

Dogs try again to sniff out missing girl

By GLENN CHAPMAN
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

The Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook was sealed off yesterday afternoon as trained dogs from the Transit Police Department Canine Patrol were used to try to sniff out some trace of Jennifer Schweiger.

Holly Ann Hughes' sister, Patty, has joined the search for the 12-year-old Westerleigh girl, who has been missing since July 9, according to Bob Cacciola, president of Richmond County R.E.A.C.T. and Friends of Children.

Holly Ann Hughes is one of

three other missing Staten Island children police believe may have disappeared under similar circumstances.

The search of the SIDC grounds yesterday did not turn up any clues to the girl's whereabouts, according to Lt. John Carlo, supervisor of the canine patrol.

"We sent two teams in and searched a wooded area behind Building 49," the lieutenant said. "One of the psychics had keyed in on the area. We did some searching and digging, but found nothing that would indicate a crime or criminal activity, and no indica-

tion she was there."

Under Carlo's direction, Officer Louis Rivera and Sgt. Ed Solomon each stalked the dense, tick-filled woods with trained German shepherds from noon to 3 p.m.

The dogs and their handlers, part of the largest canine patrol in the state, were called in by local police. They had been used to help search the miles of subterranean passageways at the SIDC facility a week earlier.

Using some items of Jennifer's provided by the girl's parents, the German shepherds, yesterday were familiarized with her scent

and scoured the area trying to find anything she may have touched, authorities said. The dogs are also trained in "cadaver search," or scenting dead bodies, according to police.

"You have to get there right after the incident to have the best shot at (finding something)," Carlo said. "Now, we are looking for anything with her scent on it."

Law enforcement agencies citywide have been helping with the search, coordinating their efforts through Island police. Police

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throughout the city have been issued photographs of the girl, according to Detective Joseph McComville of the Police Department's Public Information Division.

"There have been a lot of psychics with all different theories," Carlo said yesterday. "It is very difficult to try to sort it out."

Results released on tests of a substance found smeared on a wall in one of the SIDC buildings indicated the substance was not blood, according to Lt. Louis Fiori of the Crimes Against Property Squad. Similar tests done on residue found in a sink in the building showed that a small amount of blood had been in the basin.

Investigators last night were still waiting for the police lab to determine if the blood was animal or human, and if human, what type, authorities said.

Jennifer, her hair in pigtails and dressed in a pink "Sesame Street" shirt and multicolored striped shorts, was last seen in the company of a man police described as possibly being "emotionally disturbed." The man is described as 5 feet 11 inches tall, had a slim build and a bald spot on the back of his head.

Jennifer has Down's syndrome and a congenital heart ailment.

Police have received many calls at their 24-hour hotline number, 447-4168, but no sightings aside from several on July 9 have

been confirmed, Fiore said.

"There have been no solid connections," the lieutenant said.

Acting on tips from psychics, members of a volunteer group called the Friends of Jennifer searched through Baron Hirsch Cemetery yesterday afternoon, and had planned to hunt through Goodhue Park in the evening.

Member of R.E.A.C.T. took to the Stapleton area late yesterday afternoon to search for Jennifer, according to Cacciola.

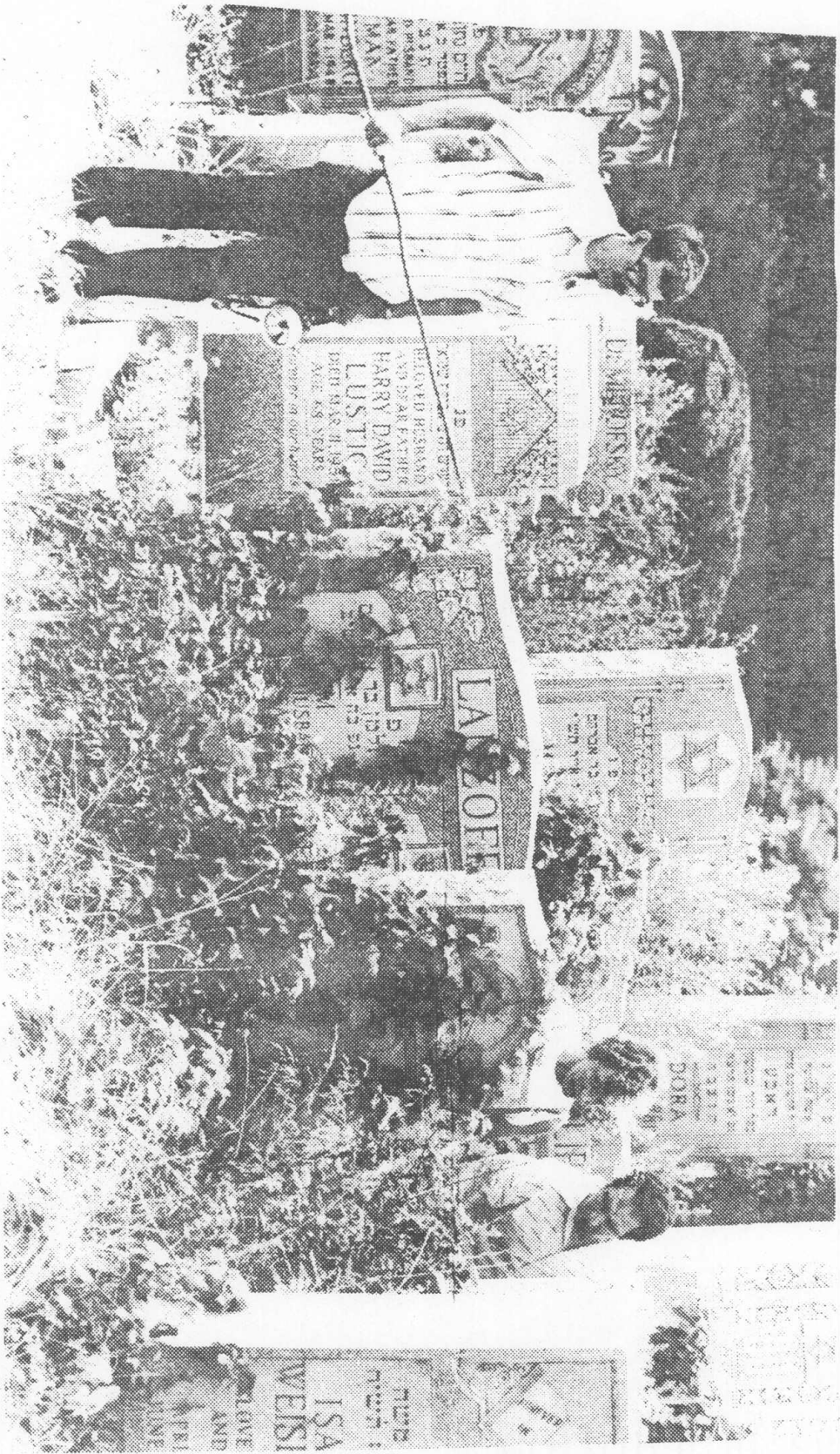
Cacciola said Jennifer is now registered with the National Center for Missing or Exploited Children, which will file her information in a computer and send it out to agencies across the nation.



ADVANCE PHOTO/STEVE ZAFFARANO

Terry Doyle, second from left, briefs volunteers at the firehouse on Jewett Avenue, the search headquarters.

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Volunteers Bill Reddy, Patricia Kirk and Mike Moudatsos search Baron Hirsch Cemetery.

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