As we enter 2012, I’d like to reflect on the past year. This year has been a year of both challenges and triumphs. We have experienced an increase in violent crime activities in our city. I can say that even though homicides are a crime of irrational passion, we have solved all but one of these crimes that have occurred in our city.

Any homicide is one too many and I can assure you that we take these instances seriously. Our agency will launch an initiative that will encompass both a prevention and intervention strategy to address violent crime. Our ultimate goal is to get illegal guns off the streets through proactive policing, public education, and encouraging citizens not to resort to violence to resolve matters.

As we enter the new year, please follow the advice of our Crime Prevention Officers. If you want to make sure your community is as safe as possible, one of the best things to do is to get involved and help. The starting point is to report crime if you see it; you can be the additional eyes and ears for the agency in our fight against crime.

Departmental updates:
To update you on police facility enhancements, the new Police Headquarters project is on track and the bid process is expected to be completed by the end of this month. This project was slated to go to the City Commission in December 2011. It is my hope that construction should begin in the summer of 2012 and plans are to complete the building by the end of 2013.

We are embarking on two vital projects for the Gainesville Police Department: 1) the Strategic Plan for the agency with community participation in formulating police strategies will be encouraged. Our common goal will be to provide the most effective possible response to law enforcement emergencies, neighborhood problems and the enforcement of traffic laws. In this way we ensure that Gainesville continues to be a desirable place to live, raise a family, educate, recreate, and do business. Dr. Patricia Grunder and Lieutenant Anthony Ferrara met with residents in five separate meetings to collect their thoughts on what the agency’s mission and goals should be for the next three years. Simultaneously, this same process was conducted internally with staff of the Gainesville Police Department. It is my hope that we have this project completed no later than February 2012. I can assure you that everything that we do, collectively or individually, will be done in accordance with our values and objectives identified in the Strategic Plan. 2) Also, the Gainesville Police Department is in the process of initiating a staffing study for the agency. As your Chief I think this is important. We have made advances and improved efficiency. This study will determine if additional resources are needed to enable the Department to fully accomplish its mission of protecting the Gainesville community and its citizens. We hope to have this study completed by June of 2012.

We hope to begin another Citizens’ Academy in February of 2012 and a mini Citizens On Patrol Academy in April of 2012.

The Gainesville Police Department has had a very good year in 2011 and each member of this Department, sworn and civilian, shares in the successes to make Gainesville a much safer city with the continued commitment of all this Department’s personnel. Further success awaits us this year. I wish you and your families all the best during the New Year.
Here are some helpful tips when dealing with a stolen or lost wallet/purse and preventative measures before it happens. Feel free to pass it along to your family members also. It can’t hurt...

1. Do not sign the back of your credit cards. Instead, put 'PHOTO ID REQUIRED.'

2. When you are writing checks to pay on your credit card accounts, DO NOT put the complete account number on the ‘For’ line. Instead, just put the last four numbers. The credit card company knows the rest of the number, and anyone who might be handling your check as it passes through all the check processing channels won’t have access to it.

3. Put your work phone number on your checks instead of your home phone. If you have a PO Box, use that instead of your home address. If you do not have a PO Box, use your work address. Never have your Social Security number printed on your checks. You can add it if it is necessary. But if you have it printed, anyone can get it.

4. Place the contents of your wallet on photocopy machine. Do both sides of each license, credit card, etc. You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place.

Here is some critical information to limit the damage in case theft or loss happens to you or someone you know.

5. We have been told we should cancel our credit cards immediately. But the key is having the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy so you know whom to call. Keep those

6. File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where your credit cards, etc., were stolen. This proves to credit providers that you were diligent, and this is a first step toward an investigation (if there ever is one).

Here’s what’s most important of all:

7. Call the 3 national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and also call the Social Security fraud line number.

The alert means any company that checks your credit knows your information was stolen, and they have to contact you by phone to authorize the credit.

Here are the numbers you always need to contact about your wallet if it has been stolen:

- Equifax: 1-800-525-6285
- Experian (formerly TRW): 1-888-397-3742
- Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289
- Social Security Administration (fraud line): 1-800-269-0271

OFC. CHAD WELCH

GPD OFFICER OF THE MONTH, DECEMBER 2011

Ofc. Castor made 9 significant arrests during the month of October. Seven DUI, 1 domestic Battery by Strangulation, and 1 Possession of Firearm by convicted felon. The most important stat of the month includes the life saving action of Deputy Bugg. Ofc. Castor witnessed the horrific crash between a suspect vehicle and an Alachua County Deputy on SW Williston Road. Ofc. Castor immediately was on the radio advising other units of the crash.

The deputy’s vehicle was on fire as she attempted to remove the deputy by cutting the seat belt. Ofc. Castor relayed that she needed fire extinguishers to put out the fire because she was unable to remove the deputy from the car due to entrapment. Ofc. Castor stayed with the deputy as the fire was extinguished and responding officers assisted with the scene. Ofc. Castor’s quick response to the situation ultimately saved Deputy Bugg from any further injury and possible death.

While Ofc. Castor was first on the scene, the quick response by Officers Brett Smith, Brendon McCarthy, and Jarin Welter to extinguish the fire should not go unnoticed. All four officers showed the true spirit of law enforcement as they placed themselves in harms way to save a fellow law enforcement officer’s life. Because of the above incidents and many more, Officer Crystal Castor has been selected as Officer of the Month for December 2011.
Volunteer Opportunities

The Gainesville Police Department currently utilizes two types of volunteers: Level I and Level II.

Level I volunteers are our in-house volunteers that are assigned to various administrative duties. Some examples of these include assisting with property and evidence, assisting the airport officers, working in crime analysis, compiling party patrol data, preparing the monthly newsletter and also working on special assignments as requested by the operations districts. There are also many opportunities to work special events with the Crime Prevention Unit.

Level II volunteers are our Citizens on Patrol. The Citizens on Patrol is a voluntary program developed to meet the changing needs of the community and to further promote the city’s philosophy on Community Oriented Policing. First deployed in 2010, volunteers patrol Gainesville neighborhoods, acting as the eyes and ears of the police. Citizens on Patrol concentrate throughout problem areas aiding the police by increasing visibility. COP units deter crime by their mere presence and visibility to the general public. Using police radios and cell phones, team members are able to communicate directly with officers and report suspicious activity and crimes in progress. Much of the COP units’ function, however, is the reporting of quality of life issues. By locating and reporting issues that contribute to criminal activity, these teams are able to fix the proverbial “Broken Window”. All members have completed training in geography, radio use, patrol techniques, have ridden with a police officer and attend additional ongoing training throughout the year. We are currently looking for more volunteers. If you are interested, please contact the Crime Prevention Unit at 393-7750.

Meet Officer Collins

Ofc. Collins is a 3 year veteran of the Gainesville Police Department. Prior to transferring to the Crime Prevention Unit, she worked on uniformed patrol. Ofc. Collins is a graduate from the University of Florida with a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminology. Prior to working for GPD, Ofc. Collins was employed by the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office and worked as a 911 call taker in the Combined Communications Center.

She is excited about working with the community and has a lot of ideas for programs that will be implemented in the future that will have a positive impact on the community. With the success of these programs, she hopes to reduce crime and continue to make Gainesville’s communities a safe and desirable place to live for all.

Meet Officer Tierney

Ofc. Nicole Tierney has been serving the Gainesville Police Department for two and a half years. Before becoming the Crime Prevention Officer for District One, she worked as a patrol officer assigned to Juliet Zone. Ofc. Tierney graduated from Florida State University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminology. Preceding her employment with GPD, Ofc. Tierney taught Intensive Reading to juniors and seniors at a high school in a neighboring county.

Ofc. Tierney’s goals include extending community participation in the volunteer program, increasing involvement in neighborhood crime watch meetings, and assisting with the development of newly designed programs implemented by Ofc. Collins.
Protect Yourself Against Craigslist Scams

Craigslist is a great service but if you deal with people you aren’t meeting face to face, you risk being scammed.

You can sidestep would-be scammers by following these common sense rules:

• Deal locally with folks you can meet in person – follow this one rule and avoid 99% of scam attempts.
• Never wire funds via Western Union, Money Gram or any other wire service – anyone who asks you to do so is a scammer.
• Fake cashier checks and money orders are common and banks will cash them and then hold you responsible when the fake is discovered weeks later.
• Craigslist is not involved in any transaction and does not handle payments, guarantee transactions, provide escrow services, or offer “buyer protection” or “seller certification”.
• Never give out financial information (bank account number, social security number, eBay/Pay Pal info, etc.).
• Avoid deals involving shipping or escrow services and know that only a scammer will “guarantee” your transaction.
• Do not rent housing without seeing the interior, or purchase expensive items sight unseen. In all likelihood that housing unit is not actually for rent and that cheap item does not exist.

Most scams involve one or more of the following:

• Inquiry from someone far away, often in another country.
• Western Union, Money Gram, cashiers’s check, money order, shipping, escrow service, or a “guarantee”.
• Inability or refusal to meet face-to-face before consummating transaction.

Make sure you are really on Craigslist. There are some sites that attempt to capitalize on Craigslist’s success. Some have similar domain names and owner’s hope is that you will make a mistake typing in the URL and end up on their site.

The real web address for Craigslist is www.craigslist.org.

Make sure you haven’t ended up at www.craigslist.com or www.craiglist.org or some other common misspelling. You’d be surprised how many people type in the wrong address and end up somewhere they didn’t mean to be.

Who should you notify about fraud or scam attempts? Call the FTC toll free hotline: 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357). If you are defrauded by someone you met in person, contact your local police department. If you happen to see something on Craigslist that looks scammy, you should send an email to abuse@craigslist.org and give them as much detail as you can about the listing. If you’re selling something and you think a con artist has expressed interest, forward it to the same above email address.

Officer Kim Rosell

GPD OFFICER OF THE MONTH, JANUARY 2012

Ofc. Kim Rosell has demonstrated the true meaning of teamwork by placing the needs of her shift and the City above her own. Ofc. Rosell has a passion for forensic science and is currently the assigned Evidence Technician for evening shift. She responded to a call at the Oaks Mall to assist Officer Tirado with a counterfeiting case that involved several items that were collected for evidence. She consistently rises to the occasion on every call and is a leader on her shift.

Since October 2009 Ofc. Rosell has had 10 latent prints which have confirmed suspect’s identity and within the last 2 months, has had 4 confirmed print hits. All of this processing is done while still covering her assigned zone. Ofc. Rosell goes above and beyond in order to develop her skills as a Forensic Investigator and makes a point of attending training offered by the Forensic Unit. Ofc. Rosell takes initiative to better her skills and then helps to educate others. One example - she showed the Forensic Investigators how to use a Visio Crime Scene Reconstruction program to re-create a crime scene. Not only did she have the 4 print hits, Ofc. Rosell also had 3 physical arrests this month.

Her diligent effort to work crime scenes not only helps solve crimes, but it helps achieve the Department’s goals of a significant reduction in UCR crimes. Because of the above incidents and many more, Officer Rosell has been selected as Officer of the Month for January 2012.
Parents – what can you do?

Know your child – listen to your child, ask about his/her beliefs and feelings so you can communicate within their world and be aware of changes in your child’s life. Keep open communication lines to discuss these changes.

Provide opportunities for your child to choose healthy friends, such as social groups, sports, church groups, parties with parental supervision and community service.

Be active with your children in outside activities; such as sponsoring programs, helping other children to get involved and giving financial support.

Provide limits and routines for your children. Let children be involved in the planning process for their limits and routines. Enforce these by follow through and making very clear the consequences of poor choices.

Teach and believe that mistakes are opportunities to learn.

Have family meetings so you can share compliments, planning and problem solving.

Make sure the message of love gets through by creating closeness and trust through above mentioned activities.

Talk to your child about gangs and the consequences of gang membership.

Practice mutual respect with your child.

Gang membership exacts a terrible toll from the lives of all who are in contact with the member. Parents and relatives of gang members live in double fear – for their own safety, for the safety of the other non-gang family members, and for the survival of their gang member relative.

Gang membership, although a temporary phase for some youth, will shape his/her future. All levels of formal education are discarded because they counter the gang’s objectives. Gang members, not killed or seriously injured, often develop patterns of alcohol and narcotics abuse and have extensive police records that will limit their employment opportunities.

It’s especially important to stay focused when you are driving on a highway or freeway and through a work zone.

Avoid slowing down to look at a crash or other accident.

Parents—how can you protect your child from joining a gang?

Hopefully, these actions can deter your children from joining gangs or becoming “Wanna-bees” who are youth not yet gang members but aspire to be members.
Recently, we have experienced a rise in violent crimes in our city, to include aggravated assaults, batteries, robberies, and homicides. Violent crimes include those that involve a weapon and/or crimes that leave a victim seriously injured. Gun violence has increasingly become an issue not only in our local area, but nationwide. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the US experiences epidemic levels of gun violence, claiming over 30,000 lives annually. For every person who dies from a gun shot wound, two others are injured. Gun violence touches every segment of our society. It increases the probability of deaths in incidents of domestic violence, raises the likelihood of fatalities by those who intend to injure others and among those who attempt suicide, places children and young people at special risk, and disproportionately affects communities of color. While there are laws in place that support gun control such as requiring background checks for gun purchasers and waiting periods, there are still numerous weapons being obtained illegally by criminals. Many guns are reported stolen in residential burglaries and many of these weapons end up being carried by the suspect or sold on the street illegally. There have been many cases where officers have located weapons in vehicles on traffic stops where the owner did not possess a concealed weapons permit. In an effort to get some of the illegally carried guns off the street and curb gun violence, the Gainesville Police Department hosted a gun buy-back event in early December. Citizens were able to turn over any weapon to law enforcement, no questions asked, and were then compensated with gift cards. A total of seventeen guns were collected. The Gainesville Police Department is committed to reducing violent crimes and making our city a safer place for all.

Ofc. Charlene Collins

Members of the Gainesville community and surrounding areas have teamed up to become part of a group affiliated with Occupy Wall Street. Occupy Gainesville applied for a permit to stay in the Bo Diddley Downtown Plaza 24 hours a day, seven days a week with an open end date in early October 2011. The participants are united in their representation of the “99%”, which are those people who are not involved in day to day dealings with a bulk of America’s money.

The participants of Occupy Gainesville have been compliant, respectful, and polite towards all entities of government and the citizens of Gainesville. They are a loosely organized group that does not have specified leadership and rule by committee. In that respect, it appears that the group takes much time to decide and solidify what they plan to do. They have been staged in the Plaza during the daytime under a 10’ x 10’ canopy and at night on the sidewalks surrounding the Plaza. This has caused some concern for the citizens who work in the area and government officials that oversee the Plaza, which is a city park. Many measures have been taken to coordinate the different city departments that have to maintain the area of the Plaza. Government officials have also worked closely with members of Occupy Gainesville in order to educate them on the laws surrounding their actions and to assist them in their safety while occupying the downtown area.

The Occupy Gainesville occupation of the Plaza creates some dynamics that the city government has been trying to balance. The occupiers have attracted other citizens to congregate in the Plaza who would not ordinarily remain there. These non-occupiers have caused some safety issues for occupiers and other citizens who frequent the downtown due to alcohol or chemical dependencies they struggle with. This is not the norm but the exception that must be carefully watched and dealt with quickly so all involved are safe and the quality of life in the area is not disrupted.

The occupiers themselves have also, on occasion, created concerns by their plans to execute pre-planned violations of city ordinances by staying in the park after hours. This is in an effort to purposefully be arrested to make a statement and get media attention. These incidents have been dealt with extreme professionalism by the Gainesville Police Department. These issues remain as the occupiers are steadfast in their resolve to continue their fight for their cause and remain in the Plaza. The occupation will continue with no end in sight and the City of Gainesville and the Gainesville Police Department will continue in their efforts to maintain safety and rights of all involved.

Lt. Brian Helmerson

If you wish to contact Lt. Helmer-son, he can be reached at helmersobj@cityofgainesville.org
Kid’s Corner

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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 3/15/2012. 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!