



HILLSDALE POLICE DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release:

Hillsdale Cops Solve Purse Snatching Pattern with Emerson Cops

On the evening of May 13, 2010, and again on May 14, 2010, two separate purse thefts were reported to the Hillsdale Police. In both instances, women who were shopping at a local supermarket reported that their purses had been stolen from them. During the first incident on May 13, an elderly woman left her purse in her shopping cart, and while her back was turned, a man quietly removed it and absconded. During the second occasion, the victim's purse was also inside of her shopping cart; however it was secured in the woman's cart by its strap. When the man attempted to remove it, he was unsuccessful and fled. Unfortunately, the store surveillance footage did not capture a useable image of the suspect or his getaway vehicle in either case.

On the morning of May 15, 2010, Police Sergeant Joe Mazzeo was reviewing local police intelligence bulletins and came across information provided by the Emerson Police Department describing a similar purse snatching at an Emerson supermarket. This incident occurred within a congruent timeframe as the Hillsdale incidents. Information in the bulletin included photos of the unknown male suspect taken by security cameras inside the establishment. Sergeant Mazzeo recognized the man's picture as Matthew G. Saunders, 44, formerly of Simsbury, Connecticut, and currently of Hillsdale. Sergeant Mazzeo alerted the other police officers working on Saturday morning to be on the lookout for him.

A short time later, Police Officer Adam Hampton was on routine patrol in the center of Hillsdale when he spotted Saunders. Saunders was promptly stopped and detained by Officer Hampton. With assistance from Sergeant Mazzeo, Saunders was ultimately taken into custody and transferred to the Emerson Police Department. There he was charged him with theft of the purse in Emerson and lodged in the Bergen County Jail in lieu of \$2,500 bail.

Through further investigation led by Hillsdale Detective Sergeant Bob Francaviglia, it was revealed that Saunders was also responsible for the two original incidents in Hillsdale on May 13 and May 14, 2010. As such, one additional count of theft, a crime of the third degree, and one count of attempted theft of a purse, a crime of the fourth degree, were filed in this matter with a bail of \$5,000. Saunders remains incarcerated at the Bergen County Jail, pending his arraignment on May 18, 2010.

Chief Stalter states that all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Chief Stalter would like to recognize the Emerson Police Department, under the direction of Police Chief Michael Saudino, for their excellent work in this matter. Further, Chief Stalter commends the professionalism and diligence of Detective Sergeant Francaviglia, Sergeant Mazzeo and Officer Hampton, saying, "Their individual contributions to this arrest were invaluable, and illustrate the benefit of coordination among various law enforcement agencies within Bergen County, across New Jersey, and throughout the United States."

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The origin of the Hillsdale Police Department dates back to as early as 1898, when a single constable patrolled the town. The first regular police department for the borough was incorporated in 1921. Currently, the Hillsdale Police Department is under the direction of Police Chief Chip Stalter, with a complement of 20 police officers who range in assignment and rank. From Patrol Officers and Detectives, to School Resource and D.A.R.E Officers, the Hillsdale Police Department has an affirmative organizational focus on community-oriented policing strategies. 365 days per year, Hillsdale Police Officers serve almost 11,000 residents; they patrol 54 linear miles of consecutive streets under their jurisdiction; and they respond to nearly 14,000 calls, requests or referrals from the public annually.