



# Sheriff®

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## IT TAKES A COMMUNITY TO PREVENT CRIME



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# CRIME REDUCTION

## You Must Engage the Community

By Lt. Kathleen Carey, PIO,  
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Explorers applying forensic science investigative techniques by lifting fingerprints at the Crime Museum.

Involving community citizens is an essential strategy for reducing crime. There will always be a place to react to crime using tried and true law enforcement activity like patrols, arrests, investigations, interrogations, prosecutions, and incarcerations. However, to ignore proactive approaches can be shortsighted when trying to make a long range difference in creating a culture for safer neighborhoods.

The Newport News Virginia Sheriff's Office has programs that appeal to young people, as well as catering to senior citizens.

### Learning For Life By Exploring

The Newport News Sheriff's Office (NNSO) is offering real life career training by being a sponsor to the Law Enforcement

Explorers program. The program is open to young men and woman ages 14 and not yet 21. The program provides career orientation experiences, leadership opportunities, and community service activities. The primary goals of the program are to help young adults choose a career path within law enforcement and to challenge them to become responsible citizens of their communities and the nation.

Developing good citizenship and quality character is essential to long term influence on a community. The cliché 'children are our future' could not be more true. Peggy Howard, Executive Director Community Outreach and Programs, oversees the NNSO's Explorers and says it offers enrichment opportunities "so they see a different side of the law and not so much that we're the bad guys who lock people up, but that we do a lot



*Turnout was high at the August 15, 2013 NNSO Shred Day. The TRIAD program helps protect citizens against identity theft. Youth Explorers volunteered at the event as part of the community service component of the Law Enforcement Explorers program.*

in the community.” This why community service is one of the expectations for the Explorers.

The diverse make-up of Post 32 is one of the positive aspects of the group. The ten participants are in different grades, and therefore, at different stages of exploring their futures. They are different genders, ethnicities, and attend different schools. All of those factors play a part in how they interact with, learn from, and support one another. Exposure to things outside their normal activities is remarkable to watch.

“Whenever we have an opportunity to have young people who are at-risk, and not everyone in the group is at-risk to come into the criminal justice system,” said Howard, “but some of them are. So now we have an opportunity to have them in a more positive environment. That adds to public safety because maybe they won’t become a statistic.”

The NNSO recruits members during the school year and then exposes them to learning activities over the course of summer vacation. Asked why they joined Explorers, Anita Grubbs said, “It was an opportunity that I couldn’t pass up just because you get an inside view of how the Sheriff’s Office works.” For Natasha Boyd it is about finding something productive to do with her free time. She said, “Well, I wanted to do it because I wanted to do different things instead of being in the house.”

The NNSO program highlights include: ride-alongs, attending court hearings followed by Q & A opportunities with judges, demonstrations by the Sheriff’s Office NCIU (Narcotics Criminal Interdiction Unit) and their K-9 partners, and field trips.

This year, Sheriff Gabriel A. “Gabe” Morgan was among the adult chaperones for a trip to Washington, D.C. and a visit to the Crime Museum which includes not only exhibits and history lessons, but also hands-on learning opportunities like

with the museum’s forensic science laboratory. Here the Explorers learned the real science behind a Crime Scene Investigator (CSI).

Morgan brought with him more than 35-years of law enforcement experience, including being a Counter Terrorism Officer in the U.S. Army and chief investigator for other police agencies. Morgan’s expertise made the museum experience even more captivating because he was able to weave-in personal stories and offer detailed explanations of some of the museum exhibits: firearms & ballistics, fingerprints workshop, blood-stain pattern evidence, and how an autopsy is performed. “He was able to enhance that activity through his vast knowledge,” said Howard. “Plus it gave the Explorers the chance to interact with the Sheriff one-on-one and learn from him.”

Sheriff Morgan added, “The one-on-one interaction allows the Explorers to feel special. To feel they are important goes a long way to building their self esteem.”

### **Triad Leading The Way For Senior Citizens**

The NNSO re-activated the City of Newport News TRIAD partnership in 2007. TRIAD is a partnership between public service agencies and senior citizens dedicated to the exchange of ideas and programs that improve the wellbeing of seniors. The concept is nationwide. In Virginia, the Office of the Attorney General oversees TRIAD. The Newport News TRIAD is one of the state’s 225 chapters. Signatures on the local cooperative agreement include Sheriff Gabe Morgan; the Virginia Office of the Attorney General; the City of Newport News Commonwealth’s Attorney, Police Department, Fire Department, Social Services, and Parks and Recreation; AARP (American Association of Retired Persons); Peninsula Agency on Aging; and RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program).

Vickie Gaffney, NNSO Community Resource Officer, holds meetings four times a year. Additionally, she participates in a regional group that uses the acronym S.A.L.T., or Senior And Law enforcement Together. This broadens the exchange of ideas beyond the borders of a city and helps get ahead of frauds and scams aimed directly at senior citizens.

Gaffney explains why seniors are preyed upon, “They are trusting. They want companionship, someone to talk to.” According to the Office of the Attorney General’s website, con artists may spend hours talking to prospective victims. They establish a trusting relationship with an elderly person. Isolation and loneliness, “sometimes cause them to reach out to telemarketers for company, and thus lay the groundwork for their being conned,” according to the site.

The primary goal of TRIAD is to develop, expand, and implement effective crime prevention and educational programs for older community members. This is a growing population with 1 in every 8 individuals in the United States being over the age of 65. By 2030, that number is projected to be 1 in every 4. An aging population has special needs with respect to



*During a fieldtrip with NNSO Law Enforcement Explorers, Newport News Sheriff Gabe Morgan describes bullet entry wounds in the autopsy workshop at the Crime Museum in Washington, D.C.*

victimization and fear of crime, perceived and actual loss, and the sense of being alone and unprotected. The NNSO agrees that these needs can and should be met by law enforcement agencies working together with the area's premier organizations of older citizens.

Project Lifesaver is a rapid response search and rescue program for adults and children who wander due to Alzheimer's, dementia, Autism, Down syndrome, traumatic brain injury, and other related cognitive disorders.

File of Life packets are given to senior citizens and others with medical needs in order for them to compile their medical information and emergency contacts in one place. In the event of an emergency, first responders to a residence know to go to the kitchen refrigerator and look for the magnetized File of Life envelope; first responders to a traffic incident look in the vehicle glove compartment for the same document. Valuable time is saved in treating victims when current information is located in one place.

S.O.S. (Safety for Our Seniors) is designed for the senior living alone. Enrolled clients get a wellness call every weekday morning, except holidays. If the senior fails to answer, a deputy is dispatched to their residence to check if they are okay.

In addition to the above signature programs, the NNSO also holds its bi-annual free shredding events with partner Stealth Shredding, Inc. Destroying personal identifying documents is a way to help from becoming a victim of identity theft. Thousands of citizens have brought truck loads of paper transformed into not much more than confetti. In fact, at the

recent August 15, 2013 event, "Stealth estimates they collected approximately 32,000 pounds of paper," said Gaffney.

Speaking engagements about the latest frauds and scams being tried in the community are also a part of the TRIAD programs offered by the NNSO. Crime prevention tips are also offered through the speaker's bureau.

### Alternative Jail Diversion Initiatives

The City of Newport News continues its efforts to model crime prevention strategies after evidence-based initiatives proven to work in other communities.

In 2004, High Point, North Carolina first demonstrated the Drug Market Intervention strategy (DMI) as a way to combat overt drug markets. Toxic to any community is the public street corner dealing and drug houses. The DMI model works to permanently shut down these neighborhood operations by going after the low-level dealer offering them a choice between entering a rehabilitative treatment plan or going to jail.

The NNSO joined the effort put in place by the city police department. This is a holistic approach offering a variety of second chance services to the offender. And the approach requires collaboration to be successful, noted Howard, "While the police department led the effort, the Sheriff's Office and others assisted. We would go into the community and talk with folks. We would make sure they were aware of upcoming meetings and the benefits of them coming to those meetings." These relationships pay off. Not only do the various government and community agencies come together and share ideas, but members of the public are given a voice in the process. Members of the MDI team listened to their concerns and their intelligence. After all, who better to identify which corners, empty lots, and abandoned buildings have become the open-air drug markets than the residents of that community?

Offenders are provided the chance to turn their lives around by getting drug treatment, job skills and interview training, financial management classes, access to social services such as housing and food stamps, and more. Those selected to participate in the program are expected to follow strict guidelines. Failure to comply, results in incarceration.

Direct and indirect harm of neighborhood drug markets is invariably seen in poor, minority, and disadvantaged communities. They support drug addiction, draw local youth into the drug trade, draw drive-through buyers into the neighborhood, create attractive targets for armed robbers, fuel turf wars and gang violence, drive down property values, and drive out businesses.

The DMI team helps to minimize the use of law enforcement and build a strong endorsement from the affected community.

Sheriff Morgan said, "Engaging your community to create a culture of crime reduction is an operational imperative consisting of a multi-dimensional approach. The goal is to change the views of the community to ownership of the solutions with law enforcement playing the supportive role." ✪