

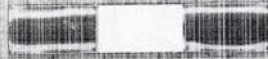
POLICE DEPARTMENT



County
Of
Suffolk



MERITORIOUS POLICE SERVICE AWARD



Presented To

SGT. BRIAN BUGGE

#663

MAY 16, 1996

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely of the Commissioner.

Commissioner

Plug pulled on phone-y prize call

By **MICHAEL S.C. CLAFFEY**

Daily News Staff Writer

Thousands of times a day, New Yorkers picked up the phone and heard what sounded like a slick-sounding deejay promising a prize if they called back right away.

Police say many of those people — lured by the promise of something for nothing — called back, not realizing that they would be charged \$9.95 for every minute they stayed on the line.

As a result, some were charged \$20 or \$30 for prizes that were, well, chintzy. "They would get a cheap little \$1 watch or a \$2 camera," said Sgt. Brian Bugge of the the Suffolk County Police Department.

Authorities moved this week to put the Long Island company, called "Call-Net," out of business, arresting its president, Kevin Shaughnessy, 35, and office manager, Mark Dehos, 30. Both men, who live in West Islip, were charged with fraud and false advertising.

Bugge said the investigation was sparked by an undercover report last fall by News 12, Long Island's all-news cable TV channel.

The Hauppauge company also is under investigation by the attorney general's office.

A spokeswoman for New York Telephone said the phone company, acting on its own, had gotten permission to shut the business down as of yesterday because it violated its contract by "charging money for merchandise."

Jamie DePeau, a NYNEX

spokeswoman, said so-called "540 lines" are supposed to be used for providing information, such as lottery and racing results and voice personals.

Neither police nor NYNEX could say how many people were taken in by the alleged scam.

Bugge said the company was "a real sophisticated operation" that used expensive computer equipment capable of automatically dialing up to 100,000 phone numbers a day.

A taped message that sounded like a radio deejay would announce, "Hello, this is Bobby James of the new hot 504-9999 studio promotion," Bugge said.

The listener was told to call that number for a prize, he said. When they did, an announcement that the call would cost \$9.95 per minute would be drowned out by loud music playing in the background.

Operators were instructed to keep the caller on the line for as long as possible, Bugge said, in order to run up the bill. The charge was tacked on to a caller's phone bill.

NYNEX couldn't disclose how much revenue the company took in, but Bugge said it was apparently a lucrative business.

Shaughnessy had \$9,000 in cash on him when he was arrested, another \$27,000 in checks, and a brand-new Mercedes Benz parked outside the office at 90B Adams Ave. in Hauppauge, Bugge said.