Vandalism, drugs, fights top list in Stouffville

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something suspicious, they become the first point of contact.

A foot patrol officer's job is a delicate balance between public relations with businesses and the locals, while ensuring those breaking the law are dealt with appropriately.

"The law is the law," Const. Musso said.

"Being out walking and biking is brilliant," said Const. Saunders, who has been with the York Regional Police for 22 years in various departments, including air support. "The vehicle is the biggest barrier introduced to policing. ... We see things we do not see in a car."

'LAW IS THE LAW'

Two of the most common infractions the officers witness on Main Street are drivers talking on their cellphones or not wearing seatbelts.

Before leaving the cafe for a walk along Main Street, Const. Musso predicted he would see multiple seatbelt infractions by the drivers of trucks and pickup trucks.

Within 10 minutes, about 10 drivers and passengers, in trucks and pickups, were spotted not wearing seatbelts.

Within 10 minutes, about 10 to ensure the traile drivers and passengers, in trucks secured to the truck. and pickups, were spotted not lt was the driver wearing seatbelts.

- his trailer was secured.

Some days the officers pull every



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHEIDT

York Regional Police constables Sal Musso (right) and Dave Saunders speak to the owner of a pickup truck on Main Street in Stouffville Wednesday morning. The officers cycled from Markham where they also patrol areas on foot and bicycle.

single non-law-abiding driver over for a chat and maybe a ticket. Other times, as on this day, it was all about the friendly warning being yelled through the open vehicle window as it goes by, with most drivers immediately reaching for the seatbelt and waving back to the officers.

One driver, however, had to be pulled over. He had no seatbelt on and his trailer full of curbside treasures was overflowing.

While Const. Musso explained to the man why he was pulled over, Const. Saunders checked to ensure the trailer was safely secured to the truck.

It was the driver's lucky day

- his trailer was secure and he was
let off with just a warning.

Const. Musso said their goal is not to ruin people's lives "but at the same time, we want to make sure they're learning from the experience".

"Everybody's got a story," Const.
Saunders said. "Why did (he or she) smoke the joint today?"

By dealing with the cause and not just the end result, which is where the officers usually come in, Const. Saunders said this is more helpful then just hauling them off to jail and putting them through the court system.

When the two constables started this particular incarnation of the foot patrol unit, which also includes Main Street Unionville, Main Street Markham, the Pacific Mall and Markville, they

had one goal in mind: intelligence gathering.

Area kids, according to
Const. Saunders, have also
been known to get into
garages looking for golf
gear they can sell and then
use that money to buy
drugs.

"Everybody knows something and if they don't know it, one of their friends does," Const. Saunders said. "There is information to be learned and gathered by every facet of the community."

Unlike some towns where criminal activity is high, Stouffville by comparison, is relatively quiet.

The majority of incidents the two constables deal with involve drugs, fighting, vandalism and "drunken stupidity".

As of late, it has been garbage cans being knocked over in the middle of the night along Main Street.

'DRUNKEN STUPIDITY'

Area kids, according to Const. Saunders, have also been known to get into garages looking for golf gear they can sell and then use that money to buy drugs.

"People are worried (if) their property is safe," he said of residents' biggest fears.



