

Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission Community Policing Program Annual Report

Agency: La Plata Police Department

Region #: 3

Reporting Period: 2018

Agency contact name: Chief Carl Schinner

Phone #: 301-934-1500

Email: cschinner@townoflaplata.org

Number of sworn members: 21

Non-sworn members: 1.5

Population: 9,365

Square miles serviced by the agency: 6.95

On July 28, 2018, the La Plata Police Department (LPPD) became the smallest law enforcement agency in Maryland to earn national accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). In the final report prepared by the assessment team, who spent several days onsite at LPPD noted, after interviewing residents, business owners, special interest group leaders, elected officials, and LPPD staff, “Crime prevention and community involvement is clearly a strength for the La Plata Police Department. The agency is visible, proactive and community oriented and has successfully engaged its community in a partnership to maintain a safe community. Community involvement is a priority for the agency.”

La Plata Police host 5th annual block party

25 local business partners participate in day of festivities

By PAUL LAGASSE
plagasse@somdnews.com

For the fifth year in a row, the La Plata Police Department invited families to join them for a party in Caroline Park near Kent Avenue that featured hot dogs, face painting, a bean-bag toss, the traditional giant water slide and an inflatable obstacle course.

There was plenty for adults as well, including health screenings and medical referrals, voter registration, information on food pantries and addiction services in the community, and opportunities to meet and chat

See **PARTY**
Page A11



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL LAGASSE
Mike Fortineau of Faith Temple Baptist Church in La Plata manned the grill throughout the 5th annual Kent Avenue Corridor Block Party on Saturday. Faith Temple was one of 25 partners participating in this year's event.

LPPD's largest community policing event occurs in the Kent Avenue Corridor. An area where some residents are financially disadvantaged. At the annual event, LPPD brings in a plethora of partners to include:

- Charles County Department of Health
- Charles County Department of Social Service
- Charles County State's Attorney's Office
- Charles Regional Medical Center
- Charles County NAACP
- Lifestyles of Maryland, Inc.
- Catherine Foundation Pregnancy Center
- College of Southern Maryland
- Willing Helpers Society
- Faith Based Partners
- Law Enforcement Partners
- Tri-County Community Action Team
- Member of the La Plata Business Association

While LPPD officers interact with members of the community and children enjoy a large waterslide and inflatable obstacle course, LPPD's community partners conduct health screenings, provide information on eldercare and childcare, give away backpacks containing school supplies, food staple items, and several tons of fresh produce.



“It’s more than just a party,” Charles County State’s Attorney Tony Covington told the Maryland Independent. “It’s a good way to provide services to a community that could use a little bit extra help now and then, although there are probably times that every community could use help like this, too.”

LPPD holds two block parties a year, the annual block party in the Kent Avenue Corridor every August just prior to school beginning. The second block party is held in a different community each year.

Home/Small Business Video Mini-Grants



In partnership with the La Plata Town Council, LPPD offers home video mini-grants to residents and small businesses in an effort to help reduce crime. Since the grant’s inception, approximately 50 residents and small businesses have received awards. The one caveat to the grant program is the recipient must share any images captured with the LPPD for official investigations. Images captured by grant awardees have been instrumental in solving numerous crimes.

Replica Handgun Dangers

After several replica airsoft and bb-guns were located in the Kent Avenue Corridor, with the majority of the incidents involving middle schoolers, LPPD put together an education program to warn youth about the dangers of carrying a replica firearm in public. This community policing initiative was called Pizza and Paintball with a Cop.

Prior to eating and paintball, members of LPPD’s firearms staff educated students, selected by the administration at Milton Somers Middle School, on the dangers of firearms in general, and replica weapons specifically.



After training, the group enjoyed lunch together and then traveled to Southern Maryland Paintball for a time of fun. The paintball fields served as an example of the proper place to safely use airsoft equipment.

Operation Prevent Porch Piracy



Over the past few years, La Plata residents experienced an increase in parcel thefts, especially during the holiday season. In an effort to prevent package thefts during the holiday season, LPPD allow residents to have parcel packages delivered to the station. Residents can then make an appointment to pick up the parcels. Since the inception of Operation Prevent Porch Piracy, reports of package thefts have decreased dramatically in La Plata.

Safe Transactions

In an effort to ensure the safety of both buyer and sellers, LPPD was one of the first agencies in Maryland to offer a Safe Transactions Program. La Plata citizens and business owners can arrange to meet individuals in the station parking lot or lobby to ensure a safe transaction. LPPD officers will also check a VIN or serial number to ensure the item being purchased is not stolen.



SAFE TRANSACTIONS



Counterfeit Currency Initiative

La Plata businesses from time-to-time experience losses due to counterfeit currency. Annually, LPPD officers visit local businesses and remind them how to spot counterfeit currency, provide them with an educational poster on how to recognize counterfeit currency, and provide local businesses with a detection pen(s).

Moreover, annually, a LPPD commander attends a La Plata Business Association meeting to discuss regional crime trends and ways a business can make itself a harder target.

Home Security Surveys

Officers certified in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design or CPTED (pronounced sep-ted), provide residents with a free home security survey. CPTED is a crime prevention philosophy based on the theory that proper design and effective use of the building environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, as well as an improvement in the quality of life



Business Security Surveys

The La Plata Police Department offers the business community the service of a trained crime prevention specialist who will come to their business and perform a security survey. The officer will give pointers on proper lighting, locks, and landscaping. The officer can also speak to employees about robbery prevention and how to respond in the event of a robbery along with other applicable topics.

Coffee with a Cop

The Chief along with members of Command Staff hold several Coffee with a Cop events per year. LPPD has found “Coffee with Cop” is a unique way to strengthen the partnership between the police department and residents and business owners it serves. An open dialogue breaks down barriers in establishing a true partnership between police department and the community.



Public Information Campaigns



LPPD works diligently to raise awareness on public welfare and safety topics, especially those that effect La Plata’s most vulnerable citizens, children and the elderly. Every April, LPPD actively raises awareness through social media about child abuse. LPPD also actively participates in domestic violence education, elder abuse, and pet safety during extreme weather conditions.

Backpacks of Love for Foster Children

LPPD is a clearinghouse in Charles County for the Blue Ribbon Project - Backpacks of Love for Foster Children program. LPPD, or another law enforcement agency in Charles County will deliver an age appropriate backpack containing clothing, hygiene items, school supplies, and an age suitable toy or game within the first critical hours of placement. This program is designed to assist not only the child, but the foster parents as well.



Vacation Checks



La Plata Police Department

VACATION CHECKS

LPPD offers its residents and small business owners vacation checks. While residents or business owners are away, an officer will check their residence or small business on a daily basis. If the officer notices anything unusual or out of place, they will alert the homeowner or business owner.

National Night Out

National Night Out (NNO) is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live. NNO enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances.

Annually, over a dozen La Plata communities and churches participate in NNO.



Explorer Post 1888



Law Enforcement Exploring is a hands-on program open to young men and women who have completed the 6th grade through 20 years old, interested in a career in law enforcement or a related field in the criminal justice system.

The program offers young adults a personal awareness of the criminal justice system through training, practical experiences, competition and other activities.

Additionally, the program promotes personal growth through character development, respect for the rule of law, physical fitness, good citizenship and patriotism.

The La Plata Explorer Post #1888, meets twice a month. Explorers routinely participate in community events to include 5Ks, parades, and concerts.

Special Olympics

Special Olympics strives to create a better world by fostering the acceptance and inclusion of all people. Through the power of sports, people with intellectual disabilities discover new strengths and abilities, skills and success. Our athletes find joy, confidence and fulfillment -- on the playing field and in life. They also inspire people in their communities and elsewhere to open their hearts to a wider world of human talents and potential.



Annually, LPPD participates in several Special Olympic events to include:

- Tip-A-Cop
- Cops on Roof Tops
- Medal Presentations

Toys for Tots



The goal of Marine Toys for Tots is through the gift of a new toy help bring the joy of Christmas and send a message of hope to America's less fortunate children.

Annually, the La Plata residents, business owners, and town staff generously donate to the Toys for Tots Campaign. LPPD serves as a collection point for the Toys for Tots Campaign, with officers delivering the new unwrapped gifts to a regional collection point for distribution.

Shop with a Cop

Shop with a Cop is a program to assist economically less fortunate youth during the Holiday Season.

Annually, LPPD participates in the Charles County Sheriff's Office Shop with a Cop event. Local youth are escorted to the Waldorf Wal-Mart to purchase items for themselves and their families. The youth then travel back with their law enforcement partner to the Elks Lodge where everyone enjoys lunch while local volunteers wrap the youth's presents.



A Night at Camden Yards



In partnership with the Baltimore Orioles, Charles County Black Police Officers Association, Charles County Chapter of the NAACP, and Island Music, LPPD hosted a night at Camden Yards for youth who might never have the opportunity to watch a major-league baseball game in person.



Drive Like Your Kids Live Here

Annually, LPPD distributes approximately four dozen “Drive Like Your Kids Live Here” signs to be placed in neighborhoods to remind motorists to slow down. This initiative is coupled with a proactive pedestrian safety social media campaign.



Child Safety Seat Inspections/Installations

LPPD has several officers who are certified to inspect and install child safety seats. Safety seat inspections and installations are conducted by appointment.



Dedicated Impaired Driving Checkpoints

Annually, LPPD host a multi-jurisdictional impaired driving checkpoint dedicated to the memory of Autumn Jenkins. Autumn, a local volunteer firefighter, was killed by an impaired driver in April 2015.

Ride-Along Program



The La Plata Police Department Ride Along Program is designed to help educate the community about what the police department does daily and to help residents become familiar with the officers and the department. The program is intended to develop partnerships with the community through interaction. The Ride-Along Program is designed to foster a better understanding of the challenges, hazards and rewards of being a police officer in the La Plata community.

Active Shooter Training

Active shooter incidents are often unpredictable and evolve quickly. In the midst of the chaos, anyone can play an integral role in mitigating the impacts of an active shooter incident.

Trained LPPD officers instruct local private school administrators and other organizations on response to an active shooter incident. LPPD's instructors training was provided by the United States Department of Justice and Texas State University.



Crime Watch Council



The Crime Watch Council meets monthly to discuss quality-of-life and crime issues in La Plata. The Council is made up of representatives from various communities within La Plata. Members of the Crime Watch Council also participate on hiring and promotional boards, as well as assisting the agency in evaluating and awarding mini-grants.

Partnering with the La Plata Business Association



LPPD routinely supports the La Plata Business Association and its member throughout the year at various events. These events include:

- Chick-Fil-A's Military Appreciation Day
- Rocktober Fest
- Shop Small Saturday

Actively Participating in Town Sponsored Events

LPPD routinely supports a plethora of events hosted by the Town of La Plata. These events include:

- Celebrate La Plata – Tornado Perseverance
- Memorial Day Celebration
- Children's Summer Shows
- Friday Night Concert Series
- Watermelon Bash
- Fall Festival
- Old Tyme Holiday Gathering
- Veterans Day Parade

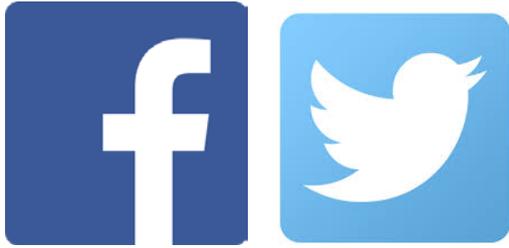


Actively Participate in Other Community Events



- Alzheimer's 5K/Walk
- Lifestyles of Maryland 5K/Walk
- Homeless 5K/Walk
- Humane Society's 5K/Walk for Animals
- Department of Social Service (DSS) 5K/Walk
- DSS Unity in the Community Event
- La Plata High School Homecoming Parade
- A Point in Time Homeless Census
- Shamrock 5K/Walk
- Lifestyles of Maryland Holiday Food Drives

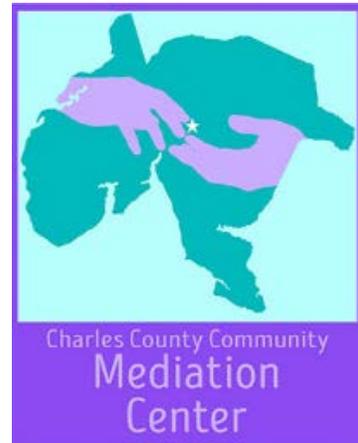
Social Media



LPPD is active on social media. LPPD uses these to keep the community aware of quality-of-life, crime, and traffic related issues. Moreover, the agency monitors local business and home owner association pages in an effort to respond in a timely manner to community concerns. Currently, the La Plata Police Department has over 8,100 followers on Facebook.

Charles County Community Mediation Center

Recently, LPPD met with the Charles County Community Mediation Center in an effort to promote voluntary and confidential mediation. The mediation is designed to take place at a time and location convenient to all participants. The mediators are highly trained volunteers and represent the diversity of Charles County. They guide participants through an informal process that helps those involved to identify the issues and generate their own resolutions. Mediators are non-judgmental, do not take sides or tell you what to do. The mediation is free of charge.



Opioid Education

LPPD teamed up with Charles County Health Officer, Dr. Dianna Abney to educate La Plata residents on the dangers of prescription drugs, heroin, and synthetic opioids. During the two-hour training class, students are instructed on how to use and provide two doses of the lifesaving drug, Narcan.