

# Police officer resigns after burglary charge

By Eve Sullivan  
Staff Writer

STAMFORD — The Stamford police officer charged with burglarizing a West Side furniture store with his girlfriend last year cut a deal with prosecutors that calls for him to resign.

Robert Velme, 36, apparently handed in a letter of resignation yesterday morning before pleading guilty in state Superior Court.

"It's a sad thing that happened in the department," Police Chief Louis DeCarlo said. "It's an unfortunate thing, but we

wish him well on his future endeavors. He made a mistake, and he acknowledged it."

Velme pleaded guilty to the reduced charge of second-degree criminal trespass, a misdemeanor. He originally was charged with third-degree burglary, which is a felony, along with fourth-degree larceny and conspiracy at both.

State's Attorney Steve Weiss said Velme responded to the call of a break-in at the Ethan Allen furniture store, 2046 W. Main St., on Jan. 16, 2002, while on duty.

Velme had a civilian, Kristine Rizzo, with him and allowed her to take property from the store, the prosecutor said. The items were recovered at Rizzo's Hartsdale, N.Y., apartment, he said.

Under the terms of the deal, Velme will get a 90-day suspended sentence with one year of probation, Weiss said. Special conditions of the probation are that Velme will pay restitution to the victim, make a \$250 charitable contribution and get psychiatric evaluation and counseling as deemed necessary, he said. Judge John Kavanewsky Jr. asked

whether Velme is on probation in any other jurisdiction.

"He's on probation in New York," said his attorney, Ray Kelly.

The judge imposed the sentence, saying that the charitable contribution must be made to the Victim's Assistance Fund within the first 90 days of probation.

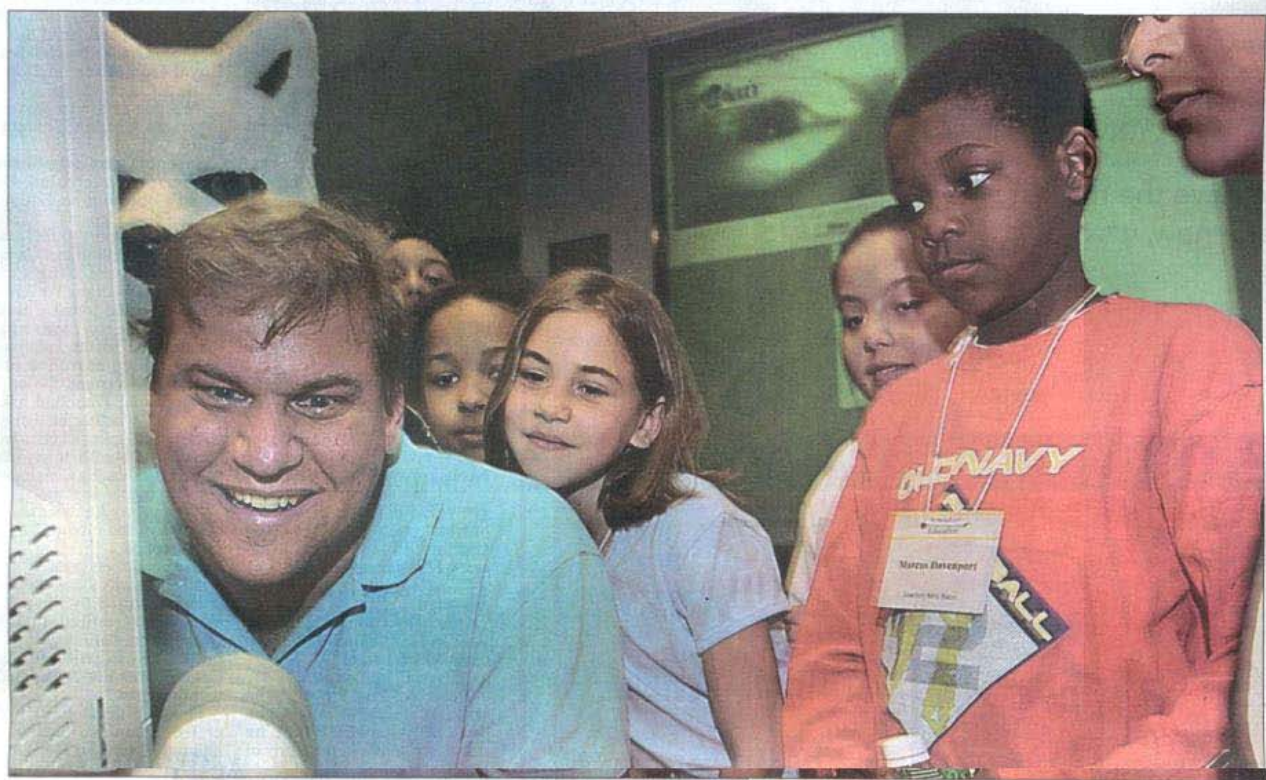
As part of the plea agreement, Weiss said Velme was to "execute a full resignation" from the Stamford Police Department.

Weiss said police officials approved of the deal.

Velme's attorney said the plea was entered under the Alford Doctrine, which does not admit guilt but concedes the state has enough evidence to convict him. Before Velme entered the plea, his attorney withdrew his not-guilty plea and his application for accelerated rehabilitation.

Weiss offered Velme the deal in April and gave him until May 12 to make a decision. His case was continued two more times before the deal went through.

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Andrew Sullivan/Staff photos

Chris Kalish, left, of the Edge Lab at the University of Connecticut, shows students from K.T. Murphy Elementary School yesterday how an iris scan works. Students from left are Marleny Jimenez, Mary Minginetti, Karla Viteri and Marcus Davenport. Below, Marcus and Oscar Cruz Machado get a hug from UConn Husky mascot Elizabeth Gregory while visiting the school's Stamford campus.

## College prep

### Students get taste of higher education

By Jane Porter  
Special Correspondent

STAMFORD — Imagine a world where a simple fingerprint scan could pay for your groceries, where you could be identified by a flash of your eye, where everyone goes to college.

Fourth- and fifth-graders from K.T. Murphy Elementary School entered this world of biometrics and digitization while visiting the Edge Lab yesterday at the University of Connecticut's Stamford campus.

It was part of an event organized by GE Capital and UConn to help young students get a sense of what college is all about.

"The goal is to improve the college-bound rate of kids from K.T. Murphy," said Mary Franco, vice president for corporate citizenship at GE and a coordinator of the Kids to College or K2C Collaboration program

sponsoring the event. The program's goal is to increase the percentage of students seeking a college education.

"When you get older, you have more choices with what you can do with your education," Chris Kalish, director of the Edge Lab, explained during a presentation to the students. With sponsorship from GE businesses, the Edge Lab works with vendors to define technology partnerships.

Kalish's demonstration was one of four designed to teach students about the opportunities available should they pursue a college education.

Students also attended a presentation at the biology lab, where they examined dissected fetal pigs to trace the path of food during the digestion process.

The K2C Collaboration event aimed to teach students about opportunities available at col-

lege and, as Trudy Frager, 11, put it, that "you don't just sit in a classroom and take notes all the time."

The students also attended a presentation at UConn's fitness center, where they learned the importance of fitness and nutrition.

Fourth-grader Luis Perez, 11, described the program as exciting. "We got to play a game and learn about muscles," he said.

Luis and his classmates also learned about careers and options available to college students in a presentation by UConn Career Coordinator Helena Hollyway.

She answered their questions which ranged from "How many years do I have to go to college if I want to be a teacher?" to "How would I be able to get money for college?"

"The key is choices," Hollyway said to the students. "That's what being in college



gives you."

Adults need to discuss college with youngsters at an early age, said Jackie Joseph-Silverstein, UConn associate vice chancellor.

"They are going to be our students one day, so when they get here we want them to be well-prepared and know what it is they have available to them," she said.

## Cop faces second trial

### No agreement reached in molestation case

By Eve Sullivan  
Staff Writer

STAMFORD — Stamford police Officer Walter Fields may be going to trial on child molestation charges for the second time.

Fields, 36, appeared in state Superior Court yesterday with his attorney, John Robert Gulash, and stood before Judge John Kavanewsky Jr. before he can be put on one-hour notice," Kavanewsky said.

The judge did not give Fields a continuation date, but told him he could be called about jury selection at any time.

"It looks like we are going to have to try it again," State's Attorney Steve Weiss said. "We couldn't reach an agreement."

Fields was arrested in February 2001 and charged with fondling two boys while working as a school resource officer at Cloonan Middle School. He went on trial in March on six counts of risk of injury to a minor and three counts of third-degree sexual assault.

A six-member jury could not reach a verdict, allowing Fields to remain free and on paid leave from the Stamford Police Department.

The hung jury of five women and one man deliberated for three days before giving up on the morning of the fourth day. Kavanewsky then declared a mistrial.

At the trial, the boys testified that he pulled their underwear and touched their private parts. One boy said Fields made him strip naked and do a headstand in his office.

In his testimony, Fields admitted pulling on the boys' underwear but denied touching their private parts.

Fields, a Fairfield resident, joined the police department in 1995 and became an SRO in 1997. Since his suspension, he has been attending law school at Pace University.

## Shell casings recovered from suspect's trash

By Lindsay Faber  
Staff Writer

STAMFORD — Greenwich detectives found three shell casings in Flores Canales' trash

Canales' building at 54 W. North St. in Stamford, and was able to identify her trash from several pieces of paper that had her name on them. Hollyway

## Treetops maintains blooming tradition

While the Treetops estate awaits a new owner, Building and Grounds Supervisor Harv Darrow continues to maintain care for the historic daffodils on the estate, as he has done for a quarter of a century.

The estate, on the Greenwich-Stamford border, is being sold by

in the 1950s, Holman soon began hosting annual daffodil shows at the estate each spring, charging visitors a dollar and donating proceeds to local charities. The shows continued after her death until IP ended the tradition a year ago, citing a lack of interest from the public.

