



# 2023 Year In Review

Maryland-National Capital Park Police  
Montgomery County Division  
12751 Layhill Road  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20906



*The 30X30 initiative is a commitment by law enforcement agencies to hire a minimum of 30% females by 2030.*

## ***Our Mission***

The Maryland-National Capital Park Police, Montgomery County Division is committed to working in partnership with the community to provide quality public safety services in a professional and timely manner. We value the attendance of all community members and visitors within our park system. We endeavor to facilitate a safe, peaceful and joyous experience for everyone.

## ***History***

The Maryland-National Capital Park Police was established in 1953. It began with three officers working six days a week for an annual salary of \$3,000. Back then, officers shared one police car until it broke down, and the Commission purchased two used cars to replace the initial vehicle. The Montgomery County Division has grown into an agency with an authorized staffing level of 126 (98 sworn and 28 non-sworn). Park Police operates 24 hours a day throughout a park system which is comprised of 4 lakes, 29 park activity buildings, 102 campsites, 114 historic structures, 136 picnic areas, 227 basketball courts, 276 miles of paved and natural surface trails, 289 outdoor tennis courts and 419 parks across 37,768 acres of property. Also available are nature centers, miniature trains, indoor tennis facilities, boat rental facilities, ice rinks, event centers, public gardens, and more. Our parks accommodate an estimated 14 million visitors every year.

**Miti Figueredo  
Director  
of Parks**



As the newly appointed Parks Director, it's been a pleasure to work more closely with Chief McSwain and all the men and women of the Park Police. I've seen their deep commitment to service, and it's inspiring. But I know it's also a challenge – the work can be difficult, high-profile, and emotionally draining. While many daily positive exchanges with community members might go unnoticed, and despite the heightened scrutiny of the profession, our members take seriously all feedback in a relentless pursuit of excellence.

I am regularly reminded of the risks our officers face while handling life threatening matters, as well as the focus of non-sworn professional staff such as communications technicians. Not only am I grateful for their demonstrated courage in the face of danger, but also their commitment to meet the needs of each other, all our employees and park visitors alike. In addition to remaining current on best practices in community engagement, crime prevention, dispatching, and overall training concepts, our members have also made a commitment to employee wellness for sustained success in all critical areas of life.

It is very apparent that our members carry out their duties with purpose, passion, and joy! Without the collective contributions of the Park Police, Montgomery Parks would not be able to make people feel happy, healthy, and connected to each other when visiting our vast parks system!

**Darryl W.  
McSwain  
Chief of Police**



I am grateful for the unselfish acts of service demonstrated by the men and women of the Park Police – both sworn and non-sworn professional staff. Their willingness to meet the needs of all community members during times of stress or great joy is a testament to their strength of character, heart of service, and courage. Over the course of 2023, members regularly availed themselves of worthy causes not just within the metropolitan region, but also across the nation.

As we continue to leverage technological advances for greater efficiencies, commit to sound leadership principles at all levels of the organization, invest in the wellness of our members, and remain sensitive to the needs of our diverse community, I am confident that we will remain well positioned to meet the demands of today and represent a beacon of light well into the future.

On behalf of all members of the Park Police, I extend our ongoing gratitude to the community for the honor and pleasure of serving you. Your support helps to strengthen our resolve to never stop improving, and your partnership reminds us of the fact that we are truly Stronger Together.

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## **Captain Nicole Adams**

*Assistant Chief, Support Branch*



Captain Nicole Adams is a 28-year veteran with the agency. Prior to joining, she served two years with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). Captain Adams is well-versed in her profession with prior experience as a Public Information Officer, Background and Criminal Investigator, Internal Affairs detective, Executive Administrative and Commander of the Community Services Section. Throughout her lengthy career, Captain Adams provided oversight for many of the above-mentioned shops including our Ranger and Park Police Volunteer programs. She is also the first female firearms instructor with the agency. Captain Adams is a graduate of the Northwestern School for Police Staff and Command.

## **Captain Bryson Evans**

*Assistant Chief, Patrol Branch*



Captain Bryson Evans is a 25-year veteran with service in both the Prince George's and Montgomery County Divisions. He was instrumental in the development of the Northern Community Services Team which centralizes on problematic areas within the park system. He helped create the Community Response Team (now recognized as our Special Assignment Team). His notable tenure includes work as the Commander of Investigations and Mounted Operations, Supervisor of the Rapid Deployment Team, Tactical Officer and Motorcycle Officer. Captain Evans also worked with Prince George's County Police Department's Violent Crimes Unit, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) and other various tasks forces.

Captain Evans earned a Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Certificate from Anne Arundel Community College and is pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Safety Administration through the University of Maryland Global Campus. Captain Evans is the recipient of innumerable commendations throughout his career. He is also certified in both mounted and motors operations and is a firearms instructor. Captain Evans is a recent graduate of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government Regional Leadership Training.

**Captain Tracy Lieberman**

*Assistant Chief, Operations Branch*



Captain Tracy Lieberman is a 26-year veteran with service in both Divisions of the Park Police. Her career began in the Prince George’s County Division where she worked as a patrol officer through the rank of lieutenant to include serving as midnight patrol, Sergeant of the new Potomac River Waterfront Unit, and Patrol Commander. Captain Lieberman became the first Search and Rescue Ground Search Manager and began training staff and building search programs that would benefit both Divisions. As the Accreditation Manager in the Prince George’s County Division, she developed policies and procedures that followed best practices and ensured staff compliance. Within both divisions, Captain Lieberman has worked as the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police and Public Relations Officer, with administrative oversight of social media.

In the Montgomery County Division, Captain Lieberman has developed invaluable programs to include groundbreaking health and wellness initiatives and protocols for interactions with the most vulnerable populations. She reorganized and restructured the Canine Unit, which is now a highly trained and well respected and sought after unit. She has received numerous awards recognizing her leadership and management skills. Captain Lieberman is a certified Life and Engagement Coach, a graduate of the Northwestern School for Police Staff and Command and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government Regional Leadership Training.

**Captain Lakeisha Robinson**

*Assistant Chief, Investigative Branch*



Captain Robinson is a 20-year veteran with service in both Prince George’s and Montgomery County Divisions. Her prior assignments include Patrol and Mounted Officer, Patrol Sergeant, Sergeant of Internal Affairs, Background Investigator, Internal Affairs, Accreditation Manager, Public Information Officer, Social Media Manager and Executive Officer within the Office of the Division Chief. Captain Robinson earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in Public Administration from Northern Arizona University. She is a well-decorated member and was recognized with the Leadership Award, Chief’s Award and a host of other certificates of recognition. Captain Robinson is a recent graduate of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government Regional Leadership Training.

*Park Police Command Staff*



**Lieutenant John Fellers**  
*Commander*  
*Internal Affairs Section*



**Lieutenant Caleb Garcia**  
*Commander*  
*Information Technology Section*



**Lieutenant Myrical Gratton**  
*Commander*  
*Special Operations Section*



**Lieutenant Adam Macleod**  
*Commander*  
*Management Services Section*



**Lieutenant Sarah Mikalauskas**  
*Commander*  
*Daywork Patrol & Community Services*



**Lieutenant Charles Smith Jr.**  
*Commander*  
*Evening/Midnight Patrol*



**Lieutenant Francis Wulff III**  
*Commander, Evening/Midnight Patrol*  
*Northern Area Community Services Team*  
*Inland Search and Rescue Manager*



## Office of the Chief

The **Office of the Chief** is responsible for the overall **management, direction, planning, and coordination** of all Montgomery County Park Police programs and operations. The Chief of Police is responsible for administering the agency in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and ensuring that organizational objectives are met. Through the dedicated service of both sworn and professional staff, the Office of the Chief oversees the following:

- Executive Management of Park Police Agency
- Public Information Officer (PIO) and Social Media Management
- Employee Records Management
- Personnel Actions / Performance Management
- Liaison for Payroll / Benefits / Employee Relations / Retirement / HRIS
- Internal Affairs and Backgrounds
- Hiring and Retention
- Performance Recognition Program

**STAFFING**

In 2023, the agency had a total staffing allocation of 126 full-time employees – 98 sworn and 28 professional staff: not including 2 seasonal (part-time) employees and 2 Term Contract employees.

**RECRUITMENT AND HIRING**

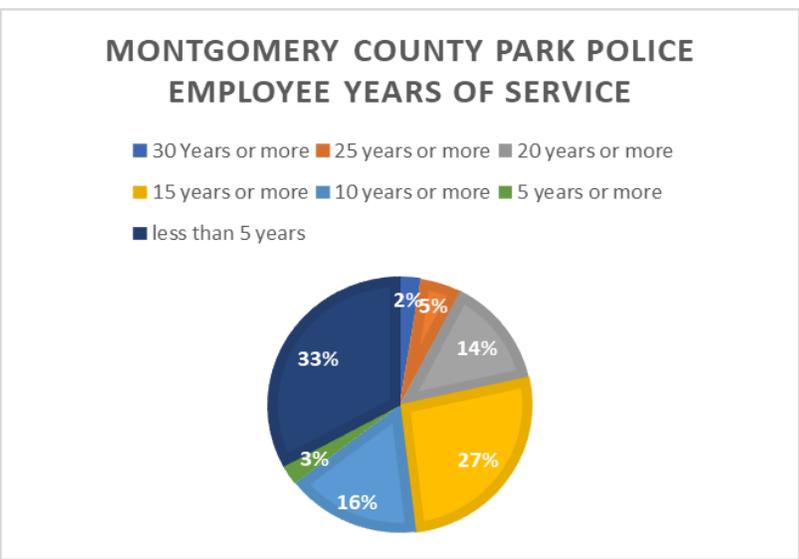
Park Police recruitment and hiring efforts are maintained throughout the year. The recruitment team, comprised of both sworn and professional staff members, works to identify various outreach opportunities to engage a diverse group of individuals interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement. As part of the overall recruitment strategy, the team instituted several new processes to provide a more timely and efficient hiring process. As a result, thirteen (13) new employees were hired in 2023. Nine (9) new employees have been hired as of January 2024.

**PROMOTIONS**

Promotions in a police agency are important for fostering institutional knowledge, building trust, and ensuring continuity in law enforcement practices. Officers who rise through the ranks bring a deep understanding of the agency's culture, values, and operational procedures, which enhances their effectiveness in leadership roles. This internal advancement also boosts morale by showing that hard work will be recognized and rewarded, leading to increased job satisfaction and retention. Six (6) officers were promoted in 2023.

**CURRENT EMPLOYEE CAREER SERVICE STATS**

The length of employee service can provide valuable insight into workforce stability and experience levels. The following graph/chart illustrates the varying lengths of service across the division in 2023. This information provides better insight into organizational dynamics and also assists the executive team with making informed decisions about talent management and development.



30 or more years:	2
25 or more years:	4
20 or more years:	11
15 or more years:	21
10 or more years:	13
5 or more years:	32
Less than 5 years:	26

**Grant Funding**

In 2023, the Montgomery County Park Police division was awarded a Local Agency Grant from the Maryland State Police Department in the amount of \$96,370.80. Funding will be used to purchase and install License Plate Readers in four (4) local area parks:

- Wheaton Regional Park Entrance - 4 cameras
- Black Hill Regional Park Entrance - 1 camera
- South Germantown Recreational Park - 3 cameras
- Little Bennett Regional Park Entrance - 2 cameras

**Park Police Demographics**

Authorized staffing for 2023 was **126** personnel members. Actual staffing was **113** employees. Authorized staffing for 2024 is **127**. As of this report, current staffing is **116** employees represented in the charts below.

Gender	% of All Personnel	% of Sworn
Male	70%	73%
Female	30%	27%

Race/Ethnicity	% of All Personnel	% of Sworn
Asian or Pacific Island	9%	10%
Native American	1%	1.0%
Black or African American	23%	17.0%
Hispanic or Latino	10%	12%
Other	4%	6%
White	53%	54%

The **30 x 30 Initiative** is a hiring objective to advance women in law enforcement. In the U.S., women on average account for 12% of sworn personnel. The Park Police is proud to note that female officers currently account for **27%** of this agency as we strive for even greater representation.



## **Patrol Branch**

Patrol Services - Northern Community Services Team - Community Services Section

The Patrol Branch provides a highly visible presence in the Parks, along trails and surrounding areas 24-hours per day by car, foot, ATV, or bicycle. Officers are responsible for maintaining safety on two parkways, hundreds of miles of trails, playgrounds and enterprise facilities such as tennis bubble complexes, swim centers, and recreational buildings. In 2023, the men and women of the Patrol Branch responded to 25,453 calls for service.

## Patrol Highlights



### Teen In Distress

On April 16, 2023, *Sergeant Long*, *Corporal Tionson*, *Corporal Hodges* and *Officer Esquivel* responded to a call of a juvenile in distress. Officers found the subject in possession of a significant quantity of medication, indicating a potential self-harm attempt. Immediate steps were taken, and officers intervened when they observed the person on a highway overpass. The individual was provided with crisis intervention and was safely transported to a medical facility.

### Overdose at Wheaton Headquarters

On May 5, 2023, *Sergeant DiVincenzo* and *Detective Ellerbe* located an unconscious person inside the parking garage at Wheaton Headquarters. There were significant indications this person may be suffering from a drug overdose due to the items observed near them and the symptoms they were exhibiting. Officers called for Montgomery County Fire and Rescue. Once alert, the teen provided his name and told officers he had been homeless for the past year.

While waiting family, the officers fed and spoke with the juvenile, who shared his struggles and admitted to smoking fentanyl to cope with his troubles. Additional resources were provided to the family.

### Lost Man Reunited with Family

*Officer Murray*, *Corporal Rose* and *Sergeant Raghubar* responded to the Rock Creek Stream Valley for the report of a critical missing person who suffered from a medical condition. The caller advised that her 72-year-old husband had left their home via bicycle from Northwest Washington D.C. Officers were informed that the man suffers from dementia and had not returned home when she had been expecting him. The wife did have the ability to track with real time data via his phone. Officers were able to work hand in hand with her to predict what route he would take and set up a search area that would likely lead to him being found. Officers worked together and were able to contact the man and reunite him with his wife, unharmed.

### Life Saving Actions

On September 30, 2023, Sergeant Raghubar was working patrol and driving along Georgia Avenue, near the intersection of Leisure World when he saw a white Mazda SUV rapidly engulfing in flames. Sergeant Raghubar acted quickly requested the fire department and spoke to the driver who said her door was stuck and she could not get out of the burning car. Sergeant Raghubar assisted her in opening the door and was able to move the driver to safety.



### **Assault at Olney Manor Skate Park**

On June 3, 2023, **Corporal Arana**, **Officer Huelbig** and **Officer Martinez** responded for an assault involving a firearm at Olney Manor Skate Park. The victim told officers that his ex-girlfriend had texted his phone, asking to meet at the park. When the victim arrived, a group affiliated with his ex-partner showed up — one was armed with a semi-automatic handgun. The victim was beaten with the weapon and his automobile was vandalized. Detectives investigated the case, and an arrest was made.



*Olney Skate Park*



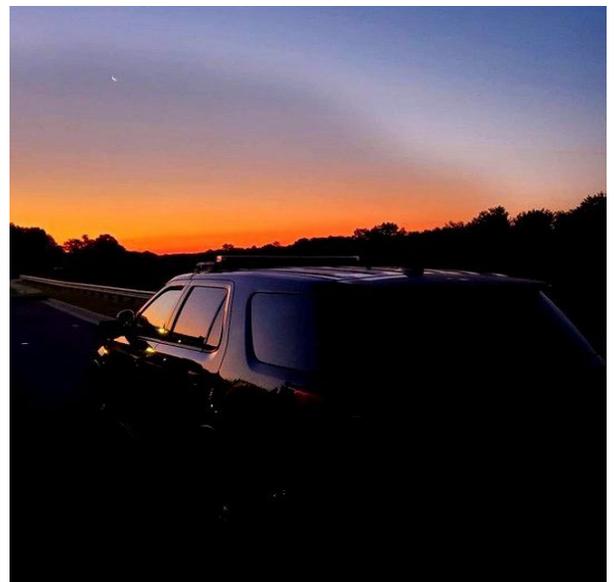
*The weapon used in the assault at Olney Skate Park*

### **Shooting at Clearspring Local Park**

On June 25, 2023, officers responded to Clearspring Local Park and found that two people had been shot, with non-life-threatening injuries. At the time there was a permitted event occurring in the pavilion. There were numerous witnesses that were able to provide vehicle descriptions. Detectives have been working with the Montgomery County Police Department, using electronic investigative means and results of evidence collected to narrow down the suspect search.

### **Burglar Arrested**

On July 15, 2023, **Officer Odina** was patrolling the 5300 Block of Willard Avenue in Chevy Chase, Maryland. While conducting a property check of a house owned by M-NCPPC, Officer Odina discovered items of interest used by squatters and radioed for backup. Patrol officers from both evening and midnight shifts arrived to assist. Patrol officers searched the property, located an individual hiding inside the building and took him into custody without incident.



### Mutual Aid

On August 3, 2023, the United States Park Police requested assistance at Fairland Regional Park. They had chased a vehicle with four suspects who committed an armed robbery of a convenience store in Baltimore City. According to U.S. Park Police, the suspects had been pursued from the Baltimore-Washington Parkway into Montgomery County before crashing into a wooded area close to the park. The Four individuals fled the scene and were reported as armed with handguns. Park Police Officers from both the Prince George’s County and Montgomery County Divisions along with surrounding jurisdictions, established a perimeter in the area. Maryland State Police was also notified and used electronic technology to track the stolen money while U.S. Park Police provided air support. All suspects were apprehended, and all the weapons were located with no injuries.

### Gun Arrest

On April 25, 2023, Officer Achacoso and Corporal Hodges were conducting an after-hours park check at Cabin John Indoor Tennis Center late in the night. They observed a car backed into a corner of the parking lot and when they approached, noticed the occupants using illegal drugs. The occupants exited the vehicle, and the officers searched it for contraband. Along with drugs, they found a rifle, loaded 30 and 50 round magazines. The driver was a convicted felon and prohibited from possessing weapons and was taken into custody and charged without incident.

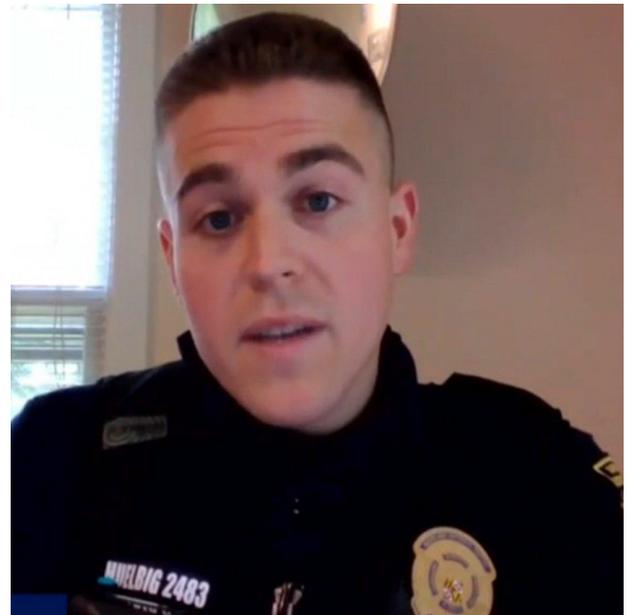
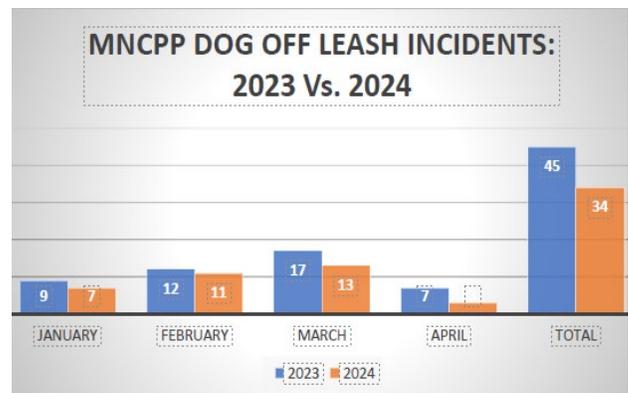


Image courtesy of Fox 5 News

### D.A.R.O. Program

The Domesticated Animal Resources Operations program (D.A.R.O.) (aka dog off-leash program) was developed in July 2023 by **Officer Huelbig**. Officers dedicated dozens of hours per month to conducting site surveys and educating the community on the applicable laws. Their combined efforts have led to a reduction in reported violations. (Click the image above to learn more.)





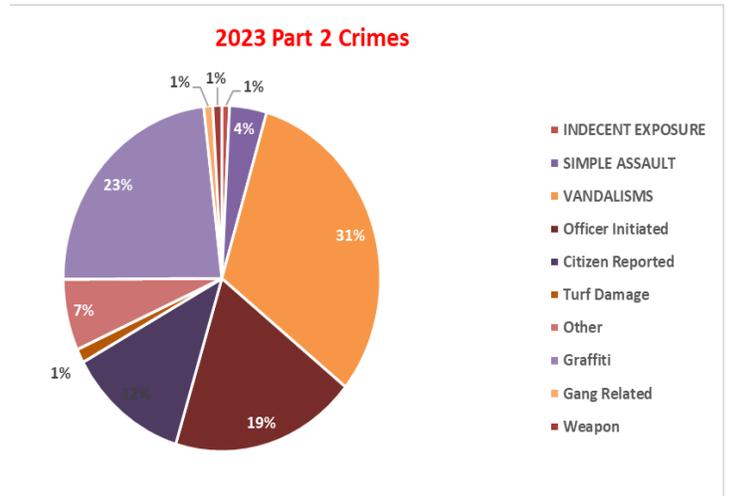
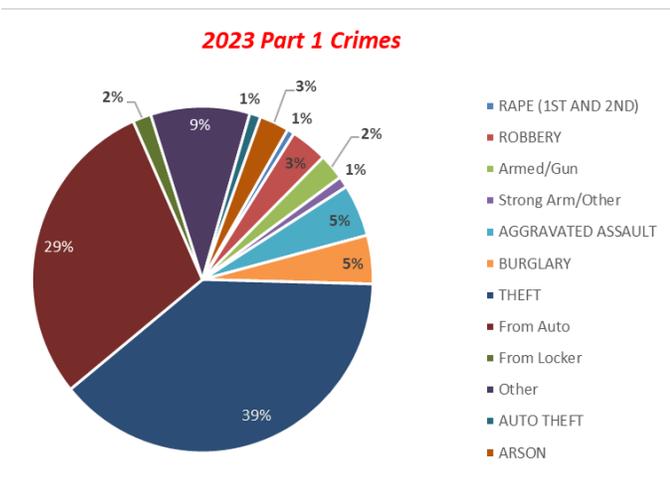
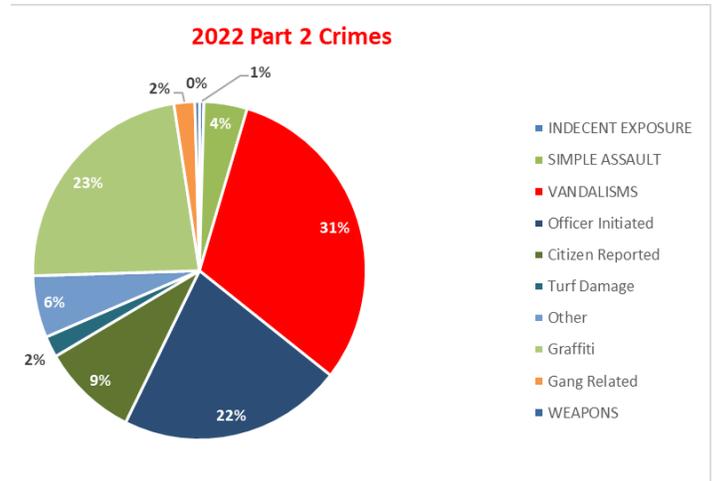
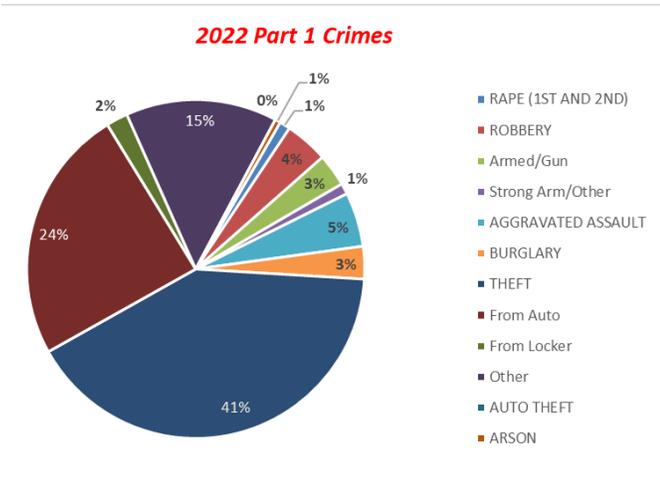
*The Search and Rescue truck has equipment to assist officers with management and Incident Command of a search from any location. The truck carries GPS devices for staff to deploy quickly into the field, has scene lighting, power to run electronic devices and can provide connectivity to coordinate with search teams from around the region.*

*Officer Green and Sgt. De Los Angeles, with the Northern Community Services Team, pose with a lost dog at Park Police Headquarters. The pup was later reunited with the family.*

The **Northern Community Services Team** is a specialized, hybrid-patrol unit responsible for high visibility throughout our park system. The team works jointly with patrol officers and investigators to enhance safety and focus on crime prevention in our parks. In 2023, the team was instrumental in the closing of several high-profile cases. The unique nature behind their work includes but is not limited to: bike patrol, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and other high-visibility techniques. The team is trained in various operational skill sets and consists of a supervisor and three officers. During the year, the team investigated 25 warrant cases. A warrant is an authorized court order or sanction for a law enforcement officer to make an arrest of an individual. 12 warrants were out-of-state (non-extraditable), four were in-state and one warrant was recalled. Eight warrants were executed.

**Search and Rescue** is an extremely vital program within the Park Police. The Division has several highly trained Search Managers and the entire work force is trained in unique awareness tactics to help locate missing people quickly. The search specialists focus on operation management and ensuring each mission is carried out with precision. The Division search program has three search and rescue bloodhound dogs and one Human Remains dog, which are sought after around the region for their expert skill set. Montgomery County has a high number of individuals that go missing with Intellectual and Developmental Dis. The Division has a groundbreaking **Sensory Bag Program** which provides officers with small fidget toys and other items to help connect with individuals who may be non-verbal. This program has been a huge success.

2023 Crime Statistics



Our Park System remains relatively safe when one considers that Montgomery Parks enjoys an estimated 14 million visitors each year. Due to the diligence of our men and women, a patron has less than one tenth of 1% of being victimized in our vast Park System. Because we value the safety of every visitor, the Park Police remains committed to proactive preventative efforts, constant vigilance, and timely follow-ups.

With over 400 parks and 250 miles of trails, proactive patrols on foot, bike, ATV, and horseback remain key crime deterrents while fostering good rapport with community members. Over 10,000 trail checks were conducted in 2023.

## Community Services Section

The Community Services Section (CSS) works to build trust and establish partnerships between Park Police and the Community. The unit is stationed at Park Police headquarters and provide a variety of community engagement services throughout Montgomery County.



**Coffee With a Cop** was forged over a mutual bond to create community partnerships. It is a fun activity that promotes casual dialogue with officers while enjoying a universal treat.



Community Services Section officers participate in **Respectfest** each year. They proudly support the youth of Montgomery County and their roles as mentors while encouraging good decisions.

On September 24, 2023, the agency coordinated with several local organizations for **Annual Friendship Day** at Wheaton Regional Park. Friendship Day is a yearly tradition that aims to bring people of diverse cultures and faiths together for a day in the park. The program's objective is to embrace cultural diversity and build a stronger community.



*The holidays are not only a time to help those in need, but also a time to show kindness, graciousness and support.*

Dedicated *Park Police Volunteers*, *Sergeant Sherard*, *Corporal Smith*, and *Corporal Williams* gave away turkey dinners to more than 20 local area families during the **7th Annual Turkey Bowl Food Giveaway** at Good Hope Neighborhood Recreational Center. Our Park Police Volunteer Association assisted with the event and continues to play a crucial part in our service to the community.

**Park Police Volunteers** contributed over 2,300 hours throughout 2023. The Association was started over twenty years ago and has continued to grow. Our volunteers attend regular training and meetings with Park Police staff. They also assist Division officers at many of our community events such as the Germantown 4th of July celebration, helping with traffic control and crowd management, and at large Montgomery Parks events like Brookside Gardens and Garden of Lights. They also patrol trails and parks on a regular basis by vehicle, foot, bike and even horses.



*Kensington Juneteenth Celebration*

To commemorate the historical significance of Juneteenth, Community Services Officers joined with reenactment civil war soldiers of the 19th century at St. Paul Park in Kensington, Maryland. **The Kensington Juneteenth** celebration recognizes the historical date (June 19, 1865) when Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to inform enslaved African Americans that they were free.

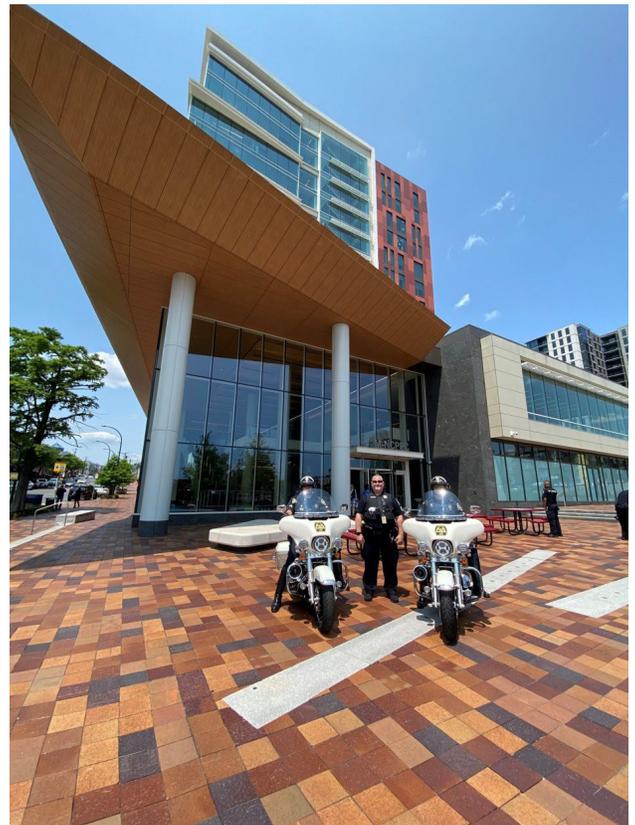
Community Services took part in an abundance of **other notable special events** throughout the year such as Career Day at Flower Valley Elementary School, RespectFest, Sunrise Camp at Brookside Gardens, Glenmont Community Day, Wheaton Community Safety Summit, Coffield Center Grand Opening, Trunk or Treat October, and the UpCounty Holiday Giveaway event.

### **Community Engagement Officer Program**



Our **Community Engagement Officer (CEO)** program services ten schools which includes two high schools, two middle schools and six elementary schools. In 2023, **Private Moore** and **Officer Peterson** served as CEOs for our agency. Private Moore and Officer Peterson handled a significant number of calls for service and follow-up investigations on and off school property. The program encourages fellowship between our youth and police.

## Wheaton Headquarters Building



**Wheaton Headquarters** is home to the Montgomery Parks Department, Montgomery Planning Department, and the Montgomery County Planning Board. As well as County Government entities to include the Department of Permitting Services (MCDPS), Environmental Protection (MCDEP), Recreational Department, County Police Central Business District Team, etc.

A team of Park Police Officers is assigned to Wheaton Headquarters and responsible for patrolling the building and adjacent lot. These officers operate within the building and areas immediately surrounding the building during normal business hours, when the building is open to the public. These officers assist visitors as well when coming to attend Planning Board Hearings or to visit the permit office. These officers can be seen making regular rounds on all the floors as well as even assisting stranded motorists in the parking garage. These officers also work hand in hand with the Montgomery County Police Central Business District (CBD) officers that are assigned to work this newly designed urban hub of shopping and businesses.



## **Operations Branch**

Mounted - K9 - Motors - Marine - Training

The Operations Branch accentuates our horse mounted brand and regional search and rescue program. Various branch units remain in constant demand for special events throughout the region. Each year, officers from our K-9, Motorcycle and Mounted Units participate in career days, demonstrations, show-and-tells, equestrian functions, escort details and other formal events such as: The Gaithersburg St. Patrick's Day Parade, County Fair, Police Week, National Night Out, The National Mounted Police Colloquium and a host of others. At other times, they provide valuable assistance on public safety sensitive missions of various types.

Mounted Unit



*The Division honors the late Chief Luther Reynolds from Charleston Police Department. Chief Reynolds was a retired Assistant Chief with Montgomery County Police.*

In the Summer of 2023, the **Motors Unit** traveled to South Carolina to pay tribute to the late Charleston Police Department Chief, **Chief Luther Reynolds** who passed away in May of 2023 after a courageous battle with cancer. Chief Reynolds' obituary described him as a "dedicated law enforcement professional, and a man of deep faith, compassion, and love. His steadfast commitment to justice, coupled with his kindness, touched the lives of countless people, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of those who knew him."

One of Chief Reynold's contributions to the Charleston Police Department during his tenure was revitalizing his agency's Mounted Unit. Thus, we welcomed and graduated Charleston PD **Officer Martin** and **Officer Ferguson** from our Mounted School, including our own, **Officer Rose**. A special thank you to **Lieutenant Gratton**, **Corporal Lau**, **Corporal Baca** and **Heather Tipperly** for their work in the referenced training.



*Officer Rose poses with Charleston Police Department officers Ferguson and Martin*



*Lt. Gratton and Cpl. Baca show off their trophies after an Equitation competition last year. Cpl. Lau (center)*

**Lieutenant Gratton** (then as Sergeant Gratton) and **Corporal Baca** competed in the 38th National Mounted Police Colloquium in Lexington, Kentucky. **Corporal Lau** was invited for her ninth year as a guest instructor in teaching equitation.

This four-day training competition included presentations, demonstrations and classes designed to share experiences, techniques, training and best practices to mounted police units across the country. Park Police received the following awards:

**1st Place English Equitation**

*Lt. Myrical Gratton (Kona)*

**3rd Place Gaited Equitation**

*Cpl. Eric Baca (Gator)*

**Motors Unit**



*Officers from our Motors Unit strike a pose during Police Week.*

Designated by the late President John F. Kennedy in 1962, May 15th serves as **National Peace Officers Memorial Day**. The week is recognized as National Police Week. Each year, members from SOS gather on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. to honor the legacy of officers who died in the line of duty.

**Lt. Gratton** continues to support Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities partnerships by creating unique opportunities for the community.

The Division hosted private tours designed specifically for neurodivergent children and adults. Visitors took part in barn tours, simulated ATV rides and interacted with our police horses before enjoying a motorcycle demonstration.



*Corporal Lau is showing where to give “Whiskey” scratches on his chin.*



During the Holiday season, the **Special Operations Officers** had the distinct honor of escorting **Wreaths Across America** to Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. Officers laid wreaths at the headstones of family members and military service members dating back to the Spanish American War in 1898.

K-9 Unit



*Corporal Byers and his partner "Duke"*

**Training equipment upgrades** were added to our K-9 section to improve its overall function. The unit built new agility equipment themselves and replaced the training field equipment for enhanced K-9 training. The additions will benefit training with realistic scenarios.

The agility equipment supports the efforts of building confidence between the handler and K-9. The training field upgrades will assist the K-9 teams' control efforts during building searches. The unit also completed the registration process with the **Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)** to receive authentic narcotics. Additionally, they replaced outdated synthetic training aids for more efficient detection of explosives, narcotics and human remains.



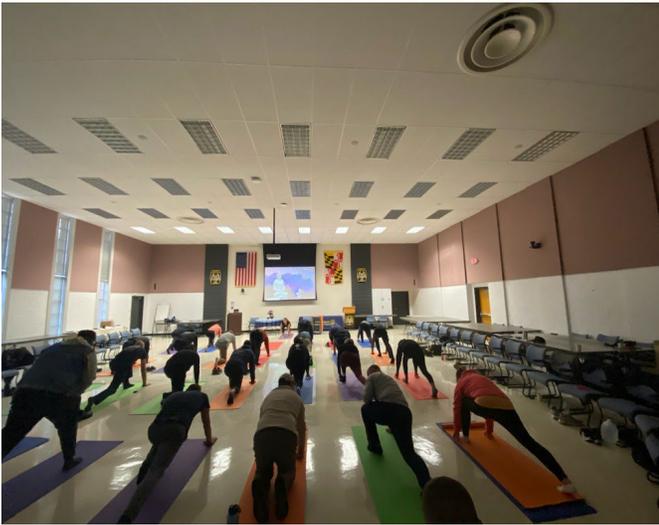
*Corporal Miranda and "Dora"*



*Head Canine Trainer D. Jones observes handlers training with new obstacles built by the unit.*

Our canines and their handlers train often in case a deployment is necessary. Teams train and work jointly with our allied partners throughout the year.

### Annual Health & Wellness In-Service Training



*Park Police Employees practice yoga during annual in-service training.*

❖ **Lauren Vint** of Still Dog Yoga has been teaching yoga to Park Police since 2022. Lauren is a former athlete and high school coach with a personal love of yoga and movement. She brings an appreciation for the complementary connection between body, mind and spirit. Lauren has practiced yoga for more than 20 years and is also a long-time meditator.

❖ **Dr. Cheryl Lee-Pow**, Doctor of Chiropractic, the owner of Pow-HER Chiropractic and Wellness Center spoke to staff about the importance of caring for our physical injuries and how suffering with pain and discomfort can lead to other chronic conditions.

❖ **Jennifer Palmer**, Owner of Nourishing Journey Wellness Center, Lead participants on a short meditation and spoke about mindfulness and visualization techniques. She spoke about the benefits of journaling and each participant was given a gratitude journal.

❖ **Matt Frasca**, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and owner of First Line Counseling, LLC is a retired law enforcement officer who frequently speaks to our sworn and professional employees about stress and burnout. He shares coping mechanisms with staff and provides additional resources as needed. Matt is available 24/7 to respond if someone is in need and has helped many along their wellness journey.

❖ **Laura Lazenby**, Doctor of Acupuncture, who presented during the Annual Health & Wellness In-Service during 2022, periodically stops in to discuss wellness and acupuncture with staff, she gently treats those interested in experiencing acupuncture for the first time, or those who are dedicated to the practice. There is often a line of people when she comes to visit, who are looking forward to her calming, and healing presence. She tailors each experience to meet the unique needs of every patient.

❖ In 2023, the Division added a unique experience to the day by participating in a guided hike on the **Underground Railroad Experience Trail** located on the grounds of **Woodlawn Manor Cultural Park** in Sandy Spring. Park Police staff learned about the experience of the 19th century freedom seekers and discovered techniques used for navigation, eluding detection and finding food/shelter on the perilous journey.

❖ The Division's first **Health and Wellness Room** was introduced this year. The room is a quiet space for mindfulness if needed after a critical event or life experience. The room is equipped with a reclining chair, health and wellness reading materials, and drawing /coloring materials.

**The Search and Rescue (SAR) Program** finished 2023 with over 110 missing persons events such as deployments, consults and investigative inquiries. These include positive finds and/or rescues completed on Park Property. Our drones played a huge role during SAR efforts. **Sergeant Snyder** (along with his K-9 partner “Robert”) are certified in Human Remains Detection and were deployed across the state for numerous criminal investigations.

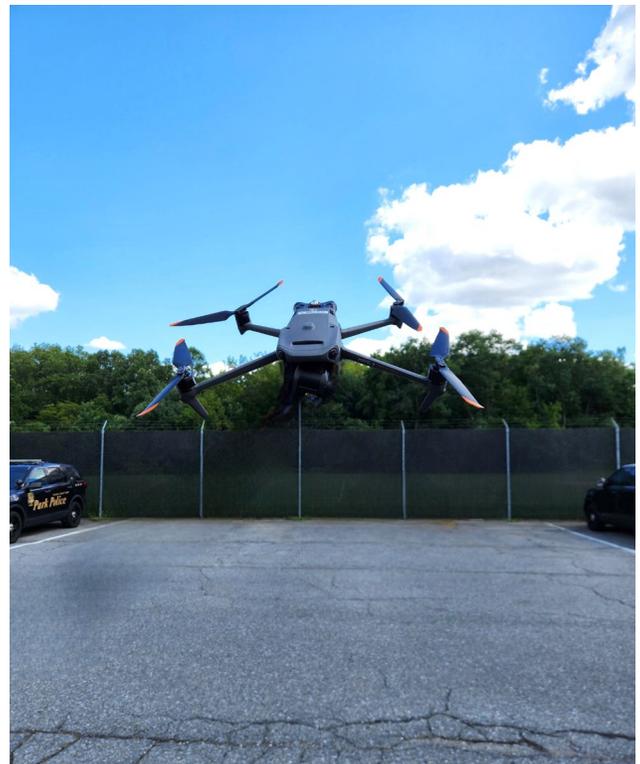
### Drone Program

To date, Park Police has nine (9) pilots and four (4) small, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). The program coordinator is **Corporal Benson**. Outside of routine training missions, the program documented welfare checks and other services to the community. One of those missions was flown within our Park Police jurisdiction to locate missing and endangered persons. All flight missions are captured in our flight database software, AlarisPro.

In 2023, the program successfully executed a number of missions for the safety and welfare of the community. These missions showcased the versatility of Park Police drones being utilized in various incidents such as: providing visual assistance in locating a shooting suspect and tracking armed suspects involved in a home invasion. The agency also deployed thermal detection drones during search and rescue missions for missing persons. Pilots completed over twenty hours of require flight missions training.



*Sergeant Snyder and Canine Robert training*



*Drone in action*

*Our latest VR and Taser devices.*

Our division is instituting **Integrating Communications, Assessment and Tactics (ICAT)** de-escalation training with Axon during our Taser in-service. ICAT is an innovative, evidence-based approach to use-of-force training which provides officers with the tools, skills, and options they need to defuse a range of critical incidents. ICAT was developed by the **Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)** with input from hundreds of law enforcement professionals nationwide.

ICAT focuses on situations involving persons in crisis and those who are armed or unarmed with weapons other than firearms. The training is anchored using the Critical Decision-Making Model which helps officers assess situations, make effective decisions, learn and document their actions. The use of **Virtual Reality** training (VR) allows trainees to experience real-world scenarios which trigger similar stress responses. VR enables trainees to build stronger muscle-memory under duress and provides officers with the following benefits:

### **Training for Everyday Situations:**

Unlike traditional simulators that only offer use-of-force training, Axon VR enhances an officer's ability to de-escalate many of the most common calls for service.

### **Critical Thinking Development:**

Promote improved decision-making using research-backed methods and dynamic experiences that lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for officers and community members.

### **Tiered Training:**

Officers develop critical decision-making skills by advancing through progressively complex scenarios, enhancing their confidence and accuracy when faced with high-stress situations.

### **After-Action Reporting:**

Trainees can assess their skills and track progression by reviewing detailed after-action reports (AAR) at the end of each exercise, enabling opportunities for coaching and program development.

### **Empathy:**

Foster critical thinking, empathy, and de-escalation skills in mental health encounters.

### **Tactical:**

Develop higher-performing officers with enhanced critical thinking and de-escalation skills.

### **Officer Preparedness:**

Enable officers to maintain proficiency through limitless repetition and application.

### **Community Engagement Training:**

Cultivates skills, empathy and de-escalation tactics for interacting with the community and those that may be in a mental health crisis. New insights and perspectives result in beneficial outcomes.



## **Investigative Branch**

Criminal Investigations Unit - Special Assignment Team - Task Force Officers - Crime Analysis

Detectives within the **Investigative Branch** have primary investigative responsibility for all crimes that occur on park property with the exception of human deaths, first degree rapes, and second- degree rapes. They utilize numerous investigative methods to include best practices in evidence collection, search of various public safety electronic databases, and the sharing of intelligence with allied agency members. Some detectives serve on regional gang and drug task forces for the betterment of the County and region as a whole. In 2023, detectives investigated several violent crimes, closing the majority via arrest or other classification. Four of those cases are still pending. Detectives were called out to respond to nine violent offenses while off-duty.

The **Special Assignment Team (SAT)** performs targeted covert surveillance, mobile static enforcement, civil disturbance response, case enhancement, warrant service execution, and other assignments deemed appropriate by the Branch Commander.



*Detective Pegler analyzes bloodstain patterns during a training exercise.*

SAT conducts plain clothes surveillance for events and details on M-NCPPC property or with an allied law enforcement agency.

Members of SAT are highly trained in rolling and physical surveillance, and vehicle containment techniques (blocks). In 2023, detectives attended Crime Scene Investigator School, Red Dot Instructor School, Taser Instructor School, and Scoped Rifle training. Members routinely conducted tactical training with the agency's Northern Community Service Team at the firearms range and training academy.

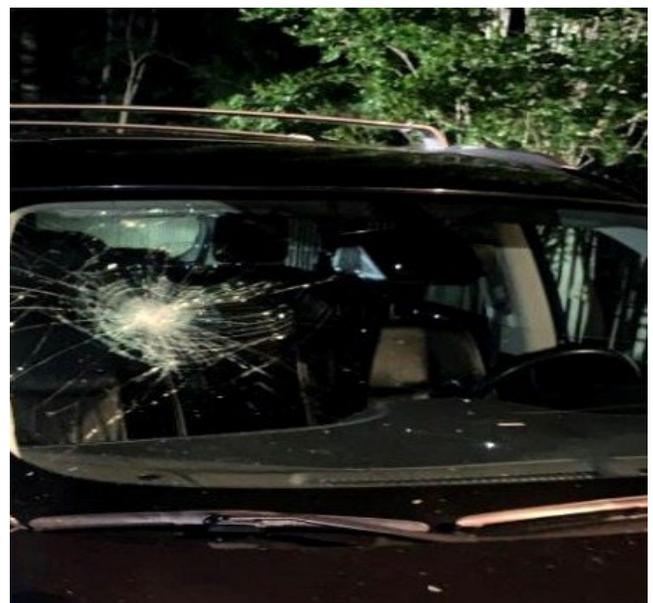
The **Crime Analyst** performs a range of specialized analytical assignments involving the study of crime reports, arrest reports and police calls to identify emerging crime patterns, series, and trends of law violations and criminal activity. Their work program facilitates the improvement of public safety and supports law enforcement activities.

### Notable Cases

On April 12, 2023, Officers responded to **North Gate Local Park** for a report of an assault. An interview with the victim revealed they were surrounded and assaulted by a group of individuals who took their sneakers. Suspects from Parkland Middle School were later arrested and charged with armed robbery.

On April 21, 2023, detectives and Prince George's County Police SWAT served two residential search warrants for an armed robbery that occurred at **Takoma-Piney Branch Local Park**. During the search of the home, multiple replica handguns, a replica rifle, loaded magazines, and other evidentiary items were also collected related to the robbery. The involved parties were later arrested and charged accordingly.

On June 3, 2023, detectives responded to **Olney Manor Skate Park** for a first-degree assault with a handgun. Detectives identified a suspect and obtained a search warrant for the suspect's home. During the search, the firearm used during the crime and drugs were seized from the house.



*Vehicle found at crime scene.*

Additionally, federal government property stolen from an incident in Ocean City was recovered. This investigation became a joint effort amongst other law enforcement agencies, which led to the closing of additional theft cases and the arrest of involved suspects. The suspect from the Olney Manor Skate Park incident was later convicted and sentenced to five years in prison.

In another matter, Officers responded to the **Rock Creek Trail #6** for the report of an assault. Upon arrival, officers located a juvenile victim who had been approached by a group of adolescents and shot with a pellet gun. The assault also included the victim being kicked, punched, chased, and spat on. Detective Ellerbe was able to identify three juveniles who led the autistic victim to the park (via social media), promising to return items that had been stolen from him in June but instead assaulted them. Appropriate charges were filed, and the suspects entered a guilty plea.



*Officers and members of Hillandale United join for a community walk on the Northwest Branch Trail*

On October 25, 2023, detectives responded to **Stewartown Local Park** for the report of a shooting. Evidence collected on the scene led to the identification of a validated gang member with ties to other violent crimes within the Gaithersburg and Montgomery Village corridor. A search warrant was served for evidence and the suspect was later captured and charged with Attempted First-Degree Murder.



*Detective Ellerbe practices creating toolmark impressions alongside allied officers in Frederick, Maryland.*

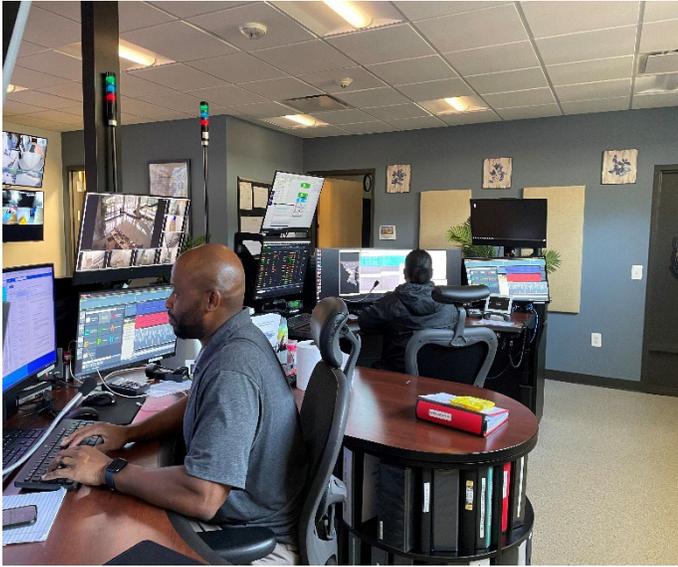


## Support Branch

Alarm Shop - Technology Services - Management Services  
Fleet Maintenance - Communication Section - Records Section

The **Support Branch** is responsible for a variety of vital functions that are critical to our public service delivery. This team of sworn and professional staff members oversees the Communications, Records, Management, and Technology Services Sections.

The **Communications Section** is responsible for all emergency calls transferred from the County Police 911 system and non-emergency calls coming directly from park patrons. This section is staffed 24-hours a day by trained public safety communications technicians who respond to various requests and dispatch Park Police officers for public safety needs. The **Records Section** processes all incident reports along with criminal, civil, and traffic citations and serve as the primary of contact for court-related matters. Charged with everything from budget review and fleet management to information technology and the Alarm Shop, the **Management and Technology Sections** responds to the day-to-day needs of the entire agency in order for all other units to carry out their responsive duties.



*A work in progress.*

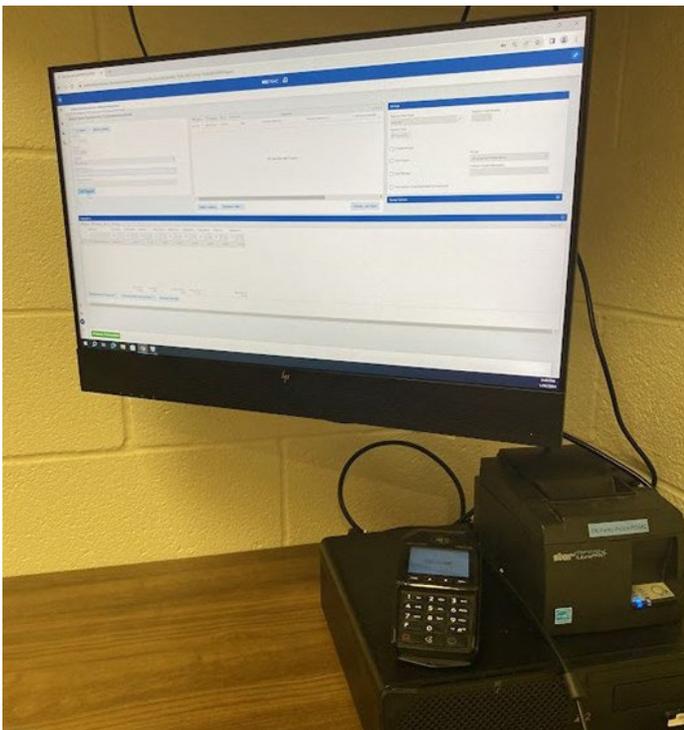
The Communications Section (CommSec) is a critical component of any law enforcement agency. Over the past year, we have added new technology to aid with continuity of operations, enhanced officer safety, greater efficiencies in call transfer protocols, and improved security video surveillance. In addition, significant hiring and retention efforts led to a 50% decrease in staffing shortages within the section.



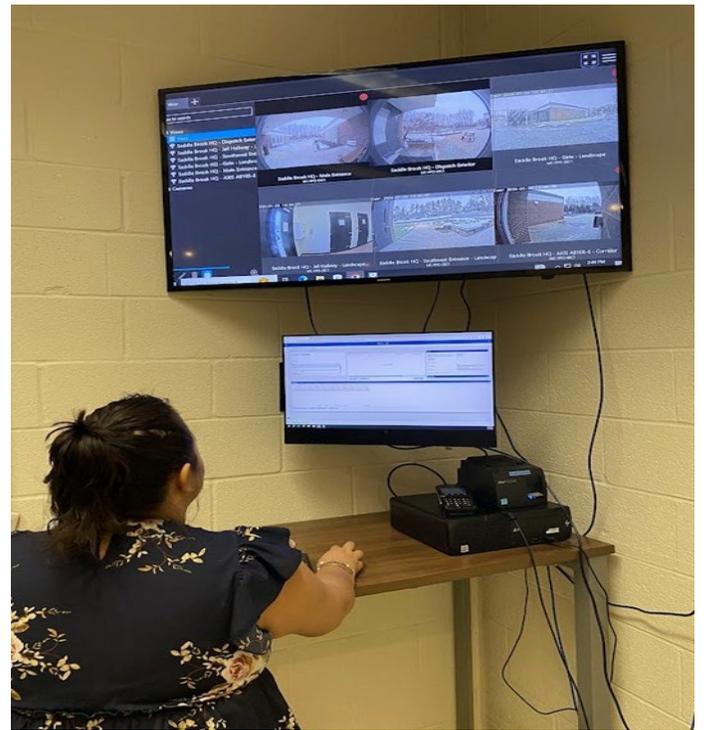
*The division's new ID badge printing machine allows Parks employees to obtain credentials expeditiously*



*Alarm Shop staff, Ed Jones (left) and Mike Norris (right), configure wiring at one of our facilities.*



*Idalia Donado, Records Assistant, tries out the new payment system.*



**Motorola CAD/RMS:**

This new contemporary system will enhance officer safety, user experience, emergency preparedness, and inter-operability. Furthermore, the platform will help us better leverage the **Motorola technology** we already have (i.e., radios and Vesta911) and also increase our capacity to add other key crime analysis, investigative tools, video vaults, etc. under one connected “eco-system” instead of operating in different “silos.”

In addition to various building upgrades, below is a list of planned initiatives for 2024:

**Zello App** is a phone-based application that will allow our agency to communicate via radio with the Park Police Communications Section (COMSEC) through a push to talk app/feature.

**License Plate Readers (LPR)** will be installed at Wheaton Regional Park, South Germantown Park, Black Hill Regional Park, and Little Bennett Regional Park.

**Vehicle Service Forms** (via CAD) is our newest method of managing the department’s fleet vehicles.

**Executive Suite Conference Room** will host command staff meetings and also serve as a “soft” interview room for Internal Affairs and the Investigations Section. The conference room will be outfitted with a large screen monitor and system programmed to accommodate virtual Teams meetings.

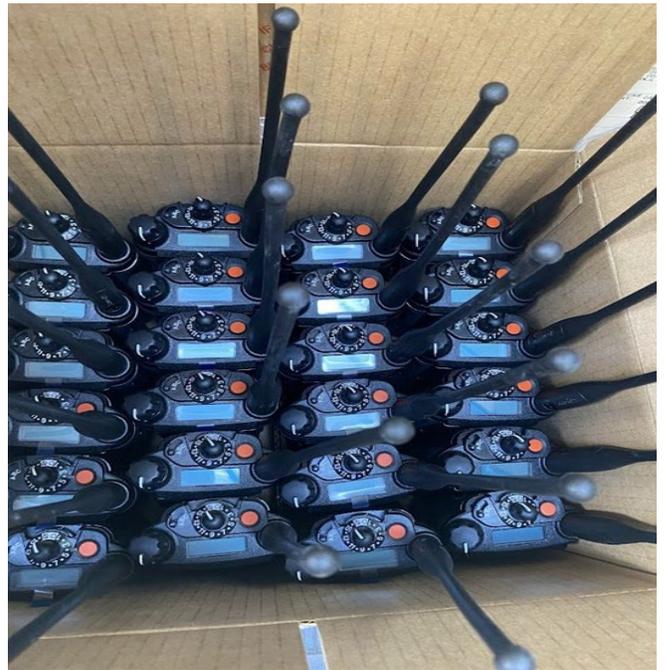
**Case tracking system** will include additional tracking metrics for case closure and follow-up to support the efficiency of our Criminal Investigations Unit. Additionally, the **digitizing of records and report forms** will help improve the unit’s case storage and tracking. Park Police is also working to establish an informant program in collaboration with the Montgomery County Police Department.

**Expanded Training Program** will include a library of recorded topics, expanded tactical and medic training. Jiu Jitsu martial arts will be taught at Park Police along with self-defense classes will for non-sworn, regional Search and Rescue exercises, and leadership development classes.

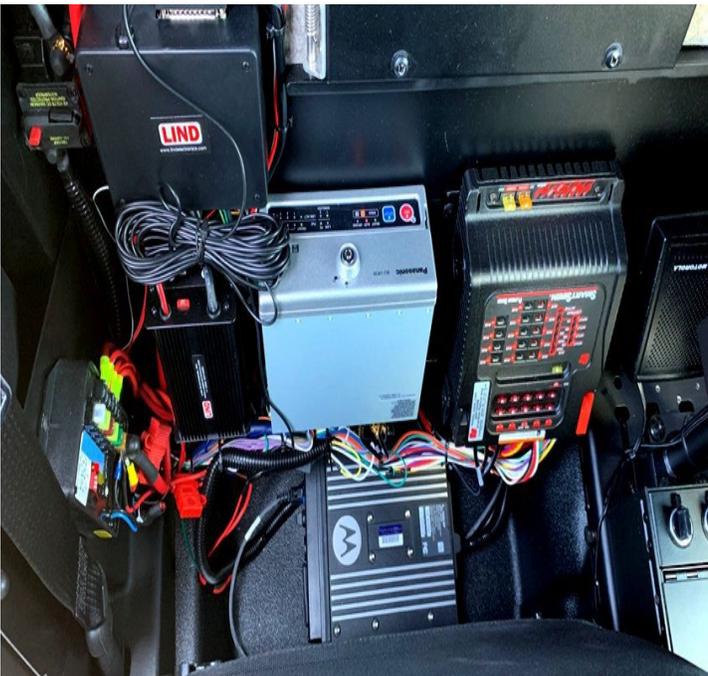
**Recruitment and Hiring** processes will incorporate more strategic recruitment and outreach efforts including an updated recruitment video.



*Recruitment table ready for action at a local event*



*The Division upgraded to the latest Motorola server and outfitted patrol officers with new radios.*



*New vehicles are being outfitted with modern emergency equipment and distributed upon availability.*



## **2023 Annual Performance Awards**

On April 10, 2024, Park Police hosted our Annual Performance Awards Ceremony to recognize both professional and sworn employees for outstanding contributions throughout the 2023 calendar year.

## Chief's Commendation

- ❖ *Captain Nicole Adams*
- ❖ *Sergeant Thomas Harrington*
- ❖ *Mr. Robert Ulisney*

## Honorable Mention

- ❖ *Daniel Jones, Head Canine Trainer*  
Montgomery County Park Police

## Field Citation (Top MS13 Gang Member Arrest)

- ❖ *Detective Christopher Backhaus*  
Montgomery County Park Police

## Teamwork Award (Olney Skate Park - First Degree Assault)

- ❖ *Lieutenant Frank Wulff III*
- ❖ *Sergeant Eddie Man*
- ❖ *Detective Daniel Benson*
- ❖ *Detective Jammie Lopez*
- ❖ *Detective Brian Rumsey*
- ❖ *Detective Ted Sombat*
- ❖ *Detective Chris Wong*
- ❖ *Corporal Allison Arana*
- ❖ *Corporal Roberto Sanchez*
- ❖ *Officer Matthew Green*
- ❖ *Officer Alexandra Mlynarski*
- ❖ *Officer Zenobia Santana*



*Prepped and Ready to Go!*



*Park Police Honor Guard*



*Miti Figueredo, Montgomery Parks Director*



*Artie Harris, Montgomery County Planning Board Chair*

**Commander's Award (Interim Crime Analyst Assist)**

*Detective Kimberley Pegler*

**Teamwork Award (Fairland Regional Park Armed Robbery Bailout)**

- ❖ *Lieutenant Sarah Mikalauskas*
- ❖ *Sergeant Jimmy Ahn*
- ❖ *Sergeant Leandra De Los Angeles*
- ❖ *Sergeant Matthew Heck*
- ❖ *Sergeant Eddie Man*
- ❖ *Sergeant Gary Raghubar*
- ❖ *Detective Daniel Benson*
- ❖ *Detective Chris Wong*
- ❖ *Detective Brian Rumsey*
- ❖ *Corporal Christopher Gayle*
- ❖ *Corporal John Lainhart*
- ❖ *Corporal Roberto Sanchez*
- ❖ *K-9 Officer David Brown*
- ❖ *Officer Donald Murray*
- ❖ *Roy Ricasa, Lead Dispatcher*

**Teamwork Award (Community Engagement-CEO Program)**

- ❖ *Sergeant Trevin Sherard*
- ❖ *Officer Rachelle Moore*
- ❖ *Officer Autumn Peterson*

**Community Engagement Award**

*Corporal Herman Hodges III*

**Bronze Star**

*Sergeant Gary Raghubar*

*Special Recognition Awards*

**Detective of the Year**

*Detective Ted Sombat*

**Supervisor of the Year**

*Barbara Lee*

**K-9 Officer of the Year Corporal**

*Corporal Steven Burroughs*

**Manager of the Year**

*Lieutenant Caleb Garcia*

**Operations Officer of the Year Corporal**

*Corporal Megan Lau*

**Community Services Officer of the Year**

*Officer Autumn Peterson*

**Professional Staff Member of the Year**

*Alif Mehari*

**Patrol Officer of the Year**

*Officer Donald Murray*

**Dispatcher of the Year**

*Roy Ricasa*

**Brent La Mere Award**

*Corporal Allison Arana*

## Outstanding Park Police Volunteer Program



*Sarah Abernathy ~ Pamela Andershot (Holden) ~ Louis Brennan  
Barbara Cheong ~ David Cohen ~ Richard Cohen ~ Bob Colvin  
Madeline DeVan ~ Jennifer Dunkin ~ Jessica Ellis ~ Cathy Gallahan  
Armilda Jimenez ~ Daniel Johannes ~ Brady Lau ~ Kathy Lipton  
Laura Liswood ~ Laura Lobel ~ Robert Marques ~ Iris Moseley  
Karan Oberoi ~ Nancy Osgood ~ Carlotta Owens ~ Bryan Parker  
Daniel Parker ~ Eileen Parker ~ Karen Parker ~ Martha Penso  
Nike Refshauge ~ Grace Richards ~ Glenn Richards ~ Mariea Sabate  
Aiden Tipperly ~ Evelyn Ventura*

## *Moving Forward*

The Maryland-National Capital Park Police, Montgomery County Division is pleased to provide this 2023 Year in Review report. Although not all-inclusive, hopefully this report adequately highlights the notable cases, initiatives, and activities administered by our dedicated officers and professional staff members throughout the year.

The successes Park Police has received this year have underscored the importance of our partnerships with community members, local organizations, and fellow agencies. Together we have made significant strides, but we know there is always more to be done. Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to improving services, fostering greater collaboration, and implementing innovative solutions to address emerging challenges affecting society.

Thank you for your continued trust and support. We remain open to constructive feedback from community members and agency allies as we move forward in partnership and continue to embody our Park Police motto of being “*Stronger Together.*”

