

# THE WESTSIDER

35¢

## *It's a World Full of Cops*

### SAFETY CZAR FOR THE 90'S

BY EMILY TORGAN

Jill Greenbaum gasps as she gets kicked in the abdomen.

"That was a sudden one," giggles Greenbaum, pregnant with her second child.

Because Greenbaum is deeply devoted to her family and friends, she takes other types of blows harder than some people. The crime, prostitution and homelessness rampant in her West 90s neighborhood led her earlier this year to spearhead the formation of the Police Liaison Group, a community group that supports police efforts.

"This is my home, and I don't like to run away," explains Greenbaum. "I don't want to be pushed out by anything, and I didn't want my family or children or old people to be either. Enjoying your family and neighborhood is how you get the most out of life."

A softspoken, fashionable young mother, Greenbaum was triggered to start the organization by a neighbor's daytime mugging early this spring. Shortly thereafter, she helped organize a May meeting that drew the captain of the 24th precinct plus three to four hundred residents from a neighborhood bounded by 89th and 92nd streets, Broadway and West End Avenue. All of them were anxious to facilitate community policing efforts as they faced violent mentally ill homeless people and flourishing drug and prostitution trades, but they needed a push. To mobilize people, Greenbaum wrote up the event in her block association newsletter, contacted the 89th Street Block Association, called block captains and presidents of building boards, and distributed batches of fliers through police officers and doormen.

Now, the organization meets monthly and sponsors large gatherings every six months, one of which was held last Wednesday.

Already, the community group has successfully fought a 91st Street OTB that had become a bastion of disorderly conduct. After the community policing organization contacted elected officials, Community Board 7 collected 300 signatures and obtained data showing that the 91st Street betting parlor was OTB's second-lowest earning New York City location, OTB sent Board 7 a letter stating that they would not be renewing their 91st Street lease, which expires in May '93.

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More recently, the PLG set up committees to confront the neighborhood's problems with homelessness and prostitution.

Greenbaum stresses that she has had tremendous support from Hugh Karraker, president of the West 90th Street's Our Block Community Group, Inc., and has appreciated the community's help.

Still, Greenbaum admits that her professional training has helped her pull PLG operations off smoothly. A Brooklyn native, Boston University graduate, and Brooklyn Law School J.D., Greenbaum has worked in marketing, media and law.

"It all helps me," Greenbaum declares. She also says her PLG work keeps her intellectually stimulated while she raises her two-year-old daughter.

Still, Greenbaum is pensive about why her organization has gotten popular so quickly. "I think it was timing. Lee Brown was a big advocate of community policing, and I think the L.A. riots made people aware that

they have to work with their police departments to make their neighborhoods safe. They didn't have community policing in L.A."

Although the community policing concept is not new, Greenbaum says she hopes to fine-tune it, then back it up with legislative changes that will make law enforcement easier.

Through working with the 24th precinct, Greenbaum has learned who the local homeless are, how they spend their money, what their addiction problems are, and what residents can do to help them. She's excited by new police initiatives that target homeless individuals to determine whether they are violent and what sort of help they need. She says much of what the police confront are multifaceted social problems that have to be combated with social and legal changes rather than just case-by-case reactions. Recently, Greenbaum worked with Congressman-Elect Jerry Nadler on strengthening laws that would get mentally ill homeless off the streets.

Greenbaum also believes that community policing can be very powerful in deterring people who are on the criminal borderline from becoming

constant offenders.

"When you see a gang loitering on the steps of a brownstone drinking, soon there'll be graffiti. The point is stopping them before they break a window, and head into trouble."

Greenbaum admits it's sobering for the group to realize that changes take a long time to bring about, but she calls the PLG tenacious and herself reluctant to give up. She loves the comprehensive community aspects of her work, shying away from presenting any of it as an individual accomplishment.

"The wonderful thing is that it's so collaborative. So many people have the same feelings you do, and they want to put in the effort to make it work." □