

## At long last, some savoir-faire hits 9A

By Daphne Stein

We can thank the French for Chanel and Dior, and now for the squat yellow road markers that are dressing up downtown Ardsley.

The village has installed 11 flexible stanchions - considered the latest in European traffic control technology - to highlight the crosswalks in front of Ardsley Hardware, 686 Saw Mill River Road, and Starbucks, 716 Saw Mill River Road.

The plastic devices are the most recent development in the village's ongoing effort to make Route 9A (Saw Mill River Road) more pedestrian friendly.

The bright yellow, 30-inch posts, unlike your average orange traffic cone, can withstand a 65 mph blow from an almost 21 ton truck.

After just over a week with the new markers, police, residents and merchants were all noticing a difference in traffic patterns.

Police Sgt. Rick LaPine said last Friday, "It heightens your attention [to the road]. The first time I saw them, it definitely brought my attention to the fact that there was a crosswalk there."

While business has not increased significantly, Joe Zeolla, owner of Ardsley Hardware, said last week that the number of complaints about difficulty crossing the state highway has declined noticeably.

"I see a difference in the reaction of the cars. People are able to stand in the crosswalks now. What people have to recognize is that this is a double yellow line highway - we are not like downtown Irvington, Dobbs Ferry and Hastings. The village has been trying desperately to do something to control traffic on 9A. Time will tell us [the value of this attempt], but my observation is that it's the best effort yet."

Trustee Stephen Dalton, village board liaison of the mayor's ad hoc Traffic,



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### A pedestrian takes advantage of a stanchion-marked crosswalk.

Parking and Pedestrian Safety Committee (TPPS), said recently that he learned of the stanchions through committee member Matthew DePasquale, an "engineer in charge" with the state Department of Transportation.

DePasquale, Dalton said, gave him a catalog from U.S. Reflector, the Worcester, Mass.-based distribution company. After reading about the stanchions, Dalton ordered them for the two crosswalks. The six-post sets cost \$400.

U.S. Reflector's vice president, George Cancelmo, and national sales manager, Leo Lessard, came to the village Thursday, March 30, to install the devices.

Two posts are placed on either side of the street along the crosswalk lines and the remaining two are in the center of the road. In the winter, to accommodate snow plows, the two in the middle will be removed.

Ardsley Police Chief Emil Califano said that his officers have not noted that patrolling the area is easier now, but, "I think [the markers] are going

to make a difference. Anything that helps a pedestrian cross the street is advantageous." To the best of his memory, there has never been a pedestrian accident at either crosswalk.

Responding to a comment that the posts had been installed without DOT permission, Califano said that the DOT had allowed the village to place other traffic control devices in the road previously.

Asked if he knew whether their installation was legal, Dalton said he did not. Indicative of his satisfaction with them, he said, "I will fight very hard if anyone tries to take them out of the street"

Lessard said his company's product meets state requirements for "tubular marking devices," making their installation legal.

The posts' durability "depends on how badly they get mangled," Lessard said, adding, "They will take 14 to 15 hits with no problem." The way they are designed, when a vehicle hits the post, rather than it bending over, slapping against the hood and ripping in half,

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it is crushed forward, sparing the car any damage, too.

He noted that they do need cleaning from time to time because they get dirty from the hits. The posts are covered with strips of reflective tape to make them equally visible at night.

Last year, Natick, Mass., population 39,000, became the first town in the United States to use the markers, installing them at two crosswalks.

Sgt. Robert Davis, supervisor of the Natick Police Department traffic safety unit, said recently, "The pedestrians love them. We have had a real problem here with the traffic not stopping.

In Massachusetts, the law says you have to stop for a pedestrian in a crosswalk - a pedestrian could stand on the side of the road for five hours and no one would stop. You have to put one foot in the crosswalk. These cones provide an area where they can step off the curb and be in the crosswalk, but be protected from traffic.

"Some people don't like the aesthetics of them, but they have stood up very well [against vehicular abuse] and have been an effective safety measure."

Davis said that two years ago there were nine pedestrian accidents in the crosswalks. Last year, after installing the posts, the number of accidents dropped to zero.

"We used to have barrels in the road. They move. If a car hits a barrel - it weighs 50 pounds - you have a 50-pound missile going across the road. It's a much better situation using [the markers] in the two crosswalks and we have had requests all over the town to put these up," Davis said.

Recognizing that accidents involving pedestrians sometimes occur because the pedestrian is crossing in an unsafe manner, Cancelmo said that the markers serve as guides for walkers, too. "Where we have put up crosswalk markers, people gravitate to the crosswalk," he said.

Though they are still being tested for effectiveness in the village, Dalton said that the village board has allocated \$3,000 in the 2000-2001 budget and the Chamber of Commerce has informally offered to donate money to purchase more stanchions for other crosswalks in the village. "The key to crosswalk safety is that the driver sees where the crosswalk is" he said.

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