

THE GUARDIAN

Volume 11, Number 2

March/April 2004

www.parkpolice.net

Routine Ride Home Becomes Fired Up

On his way home the evening of March 12, Sergeant Jim Richards encountered some heavy traffic on Route 108 by the Olney Boys & Girls Club. Thinking an accident must be the cause, he was not surprised to see a car that had been driven headlong into a tree down in a ditch. Pulling over, Sgt. Richards ran down the hill to see how he could help. The car's engine was on fire and an off-duty Montgomery County Police officer was trying to pull the driver from the car. Sgt. Richards and the unidentified officer quickly pulled the driver out of the car before it was completely engulfed in flames.

The driver of the car was taken into custody and tested for intoxication. Thanks to the decisive actions of both officers, the man was saved from a potentially life-threatening situation. **G**



Photo by Steven Hagberg

Sergeant Jim Richards

Sgt. Jim Richards is an 11-year veteran with the Park Police. Jim served in the Prince George's County Division until May 2000, when he was promoted to Sergeant and re-assigned to the Montgomery County Division.

Before coming to the Park Police, Sgt. Richards served 15 years with the Takoma Park Police Department.

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Officers Kick Off 2004 Chief's Challenge

by Ofc. Dan McCort



Photo by Ofc. Greg Worsey

Once again, it is time for the Division to participate in the Maryland Chief's Challenge. Every year, police agencies from across the state join together with the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association, the Maryland Committee for Safety Belt Use and the Maryland Highway Safety Office to increase public awareness of the importance of seat belt and child safety seat use. This year's campaign runs from April 6 through June 6, 2004.

Maryland is a national leader in seat belt and child safety seat usage, reflected in the fact that last year Maryland drivers had an 88% compliance rate. This year's goal is to reach 90% compliance from Maryland drivers. Last year, this Division won the overall award for police agencies in our category [76 to 100 officers]. In keeping with our ongoing commitment to this worthwhile program, Park Police officers will once again be

stepping up seat belt and child safety enforcement. In addition, the Division will be participating in upcoming community events such as Ayr lawn Park Healthy Kids Day and Bauer Drive Healthy Kids Day. Also, the Division will participate in various child safety seat inspections throughout the county. In doing so, the Division hopes to increase public awareness and education regarding seat belt and child safety seat use.

State law requires that all front seat passengers, regardless of age, be belted in. The law also requires all occupants under 16, regardless of seating position, to be belted in and all occupants under four or less than 40 pounds to be in a child safety seat. Fines for these violations range from \$25 to \$48. In Maryland, if all vehicle occupants were buckled up, we could save 50 lives and prevent 600 injuries a year. Look for Park Police officers on Sligo Creek Parkway, Beach Drive and Little Falls Parkway enforcing these lifesaving laws. **G**



Officer Interrupts Suicide in Progress

by Acting Lt. Karen Petrarca

Officer Tom Mock, a two-year veteran of the Park Police force, interrupted a suicide in progress at Calverton-Galway Park in the early morning hours of March 6. Officer Mock was performing a routine park check of the area when he observed a vehicle parked in the rear parking lot.

The driver of the car waved to Officer Mock as if to assure him that all was well. Officer Mock noticed that the vehicle was running but had no front registration tag displayed. Upon closer inspection, Officer Mock noticed a pipe leading from the tailpipe into the rear vehicle window.


Officer Mock then moved into action, blocking the vehicle and removing the subject from the car. Medical attention was requested and the subject was transported to a local hospital for treatment. Congratulations go to Officer Mock for his prompt action in saving a life! 



Photo by Steven Hagberg

Officer Tom Mock



Firearm’s Unit Makes Montgomery County Safer

by Detective Mau Ly, Range Master

In January 2003, the Montgomery County Firearms Task Force was formed as an outgrowth of the Montgomery County sniper attacks. At the time of the sniper attacks, thousands of leads were pouring in and authorities were following up on those leads to find the gunmen. Most of the tips led nowhere, but some of the tips uncovered people who illegally possessed guns.

As a detective with the Maryland-National Capital Park Police, I was enlisted to investigate these tips along with detectives from Montgomery County Police, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office and the United States Secret Service. We approached this undertaking in a proactive manner: investigating all firearms-related crimes; initiating search and arrest warrants; investigating firearms returns and denials and providing firearms information to law enforcement agencies and states attorneys.

The task force made approximately 96 arrests in 2003. In addition, more than 360 firearms were seized, 89 firearms returned to their rightful owners and 37 firearms denied to owners due to criminal history or mental illness. Our team’s motto was, “We think it’s fun to take a criminal’s gun.”

One of the more prominent cases occurred when Montgomery County Police Officer Kyle Olinger was shot and paralyzed during a traffic stop. The gun used in the shooting was traced back to the defendant who was trafficking guns for drugs. Upon searching the defendant’s house, several guns, drugs and a stolen motorcycle were discovered. Thanks to the task force’s work, the defendant is facing 30 years in jail.

**Our team’s motto was,
“We think it’s fun
to take a criminal’s gun.”**

Another case involved a man who lived alone in a house in Kensington. He became known as the “hermit” after his mother died and he withdrew from the

world. He boarded up the windows in his house and he was not seen by anyone except when he would yell at the kids playing basketball across the street. On one of these occasions, he made some threatening remarks about the guns he owned. That was enough for our team to roll into action. An emergency court order requiring the man to submit to psychiatric evaluation was obtained and the task force stormed the house. Fifty-seven guns were found, some hidden in the walls. Garbage was piled up throughout the house. Eight pounds of gunpowder was found in

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Firearm's Unit Makes Montgomery County Safer (Continued from Page 4)

Table full of illegal guns seized by the task force.



Photo by Det. Mau Ly

the refrigerator and the team found the subject asleep with a loaded gun in his hand. Gary Thorne was committed to Springfield State Hospital and was charged with illegal possession of explosives.

Atlantic Guns in Silver Spring was burglarized a few months ago. Once inside the store, the thieves stole numerous rifles, BB guns and other accessories. An anonymous tipster reported overhearing the defendant bragging about the burglary. The tipster also told the police where they could find the guns and that the suspect was getting ready to move them. Surveillance was set up at the residence until a search warrant was obtained. The entire surveillance team, along with Prince George's SWAT team, served the warrant. Rifles were discovered in the defendant's room, packaged as if they were about to be buried. Two male subjects were taken into custody.

Incredible teamwork and networking with various units and agencies contributed to the team's success in taking guns away from those who should not have them. It was an honor and privilege to work with the "best of the best" in law enforcement. Serving on the task force was an experience I will long remember. **G**



Park Police Show Their Stuff

by Officer Noell White

On March 12, the Park Police basketball team, “The Ballers,” played the 93.9 WKYS radio station team, “The N1 All-Stars.” It was an exciting game that many people came out to enjoy. All the children in attendance received a T-shirt, CD’s and a personalized autographed photo of Antonio, a member of the WKYS Street Team. Some children got to talk live on the radio when Antonio made a call-in from the game announcing the event.

The game was a close one with the Park Police winning 59-54. Members of the Park Police Ballers included Lt. Dan McNickle, Officers Clay Goldston, Codi Evans, Noell White, Tommy Kim, Troy Mason, Chris Ziegler and coach Jeff Coe. Ron Martin and Damon Ford from Coffield Community Center also played on the Park Police team. Officer Codi Evans was the high scorer with 18 points. It was an interesting game with fancy dunks, great moves and lots of fun.


Thanks go to everyone who came out to enjoy the game and show your support. Special thanks go to Detective Leatrice DeBruhl and Officer Johnny Fennell for taking pictures. 



Photo by Det. Leatrice DeBruhl

Kneeling: Lt. Dan McNickle

First row (L-R): Noell White, Troy Mason, Jeff Coe, Clay Goldston, Damon Ford, Codi Evans, Tommy Kim, Chris Ziegler

Back row: Ron Martin and fans



Officer Sandy Sellman Soars In Academics!

by Acting Lt. Karen Petrarca

Montgomery College faculty nominated Officer Sandy Sellman, a 16-year veteran of the Park Police force, for membership in Phi Theta Kappa. Phi Theta Kappa is the international academic honor society for students at two-year colleges. Students invited to join Phi Theta Kappa have earned a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

At the Dr. Harry Harden, Jr. Black and African American Awards Ceremony on March 5th at the Rockville campus of Montgomery College, Officer Sellman was recognized for her academic record. These awards are given as a tribute to Dr. Harden's work in acknowledging, honoring and inspiring high-achieving students of African descent.

"Congratulations on these honors, Sandy, and keep up the good work!"

It takes hard work, commitment and perseverance to reach these achievements. Congratulations on these honors, Sandy, and keep up the good work! 🇺🇸



Photo by Steven Hagberg

Officer Sandy Sellman





The Latest Scoop

Promotions and Reassignments

Congratulations and farewell go to Ron Pierce. Lt. Ronald Pierce, Jr. was promoted to the rank of Captain on March 8, 2004. Captain Pierce assumed the duties of Director of Support Operations with the Prince George's County Park Police Division. Captain Pierce is a 22-year veteran with the Park Police, serving in many positions with the Montgomery County Division.

Montgomery County Park Police also say goodbye and best wishes to Tony DeVaul. Sgt. Antonio DeVaul was promoted to a Lieutenant position with the Prince George's County Division on March 8. Lt. DeVaul will assume the duties of Field Operations - Operation Duty Officer. Lt. DeVaul is a 10-year veteran with the Park Police, serving both Montgomery County and Prince George's Divisions in various positions.

Officer Mark Nee has also been promoted to Sergeant. Sgt. Nee will join the Prince George's Division after completing his tour of duty as the Fraternal Order of Police President. Mark recently returned from serving in Iraq for over a year. Best wishes to one and all! **G**

Welcome to New Park Police Member

Please welcome Mr. David Celeste, our new Accreditation Manager. Dave joins us after a full career with Montgomery County government. He worked in various capacities for the county with the Department of Corrections and the Montgomery County Police among others.

Dave will be leading the accreditation process as we prepare for our review in December of this year. Best wishes go to Dave in this new challenging role. **G**



Photo by Steven Hagberg

Accreditation Manager David Celeste