

Police arrest two suspected in Chinese delivery robs

Flushing teenagers charged for alleged involvement in string of December, January incidents

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Deputy Inspector Matthew Whelan of the 109th Precinct speaks to Flushing Chinese restaurant owners last month about a string of robberies. Police arrested two suspects last week.

Police from the 109th Precinct made a pair of arrests in a string of robberies targeting Chinese food deliverymen in Flushing last week, days after they renewed a call for area restaurant owners to stress vigilance and safety in their operations.

Sanford Avenue residents Christopher Lee, 18, and Goel Santos, 17, were arrested Jan. 23 and charged with robbery for their alleged involvement in eight incidents that took place between Dec. 2 and Jan. 19, police said.

Detective Kevin O'Donnell of the 109th Precinct said Lee and Santos were arrested during an unrelated robbery Jan. 23 and police were subsequently able to link them to the robbery pattern using surveillance camera footage of previous incidents.

"They were wearing the exact same clothes as the two guys we saw during several of the deliverymen robberies," O'Donnell said.

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City Councilman John Liu (D-Flushing) praised the precinct for acting swiftly.

"The community appreciates the quick-footed detective work of our 109th Precinct in apprehending the alleged perpetrators of these crimes against our local businesses and restaurant workers," Liu said. "While none of these incidents resulted in serious injury, robberies against restaurant workers in the past have been especially violent — sometimes resulting in

tragic deaths — and we must do all we can to protect this vulnerable work force and ensure that the full weight of law enforcement is exerted to prevent these crimes from occurring.”

Matthew Whelan, the 109th Precinct commanding officer deputy inspector, spoke to more than two dozen restaurant owners Jan. 14 to brief them on the string of robberies. Whelan said eight separate robberies had occurred at various locations around Flushing, each between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Whelan said it is important for restaurant owners to quickly let police know if a robbery takes place.

“After the robbery occurs, you need to call 911 immediately. We’ve had situations where the deliverymen are making two or three more deliveries before returning to their restaurant and calling police,” he said. “That delay in calling 911 is a big hindrance in what we can do.”

Whelan also said the police have no interest in an employee’s immigration status.

“We’re not allowed to inquire about immigration status. We don’t care if you’re here legitimately or illegitimately,” he said. “We care that you’re the victim of a crime and we want to solve that.”

Reach reporter Stephen Stirling by e-mail at [sstirling@timesledger.com](mailto:ssirling@timesledger.com) or by phone at 718-229-0300, Ext. 138.



