

By **GLENN CHAPMAN**  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Cardinal John O'Connor describes her as a dynamo.

Hundreds of Staten Island residents pouring their spirits into the search for a missing 12-year-old girl look upon her as their leader.

She is the daughter of a city police detective who was killed in the line of duty when she was 9 years old.

Her children just call her "mom."

Donna Cutugno's days, as well as those of her husband, Charles, have become a seemingly endless collage of searches, clues from psychics, pleas and plans as she coordinates volunteer efforts to find Jennifer Schweiger.

Jennifer vanished from the street near her Wardwell Avenue home July 9 and, as official efforts to find the child came up empty, people from across the Island sought new ways to help.

It was a compassionate but disorganized volunteer effort until Donna stepped in.

Within days, Donna had established a group called the Friends of Jennifer, a band of volunteers determined to find the missing girl.

"She's just a ball of energy," Cardinal O'Connor said, glancing toward Donna as she dispatched groups of volunteers from a meeting hall in Holy Family R.C. Church on Saturday. "I don't know if she's getting any sleep, or if she eats."

Donna's days now begin at 6 a.m., when she and her husband try to organize the household for the day, and tend to their still sleepy 4-year-old son and 2-year-old daughter.

By 8 a.m. Donna's on the telephone, waking volunteers, consulting with detectives about areas to search and trying to keep the Schweigers' plight in the public eye.

Special assignments have to be developed for groups like corrections officers, Army veterans and youth organizations that call to offer help. And the nuts and bolts — minor, but important details — have to be tended to: Who has the soda? Is there enough ice to refresh the searchers? Have the additional Jennifer posters been



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**Donna Cutugno, co-ordinator of the Friends of Jennifer, prepares a list of areas to be searched.**

printed up? Is there a doctor or nurse going to be available to take care of injuries? Has anyone unlocked the church hall so people can use the bathroom?

At noon, concerned people from the Island and other parts of the metropolitan area are divided into groups, told what to be on the lookout for, then dispatched from the staging area in the parking lot of Holy Family Church.

Through the afternoon, Donna and a small team of regulars in the search gather the information and leads brought in by volunteers.

Hopes soar as searchers come sprinting back with news of discovered clothing, notes, campsites and signs of freshly dug earth. The hopes crash-land just as quickly when authorities determine they are just more dead ends.

"I must have six yellow bags. My car is filled with stuff," Donna noted. Jennifer was carrying a bright yellow pocketbook the day she disappeared.

Yesterday, there was a grim discovery: A dead body. But police believe it is that of an elderly woman, not Jennifer.

After reviewing the new information and following up on everything from eyewitness accounts to shadowy rumor, new locations are targeted for the 7 p.m. search.

When darkness falls, Donna shoots over to consult with Jennifer's parents, Kenneth and Karen. Kenneth Schweiger has been out each day on his own, desperately seeking some trace of his daughter.

They compare notes, discuss new approaches, then start the