

DAILY NEWS

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FACES & PLACES

Gentle giant becomes a nemesis of muggers

By JACK LEAHY

AT 6-FOOT-6 and with almost 200 pounds of muscle, Kevin Keefe, 34, of Jamaica has become an awesome foe of street muggers. During the past year, he has participated in thwarting five robberies, most of them near his 160th St. apartment.

In recognition of his efforts, Keefe has received a commendation from the Jamaica Hill Community Association "for demonstration of social concern and citizenship and for special efforts to maintain the welfare of the community."

Keefe, a member of the Sri Chinmoy Center in Jamaica, credits the philosophy of Chinmoy, which stresses physical fitness and social concern, for his motivation in coming to the aid of so many victims without fear for his own safety.

"I also want to give special attention to the police, who on two occasions responded quickly to calls for assistance and offered their support," Keefe said.

"I know that ours is a big neighborhood to cover," he added. "The number of calls received by our police makes it difficult to be everywhere they are needed."

Keefe, a jogger who does a 26.2-mile marathon in 3½ hours, caught one alleged mugger recently with the aid of

his two roommates, Scott Shamesman, 28, and Matthew Hogan, 31.

"I was coming up Normal Road where it leads into 160th St., when I heard someone screaming and hollering," said Keefe, a supervisory office employe at the United Nations.

"At first, I thought it was a family quarrel, but then these two guys started running away and a third guy was yelling, 'Stop, thief.' I took off after them and we raced for about a quarter of a mile before one of them just kind of collapsed with exhaustion. The other mugger jumped into a car and got away."

At the same time, Shamesman and Hogan, who were in the area at the time, heard the commotion and ran to Keefe's aid, not that the towering man seemed to need much help. A 14-year-old boy, who also had joined the chase on his bicycle, spotted a handgun sticking out of a pocket of the alleged mugger and warned the three men.

"We took the gun off the guy," Keefe said. "When his victim came on the scene, he (the victim) still had an impression mark on his forehead where the mugger had stuck the gun barrel on him."

On another recent occasion, Keefe was asleep in his bedroom when he heard noises being made by three car strippers on the street outside. "I woke up my roommates (Shamesman and Hogan) and we caught one of them after he threatened us with a tire iron,"

Keefe said.

Despite the danger of his spontaneous rescue work, Keefe said he hasn't given any thought to arming himself with a weapon.

"I don't think that's necessary," the easy-going giant said.

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