



Police Chief James Johnson

The NWCP partners with local law enforcement to keep our neighborhoods safe and secure. James W. Johnson, Chief of the Baltimore County Police Department, shared some of his experiences with us. Chief Johnson's career began in 1979 as a cadet and he has served in virtually every position in one of the largest police departments in the nation. Chief Johnson is only the second person in the nearly 140-year history of the department to rise through the ranks from cadet to Chief.

NWCP: Can you please tell us a little about your background?

JJ: I have a bit of an unusual background, having been raised in a shelter on the east side of Baltimore County. I attended Baltimore County public schools. In the 12th grade, there was a career day and a police officer came to speak to the students. After hearing him, I decided that police work would be an interesting career. My original plan was to be an art teacher, but obviously that didn't happen. I became a police cadet in 1979. As time went on, I decided to take various promotional tests and exams, never really with the goal of becoming a top commander, let alone Chief of Police. But, as life would have it, this is where I find myself. I've been Chief for the last 10 years but I still practice



art as a hobby.

NWCP: You moved up through the ranks and have been Chief since 2007. How do you feel that moving up through the ranks influenced your work as Chief of Police?

JJ: I think it's absolutely essential to start at the ground level and work your way through the various aspects of the job. People won't follow you unless they feel that you have done the work that you demand they do.

NWCP: Do you miss being a cop on the beat?

JJ: I do. I still make car stops, I still go to calls when I'm closest, and I think it's important not to lose that focus.

NWCP: Under your tenure, overall violent crime in Baltimore County has dropped significantly, 26% according to statistics. Can you explain how you

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PROJECT RECOURSE

Victims of crime are often emotionally scarred and feel victimized. The last thing they need is to be dragged through the Halls of Justice, on a roller coaster ride of emotions, many times having to relive the traumatic incident over and over again.

That's where the NWCP comes into play. Taking the victim by the hand, the NWCP guides them through the process of recovering from the crime, preparing for court, attending the court proceedings and following up for years to come, by petitioning the courts to remand dangerous criminals in jail without the chance of bail.

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HOLD THE DATE
34th Annual NWCP Reception
 Saturday night, December 3.
 Honoring Council Woman Rikki Spector for her many years of outstanding service.



Neighborhood Night Out. Left to right Rikki Spector, Sandy Rosenberg, Sandy Johnson and Adriana Rosas.

Sandra Johnson, Fallstaff Improvement Association

Ms. Sandra Johnson, who is President of the Fallstaff Improvement Association, Inc. (FIA), shares with our readers her long-time involvement with the FIA.

My husband and I moved to the Fallstaff Community in May 1978. My husband was a health inspector for Baltimore City and was assigned to Northwest Baltimore, where he became familiar with and really liked the Fallstaff neighborhood. We have lived in Fallstaff for over 38 years. Our daughter was born and grew up in Fallstaff, and attended Fallstaff Middle School.

Shortly after moving to Fallstaff, we became members of the FIA. My special interest was the environment, and I organized several community cleanups

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and created flyers and pamphlets encouraging standards to maintain a clean and healthy environment. I could never understand why people didn't pick up trash, and I still don't. I became second vice president of the Association and when the president and 1st vice president resigned at the same time, I felt compelled to help the Association continue, and I became president. Although I never intended to stay in the position so long, I have been president for more than 10 years. Our

Bylaws state that officers must be elected for one-year terms but do not limit the number of terms. All officers have served multiple terms. After all, we are all volunteers and it's hard to recruit committed volunteers.

The FIA has 12 positions on its Board and approximately 100 dues paying general members. Fallstaff has a very diverse population, including African Americans, Jews, one of the largest Hispanic populations outside of east Baltimore and many residents from the Caribbean. Various efforts are underway through the Fallstaff Experience, a slots-funded project managed by CHAI, to break down cultural and socioeconomic barriers that exist among residents in order to create a more unified, safe and healthy community for all neighborhood residents.

For as many years as I can recall, Fallstaff has coordinated annual concerts sponsored by the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks for its residents, and for the last several years has held annual Fallstaff Night Out (FNO) events to celebrate National Night Out, a nationwide event designed to raise crime prevention awareness, strengthen neighborhood spirit and unity, and foster community-police partnerships. For the last two years, this event has been combined with the annual concert. This event has been funded through grants from Lifebridge and MECU and draws more than 300 residents.

For more than 38 years, Fallstaff has also given small scholarships to graduating seniors at Northwestern High School and community residents who are accepted to a college or university. We have also sought and obtained grant and slots revenue funding for projects at Northwestern and Fallstaff schools.

On a monthly basis, we hold meetings at Fallstaff School. These meetings cover FIA ongoing business and are used to present items of importance from city agencies and invited guests to keep residents informed and involved in matters affecting the community. Agenda items include zoning matters, public safety and opportunities to continuously improve the neighborhood. We are very fortunate to have as the second vice president of FIA a committed Board Member of NWCP. NWCP greatly helps address one of the community's primary needs, which is public safety.

Fallstaff works in partnership with Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc. (CHAI), other northwest communities including Glen, Cross Country, Mt. Washington and Cheswolde, our city and state political representatives and local businesses on a variety of projects and strategic planning and funding opportunities. Currently, we have three projects noted below that are funded through slots revenue that we have requested for Fallstaff: 1) Fallstaff Neighborhood Multicultural Organizing Project managed by CHAI; 2) Daily cleaning of streets, storm drains and gutters through an agreement with CHIMES and managed by Healthy Neighborhoods; and 3) Recreation Programming to be managed by the Department of Recreation and Parks.



President's Corner

September brings many changes, including back to school and the Changing of the seasons. One change in the NWCP these past weeks has been the assignment of Officer Pablo Diaz to the NWCP while Officer Sam Bennett is on medical leave. Officer Diaz has been on the Baltimore City Police force for over 9 years patrolling Sector 3 which includes the NWCP neighborhoods. Officer Diaz is very familiar with the area and our community and we thank Major Latonya Lewis, the Northwest Police Commander for assigning Officer Diaz to the Patrol and our community while Officer Bennett is recuperating. Wishing everyone a safe and happy fall/school year.

Neil

Neil (Nachy) Schachter

The Northwest Citizens Patrol would like to thank **The Park Heights JCC** for hosting the men's and women's self-defense courses, and **The Agudah of Park Heights, Shomrei Emunah and Kehilath B'nai Torah** for hosting the children's bike and safety classes.



Major LaTonya Lewis, Officer Sam Bennett & the children from the Bike class.

Dear Readers:

The CITIZEN would like to hear from you. Please send us your comments, and suggestions for future articles.

Email us: newsletter@nwcp.info

The CITIZEN News & Views

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Back to School Safety Tips

As part of our back to school routine, a quick review of safety issues is always in order.

One general piece of advice is to leave a little extra time in the morning to get your children (and yourself) ready for the day. Cutting things too close tends to put pressure on parents and children, which can often cause unnecessary risks. During school drop-off and pick-up times, the roads are generally saturated with cars, often with many drivers who are under pressure to get to work, or take care of a second carpool.

Dropping Off and Picking Up Children

- Learn/review the drop-off procedures for each school you will be driving to.
- Don't double park; it blocks visibility of other children and vehicles.
- Don't load or unload children across the street from the school as this forces the children to cross a street.
- Make sure you have approved safety seats and booster seats for those children who need them.
- Take time to learn how each car seat and booster seat works, before the school year begins. When one is under time pressure to get the carpool underway, there is a danger that the driver will install the seat incorrectly thus compromising the safety of the child.

Children as Pedestrians

- Don't block the crosswalk when stopped at a red light or stop sign, or when waiting to make a turn. This forces pedestrians to go around your car, and they might walk right in the path of moving traffic.
- Take extra care to look out for children in school zones, near playgrounds and parks, and in all residential areas.
- Never pass a vehicle stopped for pedestrians.



- Always stop at a striped crosswalk for any pedestrian, particularly children. While this is rarely enforced, it is the law in the State of Maryland.
- Teach your children who are old enough to cross streets to be very wary around those striped crosswalks. While it is the law for cars to stop for anyone in the crosswalk, it rarely happens these days.
- When making a right turn on red in the presence of pedestrians of any age, you must yield to those pedestrians. The law actually requires a complete stop, but this is rarely enforced. Nevertheless, routinely rolling through right turns on red is a dangerous practice.
- If you are crossing a street to get your child to the school bus stop, make sure you do this in a safe way. Too often, parents who are under pressure to catch the bus, cross in the middle of a street jeopardizing the safety of their children. Children learn to do what their parents show them.

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accomplished this tremendous drop in crime, whereas neighboring districts have the opposite experience, of crime going up?

JJ: If you want to reduce the violent crime rate, you have to reduce aggravated assaults, which make up the majority of violent crime numbers. Violent crimes are assault, homicide, rape. That's been our mainstay; to reduce the number of violent crimes, and it has paid off quite well. I believe proactive work really helps. For example, if you get a guy who's perpetrating robberies at convenience stores, the quicker you catch him, the better off you are. Instead of committing 8 or 9 or 10 robberies, if you can catch him on the second or third one, of course that reduces violent crime as well. Also, using technology is a great asset, whether it be CCB TV systems, auto tag readers, or other techniques to try to identify a subject. In Baltimore County, we've got some of the best and most extensively trained personnel in the nation.

NWCP: You've been nationally recognized for progressive use of technology and science in police work.

JJ: The technology we use today is a great asset. Wherever you turn, there are changes from the technology perspective. But it doesn't replace good, old-school police work, officers who have the tenacity to pursue a case relentlessly and do everything they legally can to try and clear the crime.

NWCP: What would you consider your biggest challenges at this point in time?

JJ: I think today one of the great challenges is to ensure that the agency is applying equity or non-biased action to all members of our society. It has been and continues to be a heavy lift, to be transparent with practices and procedures and to look for biases that we all may have and how that affects our thinking. I find today's recruits to be very educated, very diverse in their thinking, and I feel very comfortable about that.

NWCP: What accomplishments are you most proud of?

JJ: I would say the drop in crime. I've been giving this a lot of thought and 20-25 years from now, I think the legacy is one of reduction in crime while the population actually increased. In the last number of years, our population in Baltimore County went up by 40,000 people, yet crime went down. I also feel really good about ensuring the safety and morale of the agency. I owe a great debt to the citizens of Baltimore County. This has been a fantastic opportunity, and although I'm not retiring just yet—arguably I'm in the autumn of my career—I think it's fair to say that this has been quite an opportunity and role that I've been graced to have.

NWCP: Looking forward, can you please share with our readers your vision for Baltimore County?

JJ: First of all, continuing to reduce violent crime in Baltimore County. Number 2, creating an agency that's reflective of the public we serve and its diversity, from a racial and gender perspective. Third, being a good steward of public funds. The Department has been at or under budget for the last 8 years.

NWCP: Just one last question: The NWCP has enjoyed a good relationship with Baltimore County law enforcement for over 30 years. We wondered if you could share something about that.

JJ: I have always enjoyed working with your organization. I find the individuals and the groups that I've worked with in the NWCP to be sincere, dedicated, appreciative, understanding, and they're there for the long haul. What I've experienced across the County is that you have pop-ups that have a lot of energy, a lot of focus, a lot of commotion, and then 8 months later they're gone. That's not the case with you. The NWCP is a solid, reliable, predictable

organization that we know is there to partner with, to reach out to, and I really appreciate it. It's made Baltimore County and other areas extraordinarily safe when you take a look at national numbers, and the NWCP deserves a pat on the back for your role in ensuring public safety.





THE JOYS OF DRIVING

By: Isaac Klein, Esquire

Often times, we take things for granted. One of those things we all seem to take for granted is having a driver's license. While it is never prudent to take things for granted, we certainly should not ignore red flags when they appear. I have seen too many cases where people fail to remain diligent or even cognizant of a problem in their lives and end up in jail. It has happened in our community, even to nice homemakers. A case in point is not responding when receiving a traffic ticket.

When you get a ticket/traffic citation, you must request a trial date or pay the fine. If you do nothing, you will eventually get a notice that your license will be suspended. If you are stopped once this has occurred, the officer has the discretion either to give you a ticket for driving on a suspended license or to arrest you on the spot. (In Baltimore City, that means you could be a "guest of the city" for up to 24 hours in not the most pleasant environment.) You will then be facing jail time.

When you get a ticket, you must either 1) pay the ticket by the prescribed date (not recommended, because that means you are pleading guilty without the ability to ask for a PBJ - Probation Before Judgment and no points), or 2) request a trial. Even if you feel you are absolutely guilty and have no defense, in this great country, the government has to prove you are guilty. Sometimes they cannot. For example, if the officer does not show up, there is no one to prove you guilty. You do not have to do their job of convicting yourself by pleading guilty.

Another option is to request a hearing where you waive (excuse) the officer's presence. By doing that, you are pleading guilty but asking for a hearing where you have an opportunity to ask the judge for a PBJ (no points). This is recommended only if you rarely get a ticket and have a very clean record (i.e., no tickets in many years (not 1 or 2 years) (tickets from speed cameras do not count)). Always keep a copy of the request you mail back. If you do not receive a trial date notice within 30 days, you should call the court to make sure a notice was mailed. Your defense of "I never got it" will usually not be a successful one.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN NWCP-SPONSORED SELF-DEFENSE CLASSES

Adult Self-Defense Women's classes and an Adult Self Defense Men's class, given by the Comprehensive Survival Arts, Martial Arts & Wellness School were exciting programs offered this summer by the Northwest Citizens Patrol (NWCP).

The women's self-defense course, held (in two parts) at the Park Heights JCC, was given by black belt, Jennifer Lake. About fifty women attended, ranging in age from post-high school to senior citizens.

All gave Jennifer their rapt attention as she explained valuable and useful safety tips on staying safe. During the second class, everyone partnered up and participated in a hands-on, interactive session practicing basic self-defense moves. Throughout the classes, Jennifer shared stories of how people had used their preparedness and ingenuity to stave off would be attackers. The attendees all agreed that they learned a lot and had fun in the process. Please call the JCC at 410-542-4900 if you are interested in Jennifer's self-defense course, which is being offered there in the fall.

While much helpful information was shared at the men's self-defense class, most of the class focused on hands on, interactive self-defense moves, which the men practiced enthusiastically with a partner. The participants got a good workout and learned moves that can be used by people of all ages. The men enjoyed the class and thought it was informative and excellent.



In the middle is Howard Libit, Executive Director of the Baltimore Jewish Council, who joined the class.

WHAT DOES THE NWCP DO?

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We urge everyone to join the ranks of the NWCP. Especially in these times, we need every pair of eyes patrolling our neighborhoods to keep our streets safe.

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