would we need to measure to show whether or not there has been real improvement?



*Onondaga Citizen's League*

**1997 STUDY**

## Security Check: Perceptions of Personal Safety

*A Study of the Quality of Life in Syracuse and Onondaga County*

### OUTLINE FOR FOCUS GROUP MEETING

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*The focus group meeting should be kept to no more than 90 minute and could be accomplished in one hour. Guard the time carefully, keep a regular pace so that discussion moves forward while allowing individuals to make as many points as they feel are important. Try not to allow one person to dominate, to allow the discussion to stray too far from the topic, or to stay too long on one topic. Times listed are approximate but add up to 1.5 hours.*

#### **A. Thank You and Introduction to OCL**

*2 Minutes*

Thank you very much for participating this evening. My name is (*your name*). I'm helping The Onondaga Citizen's League carry out a study that is concerned with what you and other County residents think.

The Onondaga Citizens League is a broad-based, non-profit, volunteer citizens group, established in 1980. [Distribute brochure] Its purpose is to encourage citizens education and involvement in public issues and problems. The League does not promote specific legislation or function as a lobbying group. Its members each year study a particular matter of public concern. They listen to invited panelists, review the facts, make considered judgments on approaches, alternatives and solutions, and develop recommendations to present to the community.

The League has published 17 reports over the years. The issues are wide ranging—the public works infrastructure, City and County charters, models of effective schools, the social costs of poverty, opportunities for economies in town and village governments, the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Onondaga County, and this year effective ways of dealing with youth violence. The Onondaga Citizens League's current membership is 200. It is open to all residents in Onondaga County.

**B. OCL and “Security Check”***3 Minutes*

Since its inception, OCL has been concerned with the quality of life in our community. One important dimension to the quality of life is the sense of safety and of security that residents have— or don't have— about their community. Surely feeling that you and your family are safe and secure is important to the quality of life. I think most of us would agree that the quality of life is diminished and compromised as people are worried about safety issues, and as people's sense of security is threatened.

This year the League intends to learn about what residents of Onondaga County feel about safety and security here. We are calling this year's study, “Security Check: Perceptions of Personal Safety. A Study of the Quality of Life in Syracuse and Onondaga County.” The League thinks that it's very important to provide a forum for community residents—folks like yourselves—to have a say on things that affect this community.

We know we're a diverse community so we are going around to different parts of Syracuse and to different towns and villages in Onondaga County in order to ensure wide and diverse participation in this project.

We're asking groups like yours these 7 questions:

*(distribute list of questions or write them on a chalk board or on large newsprint)*

1. *Definition:* how do you define “safety” and “security”? In other words, what do these terms mean to you?
2. *Concerns:* do you have any safety or security concerns for yourself or for your family? If so, what are they?
3. *Seriousness:* how serious do you regard these concerns (on a scale of 1-5)?
4. *Source of concern:* How have you come to have this concern?
5. *Action taken:* What have you done about it?
6. *Action:* what should be done about it? And who should do it?
7. *Objective measures:* what would be a good gauge of progress in correcting that concern? In other words, suppose we wanted to have a report card that would indicate how much improvement we have produced over a year, what would we need to measure to show whether or not there has been real improvement?

We plan to hold a meeting in mid-January to report back to all of you who have participated what we have learned from these focus groups. We've tentatively scheduled that meeting for:

January 15th,  
Wednesday evening 7 PM,  
at University College,  
610 E. Fayette Street, Syracuse

We will send a reminder to you at the address on your profile sheet and note if there is any change.

### C. Request to complete the profile

*5 Minutes*

Since we want to get a cross section of thinking, it is helpful for us to know some general characteristics of each group. That way, if we see we're missing some constituency—if we discover there are voices that haven't been heard—we'll arrange to meet with such a group. This information is confidential and will not be distributed to anyone else or used for any other purpose.

*(distribute profile form, ask everyone to fill it out)*

### D. The Study

#### 1. DEFINITION

*10 Minutes*

**How do you define "safety" and how do you define "security"?**

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: Probe for different understandings for these terms. Try to focus for more depth and distinction that relate to safety and security affecting persons and families. Avoid "national" security except insofar as participants feel personally affected. Always seek clarification for how safety and security relate to individuals and to their families.

#### 2. CONCERNS

*25 Minutes*

**Do you have any concerns about safety and security for yourself, for members of your family?**

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: Pay attention to the different categories of concerns expressed in the definitions. Try not to put words into the mouths of participants. If few ideas are forthcoming, ask specifically about areas listed below]

- ...at home
- ...on the block, in the neighborhood
- ...at work, on the job
- ...for your kids at school; after school
- ...on the road, traveling in this area
- ...traffic
- ...food you get at the market; in local restaurants
- ...the water for drinking, for swimming
- ...the air...other environmental features

Another approach:

Is there anything or anyone that gives you cause for concern about your own safety or that of your family? *Where* do you feel not safe or not secure? *When* do you feel not safe or not secure? Develop a list... perhaps not excessively long. There probably ought to be only a half dozen or fewer real concerns. But if participants seem to have genuine safety and security concerns elicit all of them, avoiding duplication

3. *SERIOUSNESS:*

5 Minutes

**On a scale of 1 to 5 how would you rank the seriousness of each of the concerns we've listed?**

- 1= *not* a concern for me
- 2= not a *significant* concern for me
- 3= this *is* a concern for me
- 4= this is a *significant* concern for me
- 5= this is a *very significant* concern for me and requires urgent attention

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: employ some expedient system of measurement: how many think this item is a 5? a 4? a 3?...

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4. *SOURCE OF CONCERN:*

5 Minutes

**How have you come to have this concern?  
Did you or a neighbor have some experience?  
Did you learn of this...how...from where?**

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5. *ACTION TAKEN:*

5 Minutes

**What action have you taken in light of your concern?**

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: assure participants that "nothing" is a legitimate response.

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6. *PROPOSED ACTION:*

15 Minutes

**What should we do to rectify (name a specific concern)?  
And *who* should do what? In other words, is there a role for individuals, for members of a particular neighborhood or workplace, for government...and so on?**

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: Be prepared to hear *differing* solutions to the same concern. Inquire if there is agreement on a particular solution; whether there is disagreement on a particular solution; whether participants believe multiple actions are required concurrently to correct a given concern.

Try to collect remedies for each of the listed concerns

7. *MEASURES:*

*15 Minutes*

**What would be a good measure to use that would enable us to see how much progress we've made from one year to the next in correct this concern?**

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: Try to get the group to devise one measure, at least, for each of the actions they have proposed in relation to each of the concerns identified.

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*CONCLUSION:* Ask for any questions and conclude the meeting with another thank you to participants. Be sure to collect all profile forms.

## Appendix 3: Summary of Focus Group Concerns

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### INDEX OF GROUP ABBREVIATIONS

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ANC	ANCLA	OCC1	OCC-Crim Justice 1
BGC	Boys and Girls Club (East)	OCC2	OCC-Crim Justice 2
OCL1	Onondaga Citizens League participants	OCC3	OCC-Human Services
OCL2	Onondaga Citizens League participants	LIV	Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
OCL3	Onondaga Citizens League participants	NSSD	North Syracuse School District
OCL4	Onondaga Citizens League participants	TRI	Manlius Triad Program
OCL5	Onondaga Citizens League participants		

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### PERSONAL HARM

Violence					
- increased	ANC	OCL5			
- drug	ANC	OCC1	OCC2	OCC3	OCL5
- youth	OCL5				
In school	OCL5				
Crime	OCC1	OCL3			
Assault/mugging					
- on street	TRI				
- in home	TRI				
- at mall	LIV				
- migrant farm workers	ANC				
Sex assault	OCC1	OCC2			
Date rape	OCC1				
Rape	OCC1	OCC3	OCL2		
Stabbing	OCC3				
- of college kids	LIV				
Pistol whipped	OCC2				
Shot	OCC1	OCC2			
- at home by drug traffic	OCC3				
In wrong place at wrong time	OCC2				
Never know when someone will act	OCC3				
- need to be street smart	OCL2				
- Mental cases	OCC3	LIV			
- Released felons, prison workers	LIV				
Threatening behavior	OCC3				
- by teen gangs	ANC	OCL4			
- by indicted felon	NSSD				
- by drug dealer	BGC				
Police ineffective	NSSD				



Unease with police	ANC			
Safety and security in school	ANC			
<b>INVOLVING CHILDREN/YOUTH</b>				
Other kids are danger to my child	OCC2			
Child beaten up on way home from school	OCC3			
Hillbrook students chased with weapon	NSSD			
Child attacked at school, on street	CRC			
- not safe to ride bike unsupervised	OCL2			
Child molestation	OCC1	OCC2		
Not safe in a crowd	BGC			
- Someone might have a gun				
- A "friend" might be your enemy				
Child care safety	OCC1			
Abduction	CRC	OCC1	OCC2	OCC3
Intruder enters home when you're alone	BGC			
Boy puts something in your drink at a party	BGC			
<b>THREATENING SITUATIONS</b>				
Place Specific				
- parking lot/garage	TRI	OCL5		
- parking lot at night	LIV	OCC1	OCC3	
- downtown	OCL4			
- War Memorial (blind spots)	OCL4			
- apartment house, (esp. public housing)	OCL4			
Time specific -driving after dark in unfamiliar locale				
- after dark specific locales	TRI			
- out alone early am, late pm	ANC			
- walk alone evenings	OCL5			
	OCL2			
<b>PERSONAL &amp; BUSINESS PROPERTY</b>				
Car Jacking	OCC1			
- in inner city	OCL4			
Vandalized car and break in	LIV	NSSD		
Robbery	OCC1	OCC2		
Break in	OCC3			
Burglary	OCC1	NSSD	TRI	
<b>ACCIDENTS</b>				
Driving & traffic	OCC1	OCC3	OCL4	OCL5 NSSD
Workplace hazard	TRI			
Child care ctr	OCC1			
School bus				
- driver	OCC2			
- discharging kids unsafely	OCC3			

## EMERGENCY

Living alone	OCC2	OCL2
- elders	LIV;	
- single mom	OCC3	
Fallen down and can't get up	OCL4	

## PERSONAL HEALTH

Personal health & legitimate drugs	OCL1	
Drug abuse	OCC2	OCL5
Disease	OCL3	
- communicable	OCC2	
Falling	OCL4	
Tampering with food	NSSD	
Lead	ANC	
Housing	ANC	

## ENVIRONMENT

Air, water	OCL1	
- water	NSSD	
Environemnt	OCL3	
The lake	OCC3	NSSD
Bristol	OCC3	
SU steam plant	OCC3	
Gravel field dust	OCC3	
NIMO growth retardant	OCC3	
Wood stove smoke	OCC3	
Smokers (asthma)	OCC3	
Sewage in apt house	OCC3	
Rats, roaches	OCC3	

## ECONOMIC

Job security	ANC	OCL1
Sufficient paying job	ANC	
Lost welfare due to reform	ANC	
Financial security	OCL1	OCL3
-Social security	OCC3	
Financial aid for school	OCC3	NSSD

## SOCIOLOGICAL

Safety to minorities, women, seniors, gays, migrant farmers	ANC	OCL1
Fraud	OCL1	
Racism	OCL5	
- black hostility to whites	OCC3	
Govt policy on welfare	OCL3	
Corporate influence over govt policy	OCL3	
Balancing freedom w/o jeopardizing safety	OCL2	
Breakdown of moral fabric	OCL3	
Lost civility	OCL3	

Lost ethical conduct	OCL3
Erosion of 'community'	LIV
-moms working leave neighborhood vulnerable	LIV
Peer pressure	OCC1
War	OCC3

### MISCELLANEOUS

Children	
- Negative influences on	OCL1
- Unprepared for the future	OCL3
- Lack of parental supervision/neglect	OCC2
- Single parent	LIV
- Abuse in school	OCC2
- High school drop outs	ANC
- Temptations befalling kids away at college	TRI
- College kids attacked, suicides	LIV
Animals	OCC3
Future viability of volunteer fire departments	LIV

## Appendix 4: List of Previous Studies

- 1979 Equality and Fairness in Property Assessment
- 1980 Young People in Trouble: Can Our Services be Organized and Delivered More Effectively?
- 1981 The County Legislature: Its Function Size and Structure
- 1982 Declining School Enrollments: Opportunities for Cooperative Adaptations
- 1983 Onondaga County Public Works Infrastructure: Status, Funding and Responsibilities
- 1984 Police Services in Onondaga County: A Review and Recommendations
- 1985 The City and County Charters: Time for Revision?
- 1987 Blueprints for the Future: Recommendations for the Year 2000
- 1988 The Role of the Food Industry in the Economy of Onondaga County
- 1989 Poverty and its Social Costs: Are There Long-Term Solutions
- 1990 Syracuse Area Workforce of the Future: How Do We Prepare
- 1991 Schools that Work: Models in Education that Can be Used in Onondaga County
- 1992 Town and Village Governments: Opportunities for Cost-Effective Changes
- 1993 The Criminal Justice System in Onondaga County: How Well is it Working
- 1994 The Delivery of Human Services: Opportunities for Improvement
- 1995 Reinvesting in the Community: Opportunities for Economic Development
- 1996 Building a Non-Violent Community: Successful Strategies for Youth