

## RACING ONTO STORE SHELVES



Gerard Simonetti/The Journal News

Suffern Police Officer Clarke Osborn shows Lauren Eichenberger, 11, and David Markowitz, 12, the Suffern DARE car yesterday at Viola Elementary School. The car won a national car design contest and Matchbox versions of it soon will be in stores.

# Matchbox replicates DARE car

Already a hit among children, the 1978 Corvette could bring fame to Suffern

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The Journal News

The racy yellow car known to Suffern and Montebello elementary school children could soon become a favorite nationwide.

The Suffern Police Department's DARE car, a 1978 Corvette with fiery purple flames and the village's name stamped on its hood, will soon be sold as a Matchbox miniature in stores across the country, the prize in a national contest for car design.

A photo of the car, which

Suffern DARE Officer Clarke Osborn takes on his visits to area elementary schools, was placed last August on Matchbox's Web site, where children voted for their favorites.

The winners of Mattel Inc.'s contest will be made into replicas 64 times smaller than the cars' actual size and sold in toy stores starting in December.

The car, already a hit among students, is appreciated even more now for the fame it could bring to the village.

"It's neat knowing a little town like this is going to be so widely known," said Brittney Bahlman, a seventh-grader at Sacred Heart School.

Jessica Szorentini, 9, was

impressed by how much Suffern's car stood out from its nearly 25 competitors on the Web site. Logging on to vote made her realize, "it was better. It was the greatest."

The brightly painted DARE car started out as a beat-up red and gray Corvette seized in a driving-while-intoxicated arrest in 1993. When Suffern police discovered the car had been stolen from a New Jersey car dealership soon after it was made 15 years earlier, it impounded the car and adopted it, said Craig Long, a police department spokesman.

The car was then painted black with red lettering until a year ago when Frank's

Auto Body in Hillburn decided it could use a "spruce up."

"The whole purpose of the car is to get the kids' eye and the kids' attention that police are good," said Frank Chicherchia, the auto shop owner who designed the glittering flames and orange underside to the car's exterior. "So, we came up with the idea and did it. I had no idea it would get national attention. We did it for the kids."

Fine Line Signs Inc. of Suffern donated the lettering on the car, and Chicherchia maintains the car for free.

The Suffern DARE pro-

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