

Letter

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ter or the person and I'm not going to comment on any other investigations we have," Murphy said, declining to characterize the letter.

Donna Cutugno, one of the leaders of the community search for Jennifer, also doubted the letter had any substance.

"I really think it's some kid that is just writing this for no reason at all," she said. "I don't think there is any validity at all to it."

Although police have yet to identify the author of the letter, the copies being circulated, including one obtained by the Advance, contain a cover sheet saying it is directed to "teen-agers and parents on Staten Island ... (and) is a copy of the original sent to a Tottenville High School sophomore by her uncle, a candidate for the N.Y.C. Police Department."

"I don't know what that means," Martinez said of the "candidate" reference. "Is he in the Police Academy, he took the test, he's thinking of the test? It could mean a lot of things, that phrase."

A well-placed source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said he had met and spoken to "Rick" in person but would not reveal his identity for fear of physical retaliation by the man.

"He has no hard evidence," the source said of "Rick." "I'm saying he's a nut and believes in the supernatural."

The source said "Rick," who he described as being in his mid-to-

late 20s, is "paranoid and believes the religious medals around his neck have turned from silver to gold."

The man claiming to be "Rick" also has been linked to a controversial group in Queens known as Our Lady of the Roses, Mary Help of Mothers Shrine.

In the letter signed by "Rick," he suggests that his "niece" and others she "spreads the word" to call a phone number to obtain St. Benedict medals that allegedly protect them from "satanists."

The phone number is that of the Our Lady of the Roses organization, according to James Donohue, who answered last week when the number was called and identified himself as a member of the group.

Donohue said he knew "Rick," who had told him "satanism was spreading on Staten Island." He said he would have "Rick" call the Advance, which a man claiming to be "Rick" did the next day.

However, when asked for his real name and proof of the allegations in the letter, "Rick" refused to answer, but promised to call again the next day. No further calls were received by the Advance.

In a November 1986 letter to all the Roman Catholic bishops in the United States, Archbishop Francis Mugavero affirmed the Our Lady of the Roses group "completely lacked authenticity," a spokeswoman for the Archdiocese of Brooklyn, which includes that borough, Queens and Long Island, said yesterday.

Referring to Veronica Lueken, a former Staten Island resident who began the group and has claimed to have had visions and conversation with the Virgin Mary, the spokeswoman said: "She speaks of satanism. She talks of every topic, you name it. She has a newsletter."

In his letter to the bishops, Bishop Mugavero also said Catholics should not participate in Mrs. Lueken's vigils and other activities, the spokeswoman said.