



Congressman John Sarbanes

PART TWO, continued from the February issue.

NWCP: Since you're involved with education, what do you think about reintroducing civics back into the educational curriculum, so the average person will be more literate regarding how the government operates, which I think would lead to more involvement?

JS: I agree. I think anything we can do to enhance people's understanding of citizenship and civic engagement is absolutely critical, and certainly our schools play a vital role in that. Unfortunately, many Americans seem to be running away from the town square. They are pulling up their stakes in terms of civic engagement and withdrawing. When that happens, extreme elements can fill that vacuum, and the discourse becomes much more extreme and partisan and tense. One thing we benefit from is the more Americans stay civically engaged, the more voices that are in the mix, the better policy we'll end up with ultimately. I think you're right, that our schools are an obvious place where putting an emphasis on education and engagement makes perfect sense.



NWCP: It is a two-way street. We hear a lot about accountability from Washington, but the citizens of this democracy have a responsibility as well to step up and become more involved.

JS: I appreciate that. I think you have the right perspective; it's a partnership, and the American people have a responsibility first and foremost to be informed, which is getting trickier these days, because information comes from so many sources.

NWCP: With the fake news epidemic?

JS: Right. And it can be difficult to know which sources are reliable and which are not. I always say find Continued on page 3...

NWCP ANSWERS THE CALL TO ASSIST OUR COMMUNITY

Haydee M. Rodriguez, J.D.

The citizens of the Northern District are concerned about the recent spike in crime in our community. While we have a strong relationship with our Northern District police officers, we are aware that they simply cannot be everywhere, and that we must be proactive in partnering with various stakeholders to address crime and safety issues. I spoke to my City Councilperson, Mary Pat Clark, about my concerns, and she suggested I reach out to Neil Schachter, President of the NWCP, to learn more about how they partner with the community to enhance safety in their neighborhoods.

As I arrived at the NWCP Pinkney and Park Heights location together with a group of other concerned



citizens, we were cordially greeted by Neil, who promptly took us to the hub of NWCP activity. We were impressed by the volunteers and police officers we met, as well as by Continued on page 2...

Baltimore Police Major LaTonya Lewis

Major Lewis commands the Baltimore City Police's Northwestern District.

NWCP: Major Lewis, you've been with the Baltimore Police Department for 20 years. Could you tell us a little about what led you to becoming a police officer?

LL: I was a meter maid from 1994 to 1996. Being a parking control agent downtown, I was always on foot moving around and I was able to meet a lot of police officers working that area. One of the officers said, "Latonya, you should join the police department." I tried out and everything went well and



I became a police officer.

NWCP: Are you happy you made that career decision?

LL: Yes. At the time, I was a single mother with a 1-year-old daughter. It was a great opportunity for me. This made it possible for me to take care of my family. Continued on page 2...



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My daughter is now finishing college with a major in psychology, so we'll see where that takes her.

NWCP: Are you a native Baltimorean?

LL: I came to Baltimore at the age of two. I was born in North Carolina, and my dad came here to work at Bethlehem Steel. We lived in East Baltimore, near Ashland and Monument Street. This neighborhood was similar to Northwest.

NWCP: Speaking of Northwest, there's a big variety of neighborhoods here, a little bit of everything, a lot of ethnic diversity. Is this an interesting place for you to work?

LL: Yes, it is. I came here about a year ago, not knowing anything about the district, but now that I'm here, I really like the district.

NWCP: How would you describe our district?

LL: It's a large district with a variety of neighborhoods and ethnic groups as you mentioned. It gives a person the opportunity to be well rounded because of all the differences you encounter here.

NWCP: What would you say is the biggest challenge you've found here?



L-R: Captain Yerg, Major Lewis, Sgt. Baker, Officer Al-Quarishy, Officer Sweet

LL: Trying to find something for the youth to do. A lot of issues I see involve the youth. When I was a teen in Baltimore City, we had summer jobs and the Police Athletic League (PAL) Centers, and now I see us losing a lot of that stuff, so the youth have nowhere to go and nothing to do. Even if they're not outside doing something

criminal, they don't have anything to do so they just kind of hang out on the street corners. This doesn't always mean they are doing something wrong, it could just mean they don't have anything to do at home. Growing up, we didn't have that issue: after school, I would run home, drop my books, and take whatever books I needed to the PAL Center. We would go there until 8:00 or 9:00 at night! They would have food and games there and things for us kids to do. Once we went home, it was time to take a shower and go to bed. I think we're really missing that now. They closed all the PAL Centers down due to lack of funding. When I grew up, there was at least one in every neighborhood; wherever there was a park, there was a PAL Center. They even had a free summer camp, with regular bus trips.

NWCP: Do you have any specific goals for our District for 2017? Any priorities you have in mind?

LL: Our goals are always to decrease crime, make the neighborhoods safer, and to get more communities involved in their neighborhoods. A lot of times, you only see people when there's a problem in the neighborhood. We'd like to get more people to take more ownership of their communities on a regular basis.



NWCP: Do you mean people should get involved in their neighborhood associations?

LL: Yes, and to just be more involved in the community. We can only win this war on crime if we work together. The police can't do it by themselves; we need the support of the community.

NWCP: Do you have any advice for residents of our community to keep us safer, maybe things you see a lot that we could avoid?

LL: Absolutely. Too many people are leaving their car doors unlocked and leaving important items inside the car: wallets, laptops, phones -

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the equipment on hand – radios and signage clearly identifying the Northwest Citizens on Patrol. We felt welcomed as Neil introduced us to everyone.

Neil led us upstairs to the second floor office, where he shared the rich history of NWCP. We were impressed by the commitment of Dr. Rusty White and by the longevity of NWCP. We were equally impressed by the level of organization and dedication from all – Neil, the volunteers who give their time, and the community members who support NWCP.



L-R: Haydee Rodriguez, Rick Pagliaroli and Yvonne Fisher, from Oakenshawe, in North Balt. City

Yvonne Fisher, one of my guests, remarked, "Watching the volunteers arrive that night, going in and getting the things needed for their patrol duty, was like watching a well-oiled machine. It solidified my thoughts that if we choose to work together, we can make all of Baltimore communities safer for our families." Neil drove with us for over an hour through the quiet residential streets of Upper Park Heights and the business district. The other volunteers patrolling that evening kept in touch via radio contact.

Once we finished the tour, I asked Neil if he would consider expanding NWCP's operations to the Northern District. It will have to remain a wish for now. I remain grateful for the time and wisdom shared by Neil and do hope that we can replicate NWCP's efforts to enhance the quality of life for everyone in our beautiful city.

The CITIZEN News & Views

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President's Corner



There has recently been a changing of the guard in the command staff for Baltimore

County Police. Chief Jim Johnson, who held the position from 2007 until 2017, recently retired. Chief Johnson was a good friend of the citizens of Baltimore County and Baltimore City and of the NWCP. We wish him well. Terrence Sheridan, who was previously Baltimore County Police Chief, was reinstated. (In



the interim, Chief Sheridan held the position of Chief of the State Police.) I requested an

appointment to meet with Chief Sheridan and was accommodated right away. Our conversation started with Chief Sheridan reminding me of our first meeting about 16 years ago, when I had just become NWCP president. The discussion moved from topic to topic, including the NWCP and all its programs, and security in the United States and Israel. Chief Sheridan mentioned that he visited Israel and went to the Golan Heights. He said he was very impressed with Israel's military defense force. Chief Sheridan looks forward to being at the helm of Baltimore County police once again and making sure the County stays at the cutting edge of policing in the state.

On behalf of the many hundreds of NWCP volunteers and the citizens in our area, we thank Chief Johnson for his service and welcome back Chief Sheridan to this very important position. We wish him much success.

Neil

Neil (Nachy) Schachter

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two or three sources of information that you have confidence in and reach out to those sources to find out what's going on. I do think that people have a responsibility to be informed and then once you have the information, you have to step into the civic space and try to make some kind of difference. Involvement and participation are part of what citizenry is all about and we all, as you said, have that responsibility.

NWCP: And democracy starts at the grass-roots level?

JS: Absolutely. Democracy is rule of the people, and if the people stop being interested.... Jefferson said "a people who expect to be ignorant and free expect what never was and never will be". You have to be informed in a democracy in order to secure your freedoms, and that's why civic engagement is so critical.

NWCP: How are you preparing for the incoming administration?

JS: We're trying to understand what the position of the administration is going to be on certain issues that I've focused on over the course of my time in Congress, particularly health care, the environment, and veterans' issues. We heard that the new president is interested in infrastructure, so we're waiting to see what form that takes. There are still a lot of unknowns right now, and we'll be trying to get a read not just on President Trump but on the various cabinet members. Where we disagree, we'll push back, and where we see cause for agreement, we'll follow up on that as well.

NWCP: What are your hopes for bipartisanship with the incoming administration?

JS: Repairing the infrastructure and veteran's issues. These are causes everyone can agree on. The opioid crisis is another issue we can agree on. On the federal level, we recently passed the Cures Act, which included significant funding, finally, for dealing with this crisis.

NWCP: I understand that, in addition to your own Greek Orthodox affiliation, you're actively involved with the Bolton Street Synagogue?



JS: We're no longer members, but yes, we have been very involved with Rabbi Burg and Bolton Street. I've had a longstanding connection to the Jewish community; my wife's Jewish so over the course of time we've had many connections to the community and have great pride in the Baltimore Jewish community and all the things it achieves, often in unsung ways, you see the kind of commitment they make to the greater community. Organizations, for example, like the NWCP, CHAI, all the different groups that are an expression of the Jewish community, including a vibrant Orthodox Jewish community, that serve the broader Baltimore community.

NWCP: That segues nicely to the next question: can you please say a few words about the importance of NWCP?

JS: The importance of the NWCP almost goes without saying, which is the security it provides in the community and meeting people's expectations of living in a safe and thriving neighborhood. It's made a tremendous contribution over the years. Again, I want to emphasize this idea that it's not just about patrolling the four corners of your own neighborhood. It's building relationships with the broader Baltimore community that's been a hallmark of NWCP. You want organizations that are outward-looking and that build partnerships, which describes NWCP. In terms of my own

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relationship, I've been so impressed since I came to know the organization, and I've been especially impressed by the birthday cake I get from NWCP every year! Other organizations do not do that, but they could learn from it. Even before I was in elected office, I was certainly aware of the role they played in the community. One thing I take particular notice of when I go to the annual dinner is the positive feeling in the room and the deep respect for the Baltimore Police Department, how the organization builds trust, mutual respect, and partnership with law enforcement.

NWCP: So just to wrap up, what would you say the average citizen can do to strengthen our democracy?

JS: The average citizen can, firstly, engage in citizen-to-citizen communication, and then find areas of particular interest. The most important element is to learn how to communicate and debate in a respectful and civil manner; always trying to step into the civic space in a respectful and civil way. This is the only way to bridge the divide and help bring our country together.

**WHAT DOES THE
NWCP DO?**

**Neighborhood Patrol
Project Recourse
Watch Your Home
Program
Citizen Protection
Program
Event Protection
Auto Theft Protection
Home Security
Surveys
Cyber Security**
See:
<http://nwcp.info>

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someone actually left a wallet with \$1500 on the front seat of an unlocked car! The district gets hit very heavy with loss of property because of people leaving a lot of valuable property in unlocked cars. My theory is that if you have a criminal who likes to break into cars and steal, if he comes to one area in the district and he looks in cars and sees nothing of value and the cars are locked, he's going to leave that area and move on. When he gets to another area and he sees high-tech equipment, wallets, and unlocked cars, he's going to continue to come back, because that's where all the good stuff is. He doesn't have to break a window, he doesn't have to worry about an alarm, he can just grab it and run. That's why in certain neighborhoods, we have a lot of losses from autos because people fail to lock their car doors. You don't want to make it easy for criminals to steal your property. Another big issue is that in the winter months, people warm their cars up, leave the motor running, and come back inside the house. When they go back, the car's gone. In addition, nine out of ten times, the person who stole the car will use that car in criminal activity. They hit other people's cars and use them for robberies, hit and runs, etc. You don't want to contribute to that.

NWCP: What about breaking and entering? Have you seen an increase?

LL: What I'm seeing recently is that a lot of people have installed alarms, so when someone tries to break in, they're startled by the alarm and run off before they can take a lot of property. The alarm doesn't have to be tied to anything; just hearing the alarm startles the people and they leave. I don't see as many burglaries as this time last year, probably because a lot of the perpetrators are in jail and people are taking better care of their properties. Another thing I tell people is don't leave your purse and keys by the door in a visible place, because they'll break in just for those items. They'll take your purse and steal your car. Put them away somewhere in the house where they can't be seen.

NWCP: So, our district seems pretty stable to you?

LL: It's pretty stable, but we do have different neighborhoods with pockets of crime. For the most part, yes, it's a safe district.

NWCP: And I think we have you and Captain Yerg to thank for keeping us safe and stable.

LL: I appreciate that!

NWCP: And we really do appreciate you both. We know it's a hard job, especially these days when you don't get as much appreciation as you should. The NWCP banquet does try to correct that, though. Thank you so much for your hard work. Any words about the NWCP?

LL: I have a great relationship with Neil Schachter, Rabbi Chezky Tennenbaum (city police chaplain), and with Councilman Yitzzy Schleifer. Whenever we have something going on throughout the district, I try to call them, in addition to the district-wide email, because I know I can depend on each one of them to get the facts of what's going on. Together we make a great team to help keep the community safe.

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