

Sending out an SOS

And it's not just for the city, but for York County's entire ship of state.

Daily Record/Sunday News

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Sep 9, 2007 — News item No. 1, page 1C, York Daily Record, Sept. 7: Four people were charged after a melee involving a baseball bat, a samurai sword and a pit bull outside a bar Aug. 25. Police said the fight involved seven to nine people. Police found several people lying on the sidewalk following the alleged drunken brawl.

News item No. 2, page 4C, York Daily Record, Sept. 7: A 19-year-old and a 17-year-old were arrested in Brevard County, Fla., accused of conducting an interstate crime spree that ended with a bomb scare and the evacuation of an apartment complex. Police said the men left York County for nude beaches in Miami, and admitted to numerous thefts of food, gas and other goods on the way south.

All the people facing charges in the above two items must from York city, right?

Absent information about the suspects' places of residence, it's a safe bet that many readers assumed so. After all, York is where all the crime happens. That's the misguided belief of far too many in York County.

For a bitter taste of that attitude, just go to ydr.com, click on any crime story, scroll to the bottom, click on "comments," and chances are dismayingly good that you'll find vitriolic, often racist rants about "the city."

"The city" is a cesspool of crime. "The city" is nothing but drug dealers. City police are ineffective. Many incessantly harp on the race of suspects.

The people who anonymously share their opinions about "the city" jump to conclusions, blame the victims and generally exhibit a hard-hearted attitude toward York. It's disheartening to read these comments by smug suburbanites who just want to vilify the city. It's as if they're rooting for the city to fail. As if "being right" about the city's many problems somehow immunizes their neighborhoods from similar fates.

A representative of the Pennsylvania Economy League recently likened such people to a guy in a leaking rowboat saying to the person seated next to him, "Hey, your side of the boat is sinking." They don't seem to get that York County is one big vessel. If part of it sinks, it's just a matter of time before the rest goes under.

Granted, the York bashers have no shortage of evidence that the city is troubled. York has suffered several homicides in recent days. It has drug problems, property-crime problems and quality-of-life problems. It has financial problems, poverty problems, education problems.

But what are the city's critics doing to help? Not much. On the contrary, they're gleefully punching rhetorical holes in its hull.

They should be encouraging their municipal leaders to partner with the city to create regional police departments - or at least share more resources. They should be lobbying their elected leaders to help. For instance: York desperately needs more police officers. It's applying for federal Weed and Seed grant money - funding that it has been denied in recent years. U.S. Rep. Todd Platts needs to do everything in his power to secure that money - and constituents across the

county should call and tell him so.

But beyond that, York - and other small Pennsylvania cities - need more baseline funding from the state to shore up police budgets. York's impoverished tax base simply cannot afford all the police the city needs. And the people in surrounding municipalities can't afford to let that situation continue.

In fairness, many in our community do recognize the importance of helping the city. The YorkCounts and Metro York initiatives come immediately to mind - and there are many other such efforts out there.

It's time for those people to raise their voices and counter some of the negativity expressed toward the city. It might be tempting to dismiss the city bashers as just a few racist loudmouths.

Perhaps. Or perhaps they're the tip of an iceberg that might rip a gash in an already leaking hull.

P.S. The melee in news item No. 1 took place in Wrightsville. The suspects in item No. 2 were from Red Lion.

Hey, Red Lion and Wrightsville: Your side of the boat is sinking.

RECENT SUBURBAN CRIME INCIDENTS

- A 14-year-old boy was arrested after attempting to rape a 22-year-old Hanover woman in North Codorus Township, according to Southwestern Regional Police.

Police allege that, at 6 p.m. Tuesday, the boy - who was not identified and is being charged as a juvenile - rode a motorbike past the woman, who was jogging in the 1800 block of Haar Road in North Codorus Township.

After passing her several times, he stopped, got off the motorbike, forced the woman to the ground and attempted to rape her, according to police.

- Police are investigating whether a trucker arrested in Massachusetts in July has ties to two attacks in York and Dauphin counties.

They join authorities in New Jersey and North Carolina who are also investigating whether he is connected to unsolved crimes. He is being investigated in Pennsylvania as a person of interest in a slashing attack on a 37-year-old woman in her Conewago Township home July 17, Pennsylvania State Police said.

- A Chanceford Township woman is accused of having a sexual relationship with a teenager, state police said.

Heather D. Sites, 23, of the first block of Maidstone Avenue was charged with corruption of minors and harassment Thursday, according to court documents.

Police allege Sites had a consensual sexual relationship with a 17-year-old boy, and gave the boy and his friend alcohol and drugs.

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