

# Herald

Thursday, September 8, 2005

3 Sections with Supplements ♦ 32 Pages ◀

## New guards have hit the streets

By ELIZABETH SEAL

Without much fanfare, Cranston's new crossing guards began manning their intersections when local Catholic schools started class last week.

Things are still a little tense — there's been rumors that the new guards may face interference from the old guards when public schools open this week — but NESCTC president and founder Michael Malloy is confident that his people will rise to the challenge.

Malloy, a retired Pawtucket Police sergeant, started NESCTC Security Agency after he retired from the force. The company handles all types of security jobs, from records security to elderly housing security, but this is its first foray into manning school crossings.

"We were not looking for this market," Malloy said. "To our knowledge, nobody privatizes this on the east coast."

The reason NESCTC even applied when the city put out a request for bids last winter was because Malloy



**CROSS HERE:** Doreen Golde helps students at St. Paul's cross Broad Street while working as an NESCTC crossing guard Tuesday afternoon. (Cranston Herald photo by Diana Thovmasian)

lives in Cranston and wanted to make sure the job was done properly. In doing so, he agreed to enter virgin territory by creating a training program and a professional team of privatized crossing guards

that would do the job as well as the old, unionized guards — something that many ex-guards told the city couldn't be done.

■ GUARDS - PAGE 6

## ■ Guards

(Continued from page 1)

Malloy isn't sure yet whether the financials will pencil out but, as he pointed out, he didn't take this job to make a fortune.

"Is this a moneymaker for me? No," he said. "It had more to do with supporting the community."

In order to get a group of guards that were as invested in the community as possible – a quality Malloy finds indispensable – NESCTC did a block-by-block recruitment of the local neighborhoods and even invited the former crossing guards to apply. He didn't get quite the response he wanted – "Honestly, I'm surprised I didn't get 500 people," Malloy said – but, in the end, 33 out of the 37 current guards are Cranston residents. In addition, nearly all the supervisors – the guards that double as core group supervisors and an office-base sergeant – are former crossing guards or guard alternates.

Malloy plans to continue hiring until he gets a staff of 50 guards. That way, if someone quits or calls in sick, he has a trained guard waiting in the wings to replace him or her.

The guards are paid on a daily basis – approximately \$30 a

day depending on how long they work. They also have the opportunity to buy into a discounted health insurance program after 90 days.

Raises are subject to negotiation with the city, but Malloy said his practice is to build cost of living increases into all of his employees' salaries.

NESCTC has signed a three-year contract with the city for a little less than \$350,000 a year. However, Malloy said he plans to be up-front with the city if the foray into privatization isn't working as anticipated.

"If this could work better in-house, I'll tell them," Malloy said.

In the meantime, however, NESCTC is making sure the guards are doing their job and exceeding community expectations. Malloy said the company put together its own training package using input from crossing guards from other cities. Guards are trained in how to handle children, including how to "verbally defuse aggressive behavior," but are also given advance training that includes how to respond if an accident involving special hazards occurs near their area.

"Obviously CPR, First Aid was a priority," Malloy said.

The company also plans to launch a Web site within the

next 30 days to solicit feedback from residents and parents.

"We're going to invite the good, bad and ugly from the public," Malloy said. "I need that communication; I need that feedback."

The only thing Malloy didn't get to do was run a national background check on his new employees. He was able to run them all through the local system but because, under state law, crossing guards aren't considered childcare workers, Malloy wasn't given access to the national database. As a former police officer, that frustrated Malloy.

"I would prefer having the same access as anyone else handling kids," he said.

Even though he said he was comfortable with his current staff, Malloy said something needs to change at a state level so he can hire people who have recently moved to the state and be as confident about them as the people who have lived here their whole lives.

"These are the bugs that need to be worked out," he said.

The one thing Malloy is not concerned about is what happens if a judge overturns the city's decision to fire the unionized crossing guards. Malloy said he spent 15 years negotiating on behalf of the Fraternal Order of Police and holds no grudge against unions. If the judge orders the old crossing guards back to work, Malloy said he'll fold his tent and leave willingly.

Nevertheless, until that happens, he hopes the rumors of continuing conflict between the old guards and the new does not continue and interfere with the job his employees are trying to do.

"I'm hoping the union officials will adhere to the court ruling," Malloy said.