

News Release

Dear John Campaign Leads to the First Convictions for Soliciting a Prostitute in Monroe County in 20 Years

(July 6, 2009) A grassroots effort to reduce prostitution in the Lyell Avenue area of Rochester has succeeded in the first criminal convictions of “johns” in an estimated 20 years. At a public meeting today, the Lyell Avenue Area 230 Group thanked Monroe County District Attorney Mike Green and Rochester Police Department Chief David Moore for their efforts to control prostitution on Lyell Ave. Area. At the meeting, law enforcement officials told the neighborhood group about the recent convictions of two men for soliciting prostitutes in the Lyell Ave. area.

According to Rochester Police Chief David Moore, “In March, 2009, during a police operation, three men were arrested for soliciting prostitutes in the Lyell Avenue area. These men were jailed and arraigned in City Court the next day.”

On June 19, 2009, Frank Vicaretti was sentenced to 1 year conditional discharge and a \$200 surcharge for his conviction of “patronizing a prostitute in the third degree.” A second man is scheduled be sentenced on July 8, 2009. A third man arrested for patronizing a prostitute did not appear for his hearing and a bench warrant was issued for his arrest.

According to District Attorney Mike Green, “It is now the policy of the Office of the District Attorney of the Monroe County that “johns” arrested for prostitution will be prosecuted under Section 230 of the Penal Law of New York State. This should serve as a warning to men who solicit prostitutes that there are serious legal consequences for their actions.”

People arrested for patronizing prostitutes have previously been allowed to plead guilty to disorderly conduct, a violation. The district attorney’s office held several meetings with residents earlier this year and decided that would pursue convictions for the misdemeanor charge of patronizing a prostitute.

Rochester Police Chief Moore added, “RPD recognizes that the street prostitution on Lyell Ave. Area is detrimental to the quality of life in that neighborhood. It is bad for the legitimate businesses located on Lyell Ave. It is harmful to the adults and children who have to witness this behavior. RPD is committed to work with the residents on this problem”.

The Lyell Ave. Area 230 Group was formed in 2006 to help reduce the negative impact of prostitution in the neighborhood. The group posts information about its activities on its website at www.lyell230.org. The group meets at Charles Settlement House, located at 71 Parkway, Rochester, 14608. The chairman of the group is Van Smith of Recovery Houses of Rochester. The co-chairman is Dr. Andrew Doniger, Director, Monroe County Department of Public Health.

In the fall of 2008, the Lyell Ave Area 230 Group sponsored the ***Dear John Campaign***. With grant funding from the City of Rochester, the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, and other sources, the group created posters and billboards that informed local “Johns” that the behavior of soliciting prostitutes on Lyell Ave. was unwelcome and would not be tolerated. The Advertising Council of Rochester helped create the communications plan that led to the Dear John Campaign. As part of the campaign, the Lyell Ave. 230 Group pledged to the neighbors that the names of Johns convicted of prostitution would be posted on the website.

For more information about the Lyell Avenue Area 230 Group, visit the website at www.lyell230.org or send an email to info@lyell230.org.