



Sharing Ohio's Best Program

Recognizing Outstanding Community Policing



Agency of the Month

Strongsville Police Department

December 2021

The Strongsville Police Department is proud of its relationship with the community they serve, including their city services partners, residents, businesses, schools, faith-based community, as well as the visitors to their beautiful city. They have a long history of community engagement, a relationship that existed well before “community-policing” was a talking point, as exemplified by their programs and service delivery of their workforce.

Community policing is a departmental-wide philosophy, not just a program or an assigned unit. Beginning with their Strategic Plan and expanding through daily interactions with community members, they have been blessed with the support of the community as they work relentlessly to provide a safe place for them to live, work, and play.

A Challenging Year...A Strong Community

2020 proved to be a challenging year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the villainization of law enforcement seen in the media throughout the country, but throughout these challenges, the Strongsville Police Department displayed excellence and teamwork. Despite these challenges, the community was an anchor. The community displayed support through letters, cards of gratitude, posters, and even decorated the building. This show of support and affection was an encouragement to all the police department's men and women.

Faith-based Community

The Strongsville Police Department recognizes the value of faith-based communities as a uniting resource and an anchoring force. The community's churches, temples and other spiritual centers are important in the lives of people as they provide a range of spiritual, social and support services to residents. As they partner with the faith-based communities through active threat training, prayer services and other events, they are humbled by the gratitude shown. Strongsville Bible Fellowship dropped off food to show their support for the Strongsville Police Department. They value the diversity and the relationship they have with the faith-based community members.

Daily Community Interaction

Strongsville police officers stop by Charlie's party to help celebrate his 4th birthday and Noah's 6th birthday. The uniformed patrol division makes community engagement a routine daily function.



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Shop with a Cop

With the financial hardships and uncertainty of COVID, they were able to continue spreading joy and happiness to Strongsville children during the holiday season with the Shop with A Cop program with concern for the utmost safety for each participant.



Safety Town

Safety Town is a fun, enlightening program that helps children about to enter kindergarten learn many safety lessons and rules while also participating in fun field trips to places like the fire and police stations. In partnership with the community, they value the efforts of student volunteers who help to facilitate the program.

Safety Village teaches kids how to handle different situations and tips to remain safe. The program includes bus, bike and fire safety, Stranger Danger simulations, 911 call simulations, and interaction with police officers.



Safe Communities

Safe Communities is a community-based program designed to create awareness and prevent injuries caused by traffic crashes. In the past they have done fun educational events like using a Distracted Driving Simulator and Roll-over Convincer at the high school. Also the "Click it or Ticket" campaign at the high school is always fun, but unfortunately these events were not able to happen due to COVID 19.



The police department was able to participate in the "Golden Ticket" program with the help of the Safe Communities program. Officers handed out "Golden Tickets" to reward drivers who were wearing their seat belt. Recipients would then scan the QR code on the Golden Tickets to see what prize they won. There was a variety of prizes including a possible Visa Gift Card worth \$200!



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Quick Response Team (QRT)

In October of 2020, the Strongsville Police Department received a grant from the Ohio Attorney General in the amount of \$50,000 to combat the opioid epidemic. The grant funds a quick response team made up of a police officer, a fire medic, and a counselor.

- Visits the survivor of an overdose at their residence within 72 hours of the overdose
- Offers counseling and referrals to treatment centers for overdose survivors
- Follows up with the survivor through the recovery process and provides support and advice
- Provides support and resources to family members of those suffering from an addiction

Military Veterans

Strongsville Police Chief Mark Fender with Fire Chief Jack Draves and VFW Post 3345 commander Tim Zvoncheck break ground for a new monument to honor first responders. This year at the 9/11 ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2021, there will be the dedication of a new tribute to the area's first responders.

The memorial bench will be located next to the existing veteran's memorial at the post. This is a community-wide event that will include live music and food. Strongsville's safety forces will conduct the memorial ceremony to honor those killed in the attacks, then will help dedicate the new tribute. The 9/11 memorial ceremony is held every year and the entire community is invited to attend.





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Volunteers in Police Service

The Volunteers in Police Service Program, designed to address the increasing demands on state and local law enforcement agencies in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, is a locally-driven program that enables community members to offer their time and talents to their local law enforcement agency. The volunteer unit regularly assists police officers in providing security for Mayor's Court and City Council meetings. In conjunction with the newly created Citizens Police Academy, the unit is in the process of adding 12 new members.



Citizen Police Academy

The Citizens Police Academy (CPA) is a free, interactive program between citizens and the police, designed to help citizens become more aware of their police department, regulations, and the criminal justice system. The purpose of this CPA is to facilitate a better understanding, through education, between citizens and police. It will also serve to dispel suspicions and misconceptions citizens may have by meeting and interacting with police officers in a positive and proactive setting to share ideas and information.

Classes cover a variety of topics, including: laws of arrest, search & seizure, detective bureau, criminal investigations, traffic stops, accident investigation, operating vehicles under the influence, community opioid outreach program (CO-OP), use of force, pursuits, K9s, and SWAT. The Academy is used to launch the VIPs program, a formal enrollment and organization for volunteers interested in working with the police.



Strongsville Schools

Uniformed officers are not only responsible for regular walk-throughs in all of the city's schools, but they enjoy the relationships they have developed with the students and staff. The Strongsville school district serves nearly 5,500 students and consists of one preschool, five elementary schools (grades K-5), one middle school (grades 6-8) and one high school (grades 9-12).



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D.A.R.E

The Strongsville Police Department's D.A.R.E. program has been "Keepin' it Real" every year for more than 25 years. Officers teach Strongsville students lessons on decision-making skills, risk analysis, consequence recognition, and self-esteem building. The success of this program is best exemplified by the partnerships initiated by our department to recruit 150 high school role model volunteers to assist with the program and to coordinate thousands of boxes of food for the Strongsville Food Bank.

Third Grade Safety Belt Program

During 30-minute lessons taught by a uniformed police officer - a positive interaction - students learn about safety belts and their importance through discussion, activities and demonstrations.



Bicycles

The Strongsville Police Department is again giving "tickets" to kids seen wearing their helmets while on a bicycle. The tickets actually include a redeemable coupon for a kids cone at Olympia Sweet Treats & Grill and also include a chance to win a bicycle, safe tips for bicycle riding and more.

The Helmet Program is a collaborative effort with AAA and the community to help educate and reinforce the importance of wearing a bicycle helmet by encouraging all parents to take an active role in their children's safety to encourage all children to wear bike helmets when riding.



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Children 14 and under are very vulnerable to head injury while riding their bikes. This is true, no matter how responsible and careful children are.



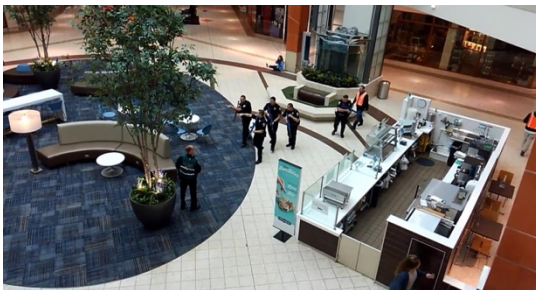
The Strongsville Police Department utilizes a wide variety of patrol techniques and patrol vehicles to effectively meet the needs of our community.

The main benefit of employing police patrols is increased community contact. Bike patrol officers may be seen as less threatening and more approachable than officers in motor vehicles. This will likely result in more contacts with the public than vehicle patrols. Bike patrols can also go where traditional patrol vehicles can't, such as working in parks or at community events.

SouthPark Mall

SouthPark Mall, located in Strongsville, is Northeast Ohio's largest retail destination. The location and the large number of patrons brings about the ideal setting for a safety event. The Strongsville Police Department is committed to community education by participating in safety fairs each year, whether city-wide or focused on more vulnerable populations, such as the senior citizens.

The relationship with the SouthPark Mall provided an opportunity to utilize the complexity of the mall layout for a large-scale, regional active shooter training site. Also, Active Threat Response Options Training is provided to all mall and retail store employees. Due to the high turnover in retail personnel, this training is conducted each year. This would not be possible without the cooperation and participation of the mall management and all employees.



Victim/Witness Advocate

For 20+ years now, the residents of Strongsville have had the availability of utilizing the services of Cindy Vanderwyst, the Victim/Witness Advocate. Ms. Vanderwyst works very closely with victims of crime in the community, offering information, guidance, referrals and other assistance to get those persons through their often traumatic experiences.

In 2020, Ms. Vanderwyst assisted more than 100 victims of crime, which incidents included crimes of domestic violence, assault, menacing, menacing by stalking, criminal damaging, etc.



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Community Diversion

The Strongsville Community Diversion Program is designed give juveniles an opportunity to successfully complete a program- specifically tailored to each individual's crime - that would allow the juveniles to maintain a clear record with the Strongsville Police Department. Failure to complete the program results in the juvenile's crime being prosecuted formally in the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court.

- Cases are heard by one (1) of nine (9) volunteer Magistrates who act on behalf of the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court.
- These Magistrates impose sanctions on the juveniles, which must be fulfilled in an appropriate and timely manner.
- In 2020, 31 cases were heard by the volunteer Magistrates, with all but one (1) successfully completing the program.

A victim advocate:

- Provides information on victimization
- Provides information on victims' legal rights and protections
- Provides information on the criminal justice process
- Provides emotional support to victims
- Helps victims with safety planning
- Helps victims with victim compensation applications
- Helps victims submit comments to courts and parole boards
- Helps victims find shelter and transportation
- Provides referrals for other services for victims
- Notifies victims of inmates' release or escape

Goal of Diversion:

Offenders gain a greater sense of responsibility to themselves as well as their community.

Recognition

Each December, the Chief of Police designates an Awards Committee to consist of up to five employees, consisting of one command or supervisory officer, two patrol officers, one dispatcher o the Chief of Police prior to December 1st of each year. The designated committee will serve for the following calendar year. In January of each year, an Awards Committee reviews all citizen and departmental commendations received during the previous calendar year in order to identify actions or performance commensurate with a departmental award. The award consists of a plaque and an accompanying pin to be worn above the left breast pocket of the uniform shirt or jacket, centered under the badge.

Departmental awards may be presented for outstanding performance in the following areas:

- *Professionalism*; awarded for outstanding effort or performance resulting in the advancement of our agency's professional image
- *Problem Solving*; awarded for recognizing and establishing a long-term solution for a particular or collective community problem or complaint
- *Compassion*; awarded for an employee's outstanding and special display of empathy



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- Quality Service; awarded for an employee's dedication, thoroughness and persistence (going the extra mile) in furthering the department's mission and values
- *Blue Collar*; awarded for a police officer's outstanding efforts in making, or assisting in, a criminal apprehension. Police officers are recognized for their perseverance and ingenuity in arrest situations.
- *Citizen Award*; will be presented to a citizen who provides the Strongsville Police Department with valuable assistance in fulfilling our mission.

Recruiting

The Strongsville Police Department recruitment efforts are far reaching, seeking quality candidates for a diverse workforce.

K-9 Teams

The Strongsville Police Department's K-9 teams are valuable law enforcement tools that improve the operating efficiency and effectiveness of the patrol division. But the K9s fulfill multiple roles beyond their law enforcement function. The K9s participate in lectures/demonstrations for many groups such as civic organizations and school functions, as well as the department's Citizen Police Academy.

"Look Before You Lock" Initiative

With tragic reports around the nation involving children left unattended in hot vehicles, it is important to remain alert to children and car safety. There are many reasons why these events happen, such as being distracted from a busy day or exhausted from lack of sleep and/or routines that may have changed. The Look Before You Lock campaign reminds parents and caregivers that anyone can accidentally leave their child in a car. Creating reminders, such as the mirror hanger provided by the Strongsville Police Department, is one effective way to ensure that a child is not forgotten in the vehicle.

Drug Take-Back Program

The Strongsville Police Department has established an on-site drug drop off location at the police station to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications.



They work with the DEA to facilitate the destruction of unwanted medications to reduce the amount available for abuse within the community.

Strategic Plan

A hallmark component of the community focused philosophy is the partnership between the police department and citizens, business owners, community-based organizations and the school system. These partnerships have an exponential effect on our successes. Therefore, they will pursue and encourage both traditional and innovative ways to foster these relationships.



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The relationship with the community is proactive and intentional, as exemplified in their strategic plan. The Strategic Plan is part of every year-end report and is available to the community on-line at <https://www.strongsville.org/departments/police/annual-report>.