

Kids see face behind the badge

Police hold an open house in north Minneapolis

By Kevin Diaz
Staff Writer

The sleek outlines of a shiny Corvette, done over with police sirens, rear spoiler and flashing red lights, had 14-year-old Rodney Ellis captivated Monday at the Fourth Precinct police station in north Minneapolis.

"It's cold," said Ellis, shaking his head in wonder at the Police Department's biggest public relations prize: the white Corvette of convicted drug dealer Ralph (Plukey)

Duke.

Public relations efforts were everywhere at the Fourth Precinct yesterday, four days after tense disturbances between the police and the precinct's large black population.

In fact, the timing of yesterday's open house, attended by about 700 elementary school children, was merely coincidence. It was held in conjunction with National Police Week. But irony was in the air.

"I was willing to come out here on

my own — take a risk," said Ellis, smiling under a neon-yellow Police Federation cap. "There's a lot of people don't trust the cops."

"Nothing against white folk, but that was wrong," he said, referring to the Rodney King verdict.

Behind Ellis, children with balloons and ice cream swarmed around ambulances, old squad cars, the bomb-squad truck, a helicopter and, of course, Plukey Duke's Corvette.

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