

December 2014 Issue



I want to start my final commentary for 2014 by wishing our readers a happy, healthy and safe holiday season. Wow, where did 2014 go? Later in this article, I will touch on a topic that helped this year go by so quickly. However, for this segment I am going to focus on a topic that is very important to all of us---*School Safety*.

For a starting point, it's useful to share some demographical information on this subject. The New Garden Township Police Department serves two elementary schools and one middle school. The collective population of these schools is approximately 2,436 people. This is the size of a small community; in fact the population is nearly twice the size the Borough of Avondale.



When people hear "*School Safety*" many challenges may come to mind. You don't have to look hard to read in a paper or on the internet or to see a television broadcast to hear about another tragedy occurring in one of our Nation's schools. Between bomb threats, active shooters, gangs and/or incidents of mass fighting, bullying and exposure to drugs, our concerns appear to be endless. All of these issues represent a real and possible challenge for law enforcement and our school administrators. In fact, we have been confronted with the problem of students writing bomb threats in restrooms in our very own district. I would like to tell you there's a medicine we can use to inoculate ourselves, but there's not. So what do we do?

The answer is **PARTNERING, PREPAREDNESS AND COMMUNICATION**. If it's predictable, it's preventable is our approach to all school safety issues. Recently, the Kennett Consolidated School District has been the target of numerous bomb threats, the majority of which have been at the Kennett Middle School. Working as a team with Dr. Tomasetti and his staff, the New Garden Township Police Department and the FBI have developed protocols to conduct an assessment. Our efforts are intended to achieve the following goals:

1. Maximize safety for the students and faculty.
2. Minimize disruption to the academic environment.

3. Conduct a meticulous investigation aimed at collecting evidence, which will promote prosecution.
4. Consider additional deterrence steps, to include extension hours or the addition of days to make up for time lost in the disruption. *The final step is easier said than done, but it should be considered.*

On the matter of prosecution; our philosophy is to hold accountable persons found to be responsible for these incidents. The penalties for making threats have serious consequences, which may include the costs for the use of emergency services. These expenses can quickly climb into the thousands of dollars. It goes without saying, that when emergency services are misused for these false incidents the whole community is at risk. Please visit the police department website at www.ngpd.org where you will find a link to our Press Releases in the left column. Here you will find two press releases chronicling the investigations and arrests of two 12 year old students for making terroristic threats.

Aside from the bomb threats, numerous efforts are underway to confront the other challenges. We have created partnerships with our law enforcement allies, at the Federal, State, County and local levels and the private sector. We have implemented modern response policies and participated in the Chester County Police Chiefs Association's Active Threat Response Training. This training provides our police officers with the most current information and recommendations which enable our efforts to be at the highest standard to engage and eliminate threats.

We do this not only because it's our vocation---it is in harmony with our Mission Statement and Core Values. I hope this information offers our readers comfort and to help reinforce your confidence in your local law enforcement professionals. We are doing everything within our power to keep your children and our schools safe and as a place where nurturing and learning go hand-in-hand.

2015 Forecast:



As the year comes to a close, I want to share with our readers the one question that remains unsettled as we enter 2015. That question is whether to join a regional police organization, which will mean the dissolution of the New Garden Township Police Department. In its place a new organization will be created; it will be known as the Southern Chester County Regional Police Department, charged with providing public safety services to 4 municipal entities, New Garden Township, London Grove Township, Kennett Square and Kennett Township.

The Regional Police Feasibility Study, completed by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), was released to the public on October 15th; it can be found on our website at www.ngpd.org or on our Facebook page.

It's my professional opinion that regional policing is a better method for providing professional police services to our residents. I wholeheartedly support it for several reasons. I know it may sound audacious, but I believe the positives for the community and

the organization far outweigh the perceived drawbacks. After some additional work, this question will be faced by all the municipal partners at some point in 2015. It warrants discussion and consideration; it's no doubt the biggest public safety topic we'll handle in southern Chester County. When it's all said and done, each community will have to grapple with this question and do what's best for their individual community. We are looking forward to our communities' involvement.

Employee Profile:

In this edition, we have selected to profile a police officer, whom recently celebrated his third anniversary as an officer with the police department; good-humoredly, Police Officer Joseph P. Versagli leaves the "rookie phase" of his career and is welcomed as a newly seasoned veteran---CONGRATULATIONS!



Joe Versagli started his journey toward a career in law enforcement in 2011 when he enrolled in the Municipal Police Academy. Upon graduation, Joe was the recipient the Delaware County Police Chief's Association Award. Following graduation, Joe was fortunate enough to be offered a position in the township that he calls home. As a police officer for New Garden Township Police Department, Joe has not only become a member of a dedicated law enforcement family, but has also been given the opportunity to grow and expand his professional skills.

Joe has been recognized in successive years for his proactive DUI enforcement in 2012 and 2013. In 2014, Joe became a certified Taser instructor and he recently graduated from the NRA Firearms Instructor School. When not on duty, Joe is an avid outdoorsman, he loves spending time at the shooting range, working on trucks, doing constructions projects and working in the yard. Joe prefers to stay busy which isn't hard considering his two children are always on the move. When it is time to relax, Joe enjoys spending time in the kitchen cooking with his wife and hanging out with family and friends.

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