

They're everywhere

OU police use personal touch to cut crime

One of the darkest days for public safety at Oakland University was March 4, 1995, when a mathematics professor was beaten senseless and left for dead.

So when a press release touts a 15 percent reduction in crime at OU, perhaps the most logical question is this: Is the reduction in crime linked to changes initiated after that assault?

Surprisingly, the answer is "Not really," from Lt. Mel Gilroy, commanding officer of the 18-member campus police department.

The assault on Stuart Wang in O'Dowd Hall was a painful experience for Gilroy. Not only did it jar the campus community and focus public attention on safety measures at OU, the mathematics professor was a personal acquaintance of Gilroy's.

But after double checking department policies and protocol, "we realized there wasn't much we could have done to prevent it," said Gilroy.

Good police work lead to the capture of Wang's assailants who were subsequently convicted of attempted murder. But good police work could not have prevented the crime, said Gilroy.

"No environment is totally free of danger," said Gilroy. "That's one of the problems we have on campus — convincing people to be careful, to take common sense precautions."

The one change Gilroy said is directly related to the assault is the installation of pay telephones with a 911 button that instantaneously links the caller to the police dispatcher. Other than that, the department procedures remain pretty much in tact.

Keeping to procedures

With those procedures, Gilroy said, it's not surprising that crime at OU was down by 15 percent as reported last month.

But while Gilroy was happy with that report, he was also among the first to note that crime statistics are not necessarily the most reliable indicators. "They can go up or down with no apparent rhyme or reason," he said. "If you get a thief living in one of the dorms, for example, reports of stolen property can skyrocket."

When reporters and others ask about statistics, Gilroy turns to the steps his department has implemented over the years independently of the Wang assault.

It made sense, for example, to put some patrol officers on bicycles. Cops on bikes are faster and more mobile than their counterparts in squad cars. "And they're everywhere," said Gilroy.

It made sense to free up patrol officers by hiring student cadets

'You see them (campus police) everywhere...it gives me a sense of well-being.'

*John Kelly
— assistant professor*

to do routine chores like checking doors and escorting coeds after hours.

"Most of what we do is routine," said Nicholas Kroll, a junior from Orionville majoring in criminal justice. He's one of nine radio-carrying student cadets who provided additional eyes and ears for the department last year.

"But it's the best paying job on campus," said Kroll, who made \$7 per hour.

Technology helps

Technology — or as Gilroy describes it, "computers, computers and more computers" — is an important part of OU campus security. Dispatchers, for example, have a computerized circuit television system that enables them to survey many parts of the mile-square campus.

"If we see something suspicious in a building or a parking lot," said Sgt. Richard Tomezak, "we can zoom in and, if necessary, dispatch a squad car. The system enables us to videotape an incident (useful evidence in court) and to provide the responding officer with updated information."

Asked to summarize the department's core philosophy, Gilroy didn't hesitate. He quickly responded, "We do community policing better than most communities."

OU police, for example, represent authority, he said. "But we also encourage students, faculty and administrators to look on our officers as people who are genuinely concerned about their welfare."

This fall, for example, officers will offer a class on the prevention of sexual assault. Students with a casual interest will be reminded of basic precautions — such as the "buddy system," or going places in pairs. Students who are more concerned can take hands-on self defense classes.

"We're there," Gilroy said. "We want students, the faculty and everybody else (including would-be robbers and rapists) to know that we're all over the place."

That police presence is reassuring, said assistant professor John Kelly, who teaches political science. "You see them (police officers) everywhere. I often work late, and it gives me a sense of well-being. I imagine it's the same for students."



Bike man on campus: Oakland University patrol officer Terry Ross makes his way on bicycle around classrooms and dorms. Video surveillance, bike patrols and emergency phones are considered factors in a decrease in campus crime.



Keeping an eye on things: Officer David Birkholz checks the video screens to make sure the campus is safe.

Commander began campus career as student

When OU campus police commander Melvin Gilroy came to Oakland University in 1989, the

was a student majoring in Chinese history.

The campus — then with 7,000 students — was undergoing something of a crime wave.

"There were a lot of thefts," he said. "and some unrest."



Gilroy

Gilroy, then a student dispatcher, remembers being the 14th person on the OU campus when he was hired and sent to the police academy. "It was a big career change," he said, but one that lead to a fulfilling career.

OU is bigger now — with almost 15,000 students expected this fall. Gilroy is currently the commanding officer of the OU police department that currently has 16 officers, including four women.

The newest hires are Ellen Kord, a former state trooper from Alaska, and Troy Scott, formerly of Brownstown Township in downriver Detroit.

Gilroy and his wife Jennifer —

who works on campus — live in Rochester Hills with their three children. A daughter attends OU part time and the couple's twins, graduating from Rochester Adams High School, expect to enroll this fall, he said.

Gilroy has supplemented his OU courses with a number of specialized law enforcement courses such as the FBI leadership conference in Chicago. One course on fraud and financial crimes offered by the treasury department was extremely helpful when campus police handled the case of an OU employee who embezzled more than \$40,000.

The time he invested studying Chinese was helpful in 1985, Gilroy said, when he in the con-

tingent of law enforcement officers invited to mainland China as part of the People to People Program.

"We were guests of the Ministry for Public Security," Gilroy, "and we were treated like diplomats. We stayed in the same hotel where (President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry) Kissinger stayed" during the president's historic visit.

Gilroy had a return trip to mainland China in 1986, and he expects to go again next year — this time focusing on potential trade relations.

He's part of an OU contingent working with county officials to promote international trade.

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GOLF OUTING
Reservations are being accepted through July 11 for the 5th annual Judson Center/Superior Carpet Golf Outing on Saturday, July 26 at Fern Hill Country Club, Clinton Township. The

NATURE WALKS
The Southeast Michigan Group Sierra Club has scheduled nature walk for Sunday, June 28 at Huron Meadows. There is a park entrance fee and a \$1 trip fee for the event. For more information, call (810) 294-7789.

MATH CAMP
Registrations are being accepted for Oakland University's free mathematics camp for gifted pre-college students. The 1998 Summer

Mathematics Institute meets June 29 to Aug. 7. Students can earn college credit for the program. Classes are taught by full-time OU faculty members. To register, or for additional information, call program coordinator Marc Lipman at (248) 370-3430. Students can also inquire about the program by fax at (248) 370-1184 or by e-mail at lipman@oakland.edu.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
Oakland County 4-H Clubs are joining with Habitat for Humanity to raise money to construct houses in the Pontiac area. 4-H youngsters will build Lego houses to call attention to the Hab-

itat for Humanity program. They seek sponsors to help them acquire Lego materials. For additional information, call (248) 858-0889.

4H SUMMER
Registration has begun for summer 4H programs offered through the Michigan State University Extension. Programs are designed for students from preschool through fifth grade. They will meet June to August. Program offerings range from dinosaurs to Native American languages to agriculture and science. For more information, call the Oakland County 4H office, (248) 858-0889.

SMART TALK

NEWS & NOTES FROM SMART

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