Message from Chief Tony Jones

The Gainesville Police Department has been at the forefront of developing innovative and effective field tactics for quite some time. Through extensive research and a commitment to excellence, the Department is working with the community to design innovative strategies and accompany these with extensive training.

This past summer Dr. Patricia Grunder, Lieutenant Will Halvosa, and Corporal Warren Crews worked with the Alachua County School District, the district courts, and a host of community partners in developing a Project Diversion Program under the supervision of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice for teens who are suspended from school.

The project focused on these youths because once they were suspended, they violated terms of their probation and were arrested, briefly detained, and back on the streets of Gainesville. The project was extensive and called for extensive data review and collaboration in connection with the Center For Law and Policy staff out of Washington D.C., where we received a grant. The program was implemented on a trial basis on August 19, 2013. In this tradition, and in adherence to our “best practices” philosophy, we constantly monitor, evaluate, update, and improve our effort which will be rewarding for the students and our community.

The Gainesville Police Department also implemented a new Civil Citation Program with policy to support its direction. This is yet another diversion program in collaboration with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office Teen Court Program. If a child commits a crime and it meets Florida criterion for eligibility of the program, that child is referred to the Teen Court where he/she will still be held accountable for their actions but will not accrue a criminal record which can adversely impact the youth’s future.

In reviewing crime we have prevailed in reducing the crime numbers in our community, and I urge our residents to continue to practice prevention efforts. One item which impacts our community is that of Bicycle Theft. The Gainesville Police Department Crime Prevention Unit initiated a Bicycle Registration Program; we encourage citizens to keep a record of the serial number. Register your bike with campus police if you are a student. Always lock your bicycle to a rack or another secure object whenever you must leave it unattended. When possible, store the bicycle inside your residence overnight or when you will be gone for long periods of time. There are more helpful hints on crime prevention outlined in the GPD’s web page and on Page 6 of this publication.

Our crime is still showing a decline. In the month of August there was a slight increase of 1.84 in overall crime compared to last year for the same 31 days of August. September showed a reduction of 4.86 in overall crime in comparison between 2012 and 2013 for that same time period.

I continue to say that fighting crime is at the forefront of the Gainesville Police Department staff’s mission. We know that we cannot arrest our way out of it. We also know that we must work in cooperation with the community we so proudly serve to make a difference.

Just as I am committed to making the Department the leader in law enforcement new strategies designed to prevent crime, I am equally committed to maintaining our position as the leader in law enforcement tactics. Through constant review and through constant proactive enforcement of the laws and working in unison with community we serve, these two efforts can and will make an impact on the quality of life in our community.
If you think you’ve noticed a pink Gainesville Police car driving around town – your eyes are not fooling you. The Gainesville Police Department has partnered with Stop Children’s Cancer of Gainesville to help raise awareness and funds to help find a cure for cancer – specifically children’s cancer.

GPD Officer Amanda Cummings had the original idea to decal GPD cars in pink lettering. “We wanted to make a powerful statement.” Cummings said, “We brought the idea to Chief Jones and he loved it. It’s a very visible way for GPD to show our commitment to an issue that affects us all. Each of us knows at least one person affected by cancer.”

The idea is not about just making a few pink cars. We hope that when the public sees one of these cars, they get motivated to help. Stop Children’s Cancer is a local agency, and funds raised during this campaign will be split between them and the American Cancer Society. These funds will stay local and help our neighbors. Gainesville residents are affected by cancer and it’s important that we help our own.

Signs by Tomorrow is providing the graphics services at a discount so as much of the funds as possible raised during this campaign will go to cancer research. GPD is also encouraging local citizens and businesses to donate. No tax dollars have been used by this campaign.

If you are interested in possibly sponsoring a pink vehicle, please email Officer Cummings at cummingsal@cityofgainesville.org to learn more about how to donate.

Officer Ben Tobias
GPD Spokesman

Ofc. Mike Preston is driving this special GPD pink car. Ofc. Preston’s grandson, Talon, is a cancer survivor. Talon was diagnosed with Germ Cell Tumor but is now CANCER FREE.
Technology has evolved so rapidly in the last few years. These days, almost everyone carries at least one mobile phone. I carry two. One for business...and one for pleasure, probably like many of you. Summoning law enforcement assistance has always been as easy as placing a telephone call, but the Gainesville Police Department has taken that concept one step further.

Earlier this year, GPD announced an anonymous, secure way to communicate with us. We now have a system in place to text GPD with non-urgent crime tips. We encourage citizens to relay information to us via text messages for cases such as unsolved cases, vandalism, or any other information that you would like to pass along to GPD officers in a secure way. It’s just another outlet for Gainesville residents to reach out to the police.

Relaying information to GPD via text is simple. Just open a new message to 274637, which spells out the word CRIMES. Begin your text message with the keyword “GPDFL” and then type your message. When you hit “send” your message is routed through a secure server and delivered to GPD personnel via email.

Standard message and data rates may apply through your wireless carrier.

So now you know how to reach out to the police department, but did you know that you can get alerts sent to your mobile phone also? This year, GPD also unveiled an emergency notification service called GPD ALERT that can deliver text or email alerts to you for incidents that occur within the city limits.

Gainesville Police will utilize GPD ALERT, powered by Tipsoft Mobile messaging to relay emergency information to citizens in real-time. Some possible incidents that may trigger an alert include violent crimes where a suspect has not been apprehended, significant critical incidents that may constitute a public safety threat, or any incident that may constitute a significant emergency to the public.

In addition to emergency alerts, GPD also uses the same software to issue traffic alerts when a crash or other event significantly affects traffic flow. You can visit www.gpdalert.com to choose which alerts you want to receive.

As always, GPD provides daily updates through Facebook or Twitter. You can follow us at Facebook.com/GainesvillePolice or @GainesvillePD on Twitter. We deliver a variety of information through those outlets each day.

Off. Ben Tobias
GPD Spokesman
Officer of the Month, September 2013, Ofc. John Maloney

On 07.08.13, Ofc. Maloney investigated a theft at Winn Dixie, when the victim set her iPhone on the ground while she attempted to render first aid to her friend that was in cardiac arrest. Moments after her friend was transported to the hospital the victim realized her phone had been stolen. The victim gave a description of two suspects that approached where she placed her phone down. Ofcs. Maloney and Prince made contact with Shaquille K. Simmons at the Winn Dixie as he matched one of the suspects’ description. He denied stealing the phone and produced his own cell phone. The officers could see the outline of an I-Phone in his pocket and he tried to cover it with his hand. The officers called the victim’s phone and it rang in Simmons’ pocket. Simmons became very upset and yelled, “I did it! Take me to jail!” Ofc. Maloney arrested him for Grand Theft.

On 07.25.13, Ofc. Maloney responded to a noise complaint at the Pointe 23 apartments. The neighbors were in fear of the noise violator who continued to play his music loudly and was extremely confrontational when approached by neighbors. Upon answering his door, James D. Bellamy refused to identify himself and shoved Ofc. Maloney in the chest knocking him back a step. Bellamy attempted to slam the door, but Ofc. Maloney grabbed his arm. Bellamy resisted but Ofc. Maloney was able to arrest him for Battery on a Law Enforcement Officer without incident.

That same night, Ofc. Maloney responded with other officers to a domestic disturbance involving Gregory Hines. Ofc. Maloney had previously arrested Hines for attempted murder on his brother in 2011. Hines left the scene but returned, trying to walk past the officers and engaging the same brother with threats. Hines continued his non-compliance and officers attempted to handcuff him. He fought the officers with great vigor, elbowing Ofc. Maloney in the forehead. After some struggle Ofc. Maloney, Ofc. Hopkins and other officers were able to handcuff him. He was arrested for Battery on a Law Enforcement Officer and a number of other charges.

Ofc. Maloney wrote the third most reports on his shift. His great work ethic and physical abilities on arrest scenes are shrouded by his enduring positive attitude. Despite fighting alongside his daughter and family through personal obstacles that would crush most people, John continues to display courage and grace and that ever likeable personality.

Celebrate Safe Communities

The Gainesville Police Department is excited to announce a new crime prevention initiative that will begin this year called Celebrate Safe Communities. In the past, our agency has participated in National Night Out with residents throughout the community. Due to the heat and unpredictable weather in August, many citizens requested that we move away from hosting events during this time of year, and instead come together in October.

Safe communities often result from law enforcement working with residents as equal partners in preventing crime. In recognition of this principle, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the National Crime Prevention Council, and the National Sheriffs’ Association have joined together to create Celebrate Safe Communities. This program is designed to help local law enforcement agencies and their community partners kick off celebrations for National Crime Prevention Month every October.

Celebrate Safe Communities works to spotlight crime prevention efforts in the community, enhance public awareness of vital crime prevention and safety messages, and recruit year-round support for ongoing prevention activities that keep neighborhoods safe from crime.

GPD welcomed citizens participating in the local event that was held at Albert Ray Massey “Westside” Park on Thursday October 10th, 2013 from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM. All GPD demonstrations were observed at this location (i.e. K9, Mounted Unit, Traffic Unit and so on) during the listed timeframe. Our goal is for attendees to enjoy more expansive and enhanced presentations from our specialty units. In addition, other city entities, local law enforcement agencies, first responders, and business partners from the community were in attendance. Neighborhoods were also welcome to set up a table to represent their area and to recruit new members to join their Neighborhood Crime Watch.

Officer of the Month, September 2013, Ofc. John Maloney
The Citizens Police Academy offers an exciting behind the scenes look at the Gainesville Police Department and an opportunity to meet the men and women who serve you. Citizen involvement is vital in our fight for safer streets. The CPA provides citizens with a better understanding of police functions and greater insight to police practices and service through interaction and hands-on exercises.

The 2013 Citizens Police Academy is newly redesigned with new interactive experiences and will also feature presentations from the following departments: K-9, Mounted Patrol, Criminal Investigations, Narcotics, the Forensics unit, and more.

The Citizens Police Academy will meet once a week on Tuesday evenings from 6:00pm-8:00pm for 10 weeks. During the 10th week, the participants will be honored during a graduation ceremony. This year’s academy begins on October 15th and will end on December 17th. Our graduates are encouraged to be ambassadors in the community and share their positive experience with others as well as be provided the opportunity to join our volunteer program as well as the Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association.

The citizens academy is free of charge and offered once a year. More information about upcoming Citizen’s Police Academies can be found on our website at www.gainesvillepd.org.
On August 21, the Gainesville Police Department held a Town Hall meeting at the Senior Recreation Center on NW 34th Street.

According to new statistics presented at the forum, crime is down in Gainesville. The forum highlighted the city's recent activities in fighting crime and gave the audience a chance to participate and ask questions. It was reported that although crime is down, there are still areas that need work.

Property crime (burglary, larceny and auto theft) is down by 1.94% from the first six months of last year. Seventy percent of the property crimes were shoplifting and car burglary. Violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) were down 5.63%. Domestic violence made up 31% of all aggravated assaults. The overall crime reduction was 2.51%. Special Operations Unit was created in January of 2013 as a solution for increased burglaries and has shown a reduction in all categories of burglary of 24%.

From January to July 2013, 251 drug dealers were arrested or charged and the total street value of drugs seized is $2.87 million. Drug Task Force targets DRUG DEALERS not USERS.

The Traffic Safety Team is working towards a goal of ZERO fatal crashes per year. In 2012 there were seven fatal crashes. So far this year there have been only two.

Chief Tony Jones said one of the important things we need to do is provide prevention and intervention service for juveniles. There are programs in place to accomplish this.

All in all, this was a very productive meeting with interaction between residents of Gainesville and the Gainesville Police Department.

GPD Bicycle Registration Program

Each year hundreds of bicycles are stolen in the City of Gainesville. This is not an insignificant crime. The majority of the victims of bicycle theft use their bike as their sole mode of transportation. Many of these bikes are valued at well over $300.00. Along with conveyance and residential burglaries, bicycle theft is responsible for high numbers of reported crimes, particularly during the summer months. Adding to the issue is the difficulty in tracking bicycles. Many victims fail to record their bicycle’s serial number, or even know where that number can be located. This makes recovery extremely difficult. To help address the issue of bicycle theft the Gainesville Police Department’s Crime Prevention Unit proposed to initiate a bicycle registry program that will not only help recover stolen bicycles, but also act as a deterrent to thieves. The process involves advertising, decaling, and documentation.

The program includes information cards that will be available at local bicycle shops. These cards will also be available from the City’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Coordinator and the GPD Crime Prevention Unit. The cards will have information about how to register bicycles as well as some crime prevention tips to keep bicycles safe from thieves. As an additional deterrent, in the future we plan to have decals with a GPD badge available for owners to affix to their registered bikes. These decals are not currently available, but bicycles can still be registered.

Bicycle owners wanting to register their bikes may do so with any officers that they meet in the field. More importantly, citizens will now have the ability to register their bikes themselves online at the Gainesville Police Department website. This is the easiest and most convenient way to register your bike. Once a bicycle is registered officers will be able to locate the owner of recovered bikes, and have proper information for a bicycle in the event it is stolen.

If you have any questions about the registry please feel free to contact Officer Ernest Graham at: graham@cityofgainesville.org.
Officer of the Month, August 2013,
Officer Marvin Collins

Ofc. Collins is assigned to Team 1, Alpha zone on the midnight shift. This area is relatively quiet and slow on midnight shift so Ofc. Collins makes use of his down time to enforce traffic laws and search for DUI drivers. This month he has written 32 citations, 7 arrests (4 for DUI) and has been called to assist with several DUI investigations. Ofc. Collins is called upon frequently by evening and midnight shift officers to assist with DUI investigations due to his experience and his willingness to conduct such investigations.

He is also a team player and assists other officers without being asked to do so. Ofc. Collins then transitions to conducting business checks and conducts increased patrols in the hotspots in Team 1.

For these reasons, Ofc. Collins is nominated for Officer of the month.

Congratulations, and keep up the good work, Officer Collins.

Officer of the Month, July 2013.
Officer Amanda Prince

Ofc. Amanda Prince has been selected by patrol as Officer of the Month for July 2013:

On May 2nd, 2013, Ofc. Darren Graham and Ofc. Amanda Prince responded to a reported residential burglary. The victim advised that unknown suspect(s) entered his residence and went directly upstairs and removed the firearms that were inside. Through further investigation Ofc. Prince found out the victim recently had AC system repaired. Ofc. Prince contacted the owner of the AC company. The owner advised the technician that responded to that residence was Jeremy Clarkson. The owner added that ASO had contacted him about Clarkson being involved in other burglaries. The owner fired Clarkson after learning of GPD’s investigation.

Ofc. Prince and Ofc. Graham responded to 1228 NW 44th Ave where Clarkson was living with his girlfriend and her mother. The officers attempted to gain consent to search the girlfriend’s vehicle on scene for any possible stolen items. The girlfriend refused. The officers contacted SOU who followed up and learned that Clarkson, a convicted felon, sold the firearms to drug dealers in Majestic Oaks. Along with an accomplice, he pawned the victim’s stolen jewelry the next day. Both Clarkson and his co-defendant, Christopher S. Wendling were arrested on numerous charges to include armed residential burglary.

Ofc. Prince also has a strong work ethic (investigating the 3rd most crashes on her shift).

Congratulations, Officer Prince. Keep up the good work.
Significant Cases This Quarter

Omar Gibson Still Missing

Omar Gibson, age 27, was last seen on July 25th, 2012 at the Palms of Brook Valley apartments, 1101 NW 39th Avenue. His last known address is 1107 SE 20th Street and his 2003 Honda Accord was found outside the apartment complex shortly after his disappearance. He is classified as a missing person and the hope is that he is still alive. His family does not know what to do.

A man, Maurice Terry, was the last person to see Gibson. Terry was arrested in September on a drug conspiracy charge. He stated that he and Gibson were planning to purchase a large amount of cocaine from someone in the Palms at Brooks Valley. The plan was for Gibson to make the buy, take the cocaine to Terry at Stephen Foster Elementary school where he was waiting on a bike. Terry was then to ride home with the cocaine. Terry informed police that Gibson never showed up.

Friends and family had planned a Candlelight Vigil for Omar Gibson on August 24th at the corner of 39th Ave and 13th Street but it was cancelled due to weather. A posting on Gibson’s website states “No one can know the heartache felt by a mother and grandmother that don’t know what happened to their child...No one can know the pain of children left with the empty feeling of not knowing...Sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts, uncles, friends are all left behind to wonder and wait...LET’S BAND TOGETHER AND FOUND OUT WHERE IS OMAR!!!”

Dog severely beaten at Polos Apartments

GPD is seeking information on a man three children saw brutally choking and beating a dog Thursday, Sept 12, at Polos Apt. Complex. It was described as the worst beating case seen by an Alachua County Animal Service Investigator. GPD’s description is a 5’10” to 6’ white male of medium build with brown hair and a tattoo between his shoulder blades. If anyone has information, call Gainesville Police Department at 955-1818 or Animal Services at 264-6880.

GPD looking for clues in homicide of Loretta Dyer

Loretta Dyer was found deceased in her home on Sunday, May 5, 2013. Dyer lived alone and did not have electricity. She had lived a somewhat risky lifestyle and her home was a transient residence. At present GPD does not have a suspect in custody and are asking that anyone with any knowledge of the case or who may have spent the last few known hours with Dyer contact them at 352-393-7660.

Larry Whitehead arrested on Sept. 15 in Hampton VA on outstanding arrest warrant

Gainesville can rest a bit easier since US Marshalls captured Whitehead, suspect in shooting death of Sam Hamilton. Whitehead was seen forcing his way into the Southern Pines Apartment unit of the victim, got into an argument with Hamilton, fatally shot him in the head, then ran away. GPD officers and Alachua County Sheriff’s deputies searched the area but were unable to find Whitehead or the weapon.
The Crime Prevention Unit hopes that you have enjoyed this issue of the Community Connection! Most importantly, we hope that you have received vital information about what you can do to help prevent being victimized, and what your rights are even after you are victimized. It is our goal to equip you, the good citizens of Gainesville, with the information and training that you need to help prevent and stop crime in your community!

In the next issue, in addition to excellent articles from and about neighborhood representatives and GPD officers, we want to hear from you! This section will be reserved for feedback, letters to the editor, and the like. If you would like to give feedback on an article you read, what articles/topics you would like to see in the future, to nominate a resident/business owner or manager for recognition, or if you simply have a comment, suggestion, or any other information you would like to share, please email Corliss Gibbons at gibbonscd@cityofgainesville.org with your request no later than December 15th. All requests received will be reviewed by the Crime Prevention Officers who will determine which ones will be printed. If you would simply like to subscribe to the newsletter, please email Ofc. Tierney.

Always remember: Safety First!