



They're Auxiliary's 'Shining Stars'

Lake Norman Regional Medical Center Auxiliary members were recently honored for their work with a luncheon at the Mooresville Citizens Center. Several members received special recognition as 'Shining Stars' for volunteering more than 500 hours over the past year. The "Shining Stars" pictured are (from left) Gloria Varela, Margaret Lamb, Linda McElrath, Leona Wilson, Wade Wilson, Tabitha Putnam, Earl Brooks, Agnes Metzger and Jeanne Root. Not pictured: Meredith Bauer, Sara Berg, Rayon Gibo, Mona Horan, Robert Horan and Marion Ross.

Iredell may be linked to attacks

Group facing racketeering charges has ties to bin Laden

By JONATHAN WEAVER

Discount cigarettes bought locally could link Iredell to last week's attacks on Washington, D.C., and New York City.

The U.S. government has identified Islamic fundamentalist Osama bin Laden as the No. 1 suspect in the attacks. Bin Laden is head of al Qaeda, an umbrella group for many smaller groups that includes Hezbollah, or "Party of God."

Hezbollah is defined by the United States government as a designated terrorist organization. Hezbollah was named as an aid to bin Laden after the USS Cole attack in Yemen last October, when two suicide bombers detonated their explosive-filled boat alongside the refueling Cole. Former CIA officials believe those suicide bombers were members of Hezbollah due to the type of bomb used in the attack.

Bob Fromme, an Iredell County sheriff's deputy and an Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent, knows the Hezbollah well.

Fromme learned about the group while investigating the suspected illicit sales of cigarettes bought in Statesville at JR Factory Outlets. Authorities later discovered that some of the proceeds from those cigarette sales were funding the Hezbollah.

The group has cells in many of the country's larger cities, Fromme said, but the Charlotte group was wiped out for the most part following Operation Smokescreen.

In 1999, Fromme was working parttime as a security guard at JR in Statesville when he began noticing groups of people of Middle-Eastern descent carrying in cash-filled bags and buying hundreds of cartons of cigarettes, sometimes on a daily basis.

After doing some free-lance

surveillance, Fromme went to Iredell County Sheriff Phil Redmond about the case. Redmond assigned Fromme to it part-time. They soon realized they were going to need help.

In the summer of 1999, the ATF stepped in and Operation Smokescreen began.

Investigators say the suspects were buying cigarettes in bulk in North Carolina, where they were then transporting the cartons to Michigan and New York to sell them at prices of up to \$45 per carton.

In 1999, indictments were drawn for racketeering, money laundering and transporting an illegal amount of cigarettes across state lines.

Then, the Federal Bureau of Investigation stepped in. Federal agents were looking at the same suspects for evidence of whether profits from the cigarette sales were going to "provide material support and resources to Hezbollah," according to a federal affidavit.

On July 21, 2000, authorities raided homes and businesses in Charlotte and arrested 18 suspects. The group was charged for weapons offenses, money laundering and cigarette trafficking.

One man arrested that day, Said Mohamed Harb, was also charged with providing resources to the Hezbollah.

Nine of the suspects are scheduled to appear in federal court in Charlotte next year.

The ties between bin Laden and Hezbollah go way back, Fromme said. And he believes some hijackers from Tuesday's attacks were members of Hezbollah. "They are that fanatical," he said. "It would surprise me if some of them weren't identified as being members of Hezbollah."

Fromme studied the small-but-powerful militant Arab culture during Operation Smokescreen to get a better understanding of his suspects.

"They aren't the type of people who would shoot me in the face — they're the type of people who would show up at my door with a bomb strapped to them and detonate it," he said. "They have no value for human life. They've been at war for so long. Violence is second nature to them."

Charlotte ATF agents have been put on standby to help with the investigation of Tuesday's attacks.

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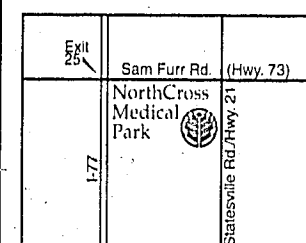
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Going the distance

The Mooresville Police Department, with a little help from some friends, went the distance for Special Olympics of North Carolina again this year, said Lt. Tina Fleming, who chairs the campaign for the department. Through a series of fundraising events — from selling Krispy Kreme doughnuts and sponsoring a car wash to participating in a Special Olympics Day at the Golden Corral restaurant — the department exceeded its goal of \$6,000, raising a total of \$6,500. Monies were also raised through the support of local businesses, donations and sales of Law Enforcement Torch Run T-shirts and hats. The proceeds from these events, according to Fleming (left) and Detective Jennifer Eagle, are given to Special Olympics of North Carolina. Fifteen percent remains in Iredell County to help with travel expenses and food and lodging costs for local athletes and their families. The Mooresville Fire Department also supported this year's campaign by participating in some of the fundraising events.

Police Blotter

Local law enforcement agencies reported the following recent charges and incidents:

MOORESVILLE POLICE

• Eight crepe myrtle trees were dug up and removed from a construction site on Timber Road sometime between noon on Sept. 5 and noon Sept. 12.

• A gas pipe was damaged and a gas fireplace was stolen from a home under construction on Grayland Road sometime between 5 p.m. on Sept. 7 and 5 p.m. on Sept. 11.

• A Cedar Street resident reported a U.S. flag had been taken off a pole in the front yard sometime between 10:30 p.m. on Sept. 14 and 9:30 a.m. on Sept. 15.

• On Sept. 15, Mooresville officers assisting an N.C. State trooper with a vehicle stop on N.C. 150, discovered the license tag and the vehicle, a 1996 Chevrolet Suburban, had been reported stolen.

According to reports, the truck was reported stolen on June 11 from Motors Insurance Corp. In Springfield, Tenn. The Notre Dame Police Department in South Bend, Ind., reported the Florida license tag had been stolen from the Notre Dame campus in Indiana on April 20.

Bryan Scott Crabtree, 21, of 1806 Simonton Road, Statesville was charged with possession of a stolen vehicle and possession of a stolen tag.

Three people were charged in connection with a fight at Mooresville Middle School following a football game Sept. 15.

According to reports, police were called to the parking lot at the middle school about a fight. Witnesses told police several individuals were talking and "tussling" at the football coach following the game when a woman joined the group and began arguing with the people talking to the coach.

The woman followed the individuals as they walked away, according to police, calling names and a fight broke out. A knife was found in the ground near the purse of one of the women involved.

Police charged Cheryl Clark McCullen, 37, of 117 Louise Drive; Michelle Renee Barnes, 31, of 741-C Kings Creek Apartments; and Kenya Nichole Howard, 16, of 482 W. Wilson Ave., each with simple assault. McCullen was also charged with possession of a weapon on school grounds.

Mooresville police filed the following recent charges: Matthew Joseph Crooks, 23, 122 E. Ontario Drive, possession of a stolen tag, possession of drug paraphernalia; Patrick Cevonda Hemphill, 29, 105-B Roanoke Drive, DWI, stop sign violation, no operator's license, speeding; Christopher Joseph Silva, 22, 900-402 W. Wilson Ave., DWI, improper passing; Cory Lee Lippard, 18, 418 Reynolda Road, Statesville, possession of less than one-half ounce Schedule VI controlled substance, carrying a concealed weapon; Jeannette Lynn McHargue, 32, 106 Autumn View Lane, possession of stolen property, obstructing and delaying a law enforcement officer; James Arthur Wilson, 42, 549-B Oak St., communicating threats;

Robert Wayne Udovich II, 23, 222 College St., contributing to the delinquency of a minor; Ellen Coffey, 54, 419 Clay St., trespassing; Angela Metcalf Martin, 20, 226 Dry Dock Loop, possession of drug paraphernalia; and Timothy Paul Mauldin, 19, 146 Chere Helen Drive, possession of cocaine.

Also, Erik Anthony Strazzabosco, 18, 130 Stafford Lane, assault and battery; Robert William Edsell Jr., 41, 304 Talbert Road, assault on a female, violation of a domestic violence protective order; Cynthia Diane Dulin, 43, 115 Red Oak Drive, larceny, possession of stolen goods, possession of drug paraphernalia, driving while license revoked; Scott Earl Rolston, 38, 191 Carlyle Road, Troutman, felonious breaking and entering, larceny; Rico Lamont Torrence, 18, 366 E. Mills Ave., assault inflicting serious injury; John Luther Patterson, 51, 187 Parks Drive, Davidson, shoplifting; Joshua Shawn Sherrill, 26, 1346 Mt. Ulla Highway, possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia; Willie Carlton Stumpert, 29, of Hemingway, S.C., DWI, DWI by a provisionally licensed; Mario Mattias Garcia, 21, 900-3 W. Wilson Ave., resisting, obstructing and delaying a law enforcement officer, possession of marijuana; and Katrina Lynne Link, 25, of Huntersville, DWI, driving while license revoked.

Man sought in robbery

Police are continuing to investigate an armed robbery that occurred outside the Dollar General Store on Plaza Drive on Aug. 31.

Mooresville-South Iredell Crime Stoppers is offering a reward for information about the robbery that may lead to the arrest of the individual involved. Callers do not have to give their identity or appear in court and rewards of up to \$1,000 are possible.

According to reports, police received a call about an armed robbery at the Dollar General Store. Around 9:15 p.m., the manager was walking to her car after closing when a man approached her wearing a winter coat and a ski mask and showing a handgun. The man took the store's night deposit bag and then left on foot.

Anyone with information about either robbery should call Detective Dana Blalock at the police department, 704-664-8045 or Crime Stoppers at 704-663-7066.

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