

Police stage crosswalk sting *Operation netted 34 tickets*

By Josh Green
Staff Writer

NORCROSS - On average, drivers in walkable downtown Norcross violated crosswalk rules every third minute Thursday. Some claimed ignorance, others haste. All left with an approximate \$200 fine.

On the heels of numerous complaints from pedestrians and downtown business owners, Norcross police choreographed their first "crosswalk crackdown" in two years during Thursday's lunch rush. Plainclothes officers crossed South Peachtree and Jones streets, while their uniformed brethren motioned too-close violators to the curb.

Police issued tickets for 30 crosswalk violations and four failures to hit the breaks at stop signs. They arrested one young man for allegedly driving a Grand Cherokee without a license.

The number of violations dropped significantly from the previous sting, which was news police welcomed with open arms, said Norcross police Lt. Jeff Thornton.

"That's actually the goal," he said.

Michael Orta, program manager for Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety, said four pedestrians are hit every day by metro Atlanta drivers. Georgia law requires drivers to completely stop for people in crosswalks, even when the walkers are on the other side of the street.

"If they change their mind, decided to come back the other way - it's your fault" if they're hit, Thornton said. Thornton said the city's last pedestrian fatality came in March, when the victim tried to cross Buford Highway without using a crosswalk.

It's worth noting, said Thornton, that the blame for fatal collisions doesn't fall completely on drivers. "It's just as important for pedestrians to use crosswalks as it is for drivers to yield," he said.

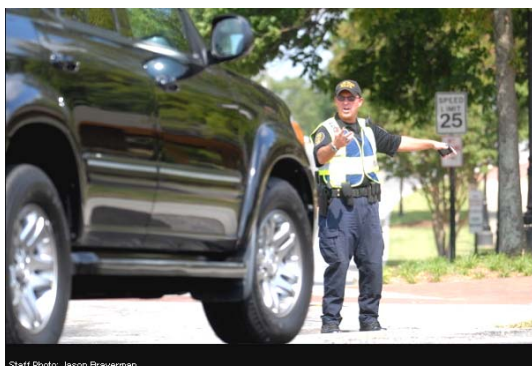
Last week, a woman trying to cross five lanes of Jimmy Carter Boulevard was struck and killed in rush-hour traffic, according to Gwinnett police. That agency led a similar sting near Norcross last year that netted 80 crosswalk violators in a single morning.



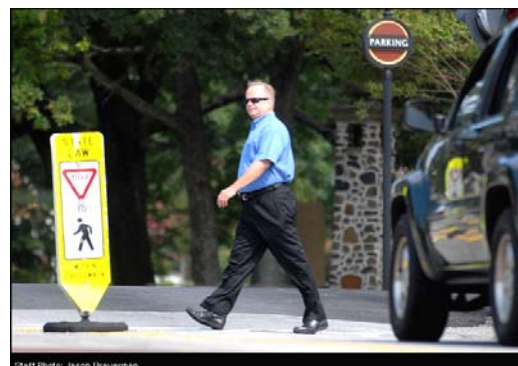
Staff Photo: Jason Braverman
Mary Williford, a Norcross detective, crosses a crosswalk as Lt. Jeff Thornton watches for drivers disobeying the law on Thursday afternoon in downtown Norcross.



Staff Photo: Jason Braverman
Norcross officer Ed Head writes a ticket to a driver that did not yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk on Thursday during a sting in downtown Norcross.



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