

Center pledges cooperation after shooting

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer isn't taking any excuses from the management of the Mercy Center following last Friday's incident in which two teenage boys were shot.

But a meeting with Mercy Center officials Monday led to a willingness to cooperate with police in the future and to cancel any future event, if necessary, Dwyer said.

Dwyer maintained that the center had plenty of time to notify and summon Hills police for extra security when the 200 expected partygoers swelled to 400 by 10 p.m.

Norma Todd, manager of operations at Mercy, said that as late as 10:40 p.m. the situation was under control.

Although the flier announcing the "Shake What Ya Mama Gave Ya Jam" dance promised "full security," Dwyer questioned that.

"We always provide additional security (when asked)," Dwyer said. "Mercy has a responsibility to

POLICE

notify the police department. I think they were somewhat negligent in their responsibility. There was the potential there for problems. We didn't expect this."

Mercy officials told Dwyer Monday that organizers did not live up to their end of the contract, signed June 10, which required one adult chaperone for every eight teens. Only 150 people were expected, Todd said.

The organizers will be held liable, she said, adding that Mercy officials never saw the flier.

"I'm not as critical of Mercy as I was Saturday," Dwyer said after the meeting.

Victims hospitalized

Detroiters Eric Leslie Coleman, 16, and Henry Cookley, 19, remained hospitalized in Hotchkiss General Hospital Monday. Coleman was listed in stable condition and Cookley in serious condition, according to Margo Gorchow, administrator of community relations.

Police are seeking two suspects, but no further information was available about them.

Monday Dwyer said that Hills police plan to charge a 20-year-old Illinois resident who lists an address at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor with malicious destruction of property.

"Three police officers witnessed him punch out a door window," Dwyer said.

A police report indicates that the suspect approached the east exit of the center and hit the glass three times. "When he struck the glass, he cut himself severely in the right wrist and forearm," the report said.

He was taken to St. Mary hospital where a physician determined he should undergo surgery, the report said. "He was treated and released Saturday," the report said.

Hills police were assisted by police officers from West Bloomfield, Southfield, Farmington and Franklin and by the Michigan State Police.

"Without their assistance, we might not have as

quickly contained the situation," Dwyer said.

The first 911 call came at 10:50 p.m., Dwyer said. "It was spontaneous," he added. "Within a minute, there were a series of four calls, reporting first that there was a disturbance in the gym and then that two persons had just been shot."

Police find panic

Police arrived to find panic and pandemonium in the parking lot with people rushing to get away.

"I don't think it was inappropriate for these officers to enter with their guns drawn," Dwyer said. "If it were me, I would have entered with my gun drawn, too."

Hills police learned that a man waving a gun in the auditorium where the dance was held sparked the fearful reaction. Hills police entered not knowing where or how many guns were in the building, Dwyer said.

Police also found evidence of alcohol and drug use in the parking lot, but not inside, Dwyer said. The contract provided for no food service.

Party organizers dismayed over incident

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The three young Southfield men who organized the party at Mercy Center last Friday are "good kids," according to one of their mothers who booked the event.

That's why Linda Harris had no qualms about signing the contract for a party that would serve as their last get-together, "the last good time" for her son, Ken, who's headed for Clark University in Atlanta, Ga., on a

basketball scholarship, and his two friends, Louis and Sean Johnson (no relation), who will attend Kent State University in Ohio on football scholarships.

The youths, recent graduates of Birmingham's Brother Rice High school, have been friends since grade school, according to Linda Harris.

"My son is so hurt by the incident," Linda Harris said. "He never wants to have another party again. Never."

Linda Harris, who was at the party when it began at 8 p.m., had just left to take the admission money home.

"That's when I got the call that something was wrong," Linda Harris said. "I had been in and out (of the building) all night long."

She expected mostly seniors to be attendees.

Linda Harris doesn't feel that she should have any liability for what happened at Mercy Center — espe-

cially because the shootings occurred outside the building.

"We had chaperones," Linda Harris said. "We had 10 (volunteer) security guards (ages 28-35). They weren't kids. They were big, muscular men (bouncer types). But 10 chaperones don't mean anything to a panicked crowd."

She doesn't know who the man was who later came into the building with a gun.

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