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Stalker Claims Unsettle Police

by Anthony G. Attrino

Detectives are questioning a former Verona resident who has been handing out fliers claiming a large, organized group of stalkers is targeting residents and business owners with the objective of destroying their lives.

“Their intention is to murder their target without getting their hands dirty. It’s the perfect hate crime.” states the flier, which is titled “A Community Secret Revealed: Organized Stalking is Thriving in NJ.”

The one-page flier concludes, “Your neighbor, Frank Raffaele” and gives a Pine Brook address.

Raffaele, 51, is a former Verona resident who moved years ago but resurfaced in recent weeks to hand out fliers, according to police. He has dropped them off in businesses across the township and left the papers in doors and fences in Verona, Caldwell and Pine Brook.

“He’s scaring people,” said police Chief Doug Huber. “It doesn’t make any sense, it’s unsubstantiated and it’s frightening some people.”

Patrol officers and detectives have questioned Raffaele on several occasions. One detective asked him to stop handing out the fliers.

Reached by phone on Tuesday, Raffaele said he has no intention of stopping.

“I’m exercising my First Amendment right at free speech,” Raffaele said. “I want to inform people and raise awareness on this subject. These people do exist and it’s a big problem.”

The flier states that group stalking is a method of harassment by a large group of people, often in the hundreds, against a sole individual.

“The process starts when the group selects a target,” the flier states.

“Once the selection is made an expert campaign of character assassination begins with the intention of isolating the person from the community.”

“He’s getting people excited, especially in light of what happened,” said Police Capt. Fred DiStefano, referring to the Feb. 22 robbery and shooting of gas station attendant Daniel Pritchard.

Pritchard, 29, was killed at the Claridge Sunoco on Pompton Avenue. Two suspects have been arrested, jailed and charged with murder in his death.

DiStefano said there is no connection between Pritchard's shooting and Raffaele or his fliers.

Police have not charged Raffaele with a crime, saying it appears to be within his legal rights to hand out the literature.

"There's no law that we could come up with" against it, DiStefano said.

Still, detectives have questioned Raffaele at least twice – in person and on the phone.

And Verona police have taken the unusual step in recent days of including Raffaele's letter in their police blotter, calling the stalking claims unsubstantiated.

The blotter, along with a copy of the flier, was faxed to the Times on Monday morning.

"He's disgruntled, but what he's disgruntled about we don't know," the police chief said.

The flier states the stalkers are professionals, both paid and unpaid, full and part-time.

"The unpaid stalkers are usually neighbors who have been recruited as a result of a successful smear campaign," the flier states. "They naively think they are doing a good deed. Harassment techniques are infinite."

The flier contains the Internet addresses of three Web sites with information and video about gang stalking, and general information about who the victims have been. In one video, the narrator discusses the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, former President Ronald Reagan and the practices of Scientology.

The video further states that community police watch groups, church groups and gay activists "might actively follow, harass, and assist in the torture and occasional murder of targeted individuals that are total strangers. ..."

"I think this is a serious issue," Raffaele said.

Huber said Raffaele has no history of arrest.

Asked whether Raffaele might be dangerous, Huber said, "He's never given anybody a hard time – we don't believe he's dangerous."

DiStefano asked that anyone who receives a "stalker" flier from Raffaele call police. He said detectives will continue to question Raffaele if they receive complaints.