

NEWS

You Can Use...

JACKSONVILLE BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT
Gene Paul N. Smith, Chief of Police

May 2023



Greetings All,

The Police Department organized two meetings in May, with numerous agencies in attendance, to discuss and plan for the Orange Crush event scheduled to take place in Duval County on June 16 – 19, 2023. At this time, there are no permitted events at the beaches. Beaches officials, law enforcement, and staff will continue to monitor the event closely and work to stay apprised of evolving plans. While there are no permitted events on public and, officials are prepared for a very busy weekend. Due to the history of the event at its various locations, police departments across the area will assist to ensure that residents and visitors alike enjoy a safe weekend at the beach.

Our officers assisted the Fernandina Beach Police Department by sending officers to help with their annual Isle of Eight Shrimp Festival.

Police Department volunteers and Sergeant Tator did a wonderful job conducting our Annual Kids Fishing Rodeo which emphasized youth involvement in fishing instead of drug use.

In 1962, President Kennedy proclaimed May 15 as National Peace Officers Memorial Day, and the calendar week in which May 15 falls, as National Police Week. Established by a joint resolution of Congress in 1962, National Police Week pays special recognition to those law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty for the safety and protection of others. Our agency paid tribute to Florida's fallen officers in a ceremony at our police headquarters. We were joined by our neighbors at the Neptune Beach Police Department, Atlantic Beach Police Department, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, and the State Attorney's Office, 4th Judicial Circuit of Florida. As usual, our honor guard did a fantastic job of putting the entire event together and gave a flawless performance during the ceremony.

In May we celebrated National Volunteer Day. Commander Bingham quoted the following in a social media post: "The Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association has, and will always remain, such a critical daily part of our organization. Twenty-three years ago, a group of volunteers took it upon themselves to establish the CPAAA with one clear mission: We want to assist those who assist others. You have helped in every section and division and have taken on so many tasks over the last two decades, that JBPD would simply not be able to be as successful as we are without your help. The CPAAA and the Citizens On Patrol are both critical to our past and present successes. There are still a few employees here who remember what it was like before the CPAAA began. When you really take time to think about all the great work you have completed, it truly is an honor to know you as talented and amazing individuals and part of our JB family. You will always continue to be a valuable part of this department's mission. From so many outstanding interactions with many CPAAA members over the years, I know CPAAA completes their mission for the greater good and does not do it to seek glory or want the spotlight on them. However, great performances should always be appreciated and highlighted. The CPAAA has always stood right by us to help in any way they possibly could. You have been there for the good times and the bad and through our losses and celebrations. When we talk about JBPD family, it could not be complete without each and every one of you. Thank you for all you have done and for all the great things to come in the future! On behalf of Chief Smith, and all the men and women at the JBPD, I truly want to send our sincere thanks and admiration to all of you!"

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our longtime friend and brother, William J. "Bill" Ostrowski. Bill Ostrowski joined the Jacksonville Beach Police Department family in 2007, when he enrolled in the 19th class of the Citizen Police Academy (CPA). Eager to volunteer, he joined the Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association (CPAAA) and was elected Vice-President in 2008. We all knew he had a deep devotion to continue to help others, and it showed when he passed his field training and became a member of the Citizens On Patrol (COP) unit in 2009. Bill was constantly volunteering to ride patrol shifts to help the officers on the street in whatever capacity he could. While continuing with his COP duties, Bill became a two-term President of the CPAAA from 2010 to 2014. Still not content to rest in those critical volunteer positions, Bill accepted a part-time position within the police department as the Volunteer Coordinator in 2013. For the last ten years, Bill supervised the COP program and assisted with numerous special events. Bill never sought the spotlight and preferred to work "behind the scenes." He always spoke highly of all the volunteers within the program and all of their special accomplishments. In 2017, he put together a detailed informational packet for an article in Law and Order magazine that put a spotlight on our volunteer organization as a model to follow. While he chose not to be the focus of any special attention, his natural abilities and service deserved distinct recognition for special jobs well done. We will miss him.

Patrol officers responded to an armed disturbance at a short-term vacation rental (STVR). After some investigation, GIU and SIU detectives secured the scene and served a search warrant at that location. Approximately 11 pounds of marijuana and two firearms were located and seized from the residence. One of the occupants was arrested for Possession of a Controlled Substance and Possession of Marijuana more than 20 Grams.

We responded to a shooting call in the Pablo Beach, South neighborhood. Seventeen shots were fired at a residence, and thankfully no one was injured. The case is under active investigation.

We hired two new officers in May, leaving us four total vacancies. Our two part-time officers are progressing well through training and should be in solo status within a month. We hired a part-time officer to specifically assist us with planning special events. The retired officer has extensive special event experience and will lessen the burden on staff.

The Jacksonville Beach Police Department was notified by the Florida Law Enforcement Liaison Program and the Florida Department of Transportation that we placed within the top three rankings based on our agency's size category in the Florida Law Enforcement Liaison Traffic Safety Challenge. We will be recognized in an awards ceremony on Friday, July 28, in Orlando, Florida. This challenge recognizes our efforts in developing and implementing a comprehensive traffic safety program that may make a significant and positive impact in our community by reducing traffic-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities. This award is even more meaningful because of our circumstances. We placed in the top three with our size agencies in Florida, which could mean agencies with up to 150 officers (we have 70). All of these other agencies have dedicated traffic units that are much larger than ours. We have a four-person traffic unit that was very active, but unfortunately it's not staffed currently because of personnel shortages. Patrol officers basically did all of this traffic work on top of their regular duties. The main focus of traffic enforcement is always to reduce injury-roadway crashes, which we have done for three straight years.

The Jacksonville Beach Police Department received a call from a person who believed they spotted a suspect and baby from the earlier Amber Alert activated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Officers arrived on scene, and the subject was not there. However, officers received a second call that said the suspect and baby were in the area of 12th Avenue, South. Officers continued to search the area and located the suspect with the baby walking onto the beach. The baby was safely recovered, and the suspect was taken into custody without incident.

We would like to thank Wounded Warrior Project and their partners for providing our agency's peer counselors with ASIST training earlier this week. Raising awareness of veteran suicide and how to talk to veterans dealing with thoughts of suicide are the main principles behind Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).

Detective Sergeant C. David Young retired after 27 years of service! David began his career as a Reserve Officer in February 1995. In March 1996, he transitioned to full-time Police Officer. He was promoted to Corporal in October 1999, and then to Sergeant in August 2002. His final assignment was the GIU Detective Sergeant. Prior to his service to the citizens of Jacksonville Beach, David served in the U.S. Navy from 1985 until 1996. His last assignment was at Naval Station Mayport as a Dog Handler. David will be missed by all he has worked with over the years, especially his fellow officers and civilians. He will begin the next chapter of his life with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service in June 2023.

Detectives responded to a deceased male in a front yard in the Pablo Beach, South neighborhood. The male had one gunshot wound. The case is under active investigation.

The U.S. Marshals Service called for assistance at a local hotel. They had two murder suspects from Georgia confirmed to be inside the hotel. Both suspects were arrested, and multiple firearms were seized without incident.

We began our Hurricane season preparations in the city, and we conducted meetings and performed tabletop exercises with other members of Duval County.

Memorial Day Weekend brought tens of thousands of visitors to our city. Despite only having approximately two dozen employees on duty at any one given time, our officers, civilian staff, and volunteers did a wonderful job keeping our city, citizens, and visitors safe. Statistics at a glance (Saturday through Monday) are as follows:

Calls for Service - 564
Officer Responses - 952
Traffic Stops - 192
Arrests - 22
Gun Cases - 4

We assisted Ocean Rescue with a search for a missing swimmer in the area of 2nd Avenue, South. GIU detectives responded, and SIU detectives deployed our drones to assist in the search. Although an active search continued for days, the missing swimmer could not be located. Unfortunately, three days later, his body was located by a paddleboarder just offshore. Detectives notified his family members.

On Memorial Day at 11:00 PM, officers responded to a disturbance on the boardwalk. They found 10 children, ages 3 to 16 years old. With permission from their parents, they took a JTA bus to the beach from northwest Jacksonville to attend a child's birthday party at the beach. They missed their bus back home, and they had no phone, no money, and could provide little information concerning next of kin. Officers were finally able to contact some of their parents, but only one parent had a car and came to the scene. Officers used one of our undercover SUVs, gathered the remaining children, borrowed a few car seats, and drove the children home. None of the children had been reported missing, and we received no calls concerning their whereabouts as of 1130 PM. The Department of Children and Families was notified of the situation by our department.

As always, thank you for your support!


Gene Paul N. Smith

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