

# THE BLUE LIGHT

## Bulletin

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Gastonia Police  
Department

Terry L. Sult, Chief of Police

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## 5-Year Strategic Plan Created

By Capt. Chuck Lifford

BLB Writer

The famous baseball manager Yogi Berra once said, "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there." Likewise for our police department, as we undergo significant organizational change, it is important to keep focused on what we want to ultimately accomplish.

In Fall 2005 Chief Sult commissioned a workgroup consisting of Donna Lahser, Rob Helton, Amanda Neese, Joe Talley, and Chuck Lifford to develop a long-range strategic plan. The mission was to create a fluid document that outlined the goals of the organization for the next three to five years. The department's long-range plan is designed to work in

conjunction with the fiscal goals of the units and the annual report to give a clear picture of what we have done, what we are about to do, and what we want to accomplish in the future.

To undertake the task, the group first had to do their homework. The team reviewed strategic plans from over twenty other agencies both large and small. Business management textbooks and articles that described long-range planning processes were read. For the plan to be effective it had to address both the internal strengths and weaknesses of our organization but also had to consider external opportunities and threats. After much discussion, a six-month strategy was implemented to develop a document that would have input and ownership by

(Please see **Strategic Plan**, page 4)

### T.E.A.M. Launches In Gastonia

Officer Rick Caldwell works with a Woodhill Elementary School student in the program called Teaching, Educating And Mentoring (T.E.A.M.) which started Oct. 9. T.E.A.M. offers a variety of topics that can be taught to students K-12. Instruction in laws relating to violence, weapon safety, gang prevention, traffic safety, substance abuse, truancy and personal safety can be provided as well as locally created topics.



# Message From The Chief

## Goals Realized; New Goals Ahead

**T**wo and a half years ago our organization began to take an internal look at how the Gastonia Police Department would evolve in an ever-changing environment.

Many of the goals we set have been realized. We have a new Records Management and CAD System and a geographic policing model. The organizational structure modifications allow for more decision-making and accountability throughout the department. We have learned the value of problem solving as a targeting and evaluation model that embraces all methods of policing.

The journey has not been easy! The challenges we faced during these two years have been met with professionalism and determination. The organizational changes combined with decade old salary issues and the budget process created high stress on our

department and more importantly our employees. I am truly honored to be associated with our employees who met these challenges and kept the faith. Our staff can take pride in fact that with all the challenges, reduced staffing and stress, crime was actually reduced in 2006.

As promised, GPD will have our two-year review in the form of a retreat in late February. Employees, sworn and civilian, from across the department at all levels will be represented. The organizational changes will be evaluated and modified if needed as we look toward the future and define opportunities. We will focus on our goal to get SERIOUS about Reducing Crime and combating Guns, Gangs and Drugs.

In the long run the primary role of the chief of police is to provide the vision of where the department is headed and develop goals and

objectives. The chief must also provide resources and tear down obstacles. We have made gains in the area of vehicle quality, salary adjustments and now in staffing levels. In the end, it is not the chief who defines the Gastonia Police Department but those employees who interact with and provide services to our community on a daily basis.

Today, tomorrow and the next day it's your actions and deeds which determine our successes, failures and reputation. For this reason each officer and employee must make routine the process of reaching for the next level to keep the Gastonia Police Department nationally recognized as an organization of the highest quality.

Terry L. Sult  
Chief of Police

## PSN Seeks Community Involvement

**By Darcie Bergandine**  
BLB Writer

**P**roject Safe Neighborhoods Task Force members are developing plans to get more involvement in this community effort which was recently launched in Gastonia.

PSN was created by President George W. Bush in 2001 in response to the "out of control" gun-related violent crime that was occurring

throughout the country. PSN officially kicked off in Gastonia on Sept. 21, 2006, and Gastonia's focus will be on guns, gangs and drugs.

A grassroots approach is being used for community outreach. Task Force members met with the Downtown Faith Network on Jan. 22 to present PSN's approach to eradicating gun crime in Gastonia.

In addition, PSN meetings are being held at the Erwin Center which is within the "corridor" of

hotspot locations. Partnerships are being formed throughout the community to advance the strategy.

On another front, Sgt. Brackett has created a list of repeat offenders that is being reviewed by Locke Bell, the new district attorney. A plan will be created to use "notification" and/or "fast tracking" resulting in a second chance and/or more jail/prison time.

For more information please call PSN at 704-866-6983.

# The New Citizen's Police Academy

By Patrick Daley

BLB Writer

The Gastonia Police Department recently completed its first Citizen's Police Academy. The Crime Prevention/Training Bureau was tasked by Chief Sult to come up with a unique and different perspective on the academy experience.

After many meetings and planning sessions a strategy for conducting the academy was put into place. Twenty participants were chosen from applications submitted and background checks were done on each.

The Citizen's Police Academy offers citizens insights into how police officers perform their duties and how the department serves the community. The purpose of the program is to foster better communication between citizens and police through education. As a result, the academy creates a nucleus of well-informed citizens who possess greater insight into police practices and services.

Graduates of the academy are encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences with the community and to volunteer with the department. Everyone benefits from enhancing citizen understanding of their police department's role and functions.

The academy consisted of 11 class sessions that met once a week. Each class consisted of a two-hour block of instruction. This instruction was comprehensive, covering a different area of the



**Graduates of GPD's first Citizen's Police Academy are, seated left to right, April Adams, Joyce Rhyne, Jackie Youngblood, Cecelia Burr, Stacy Baldwin and Dottie Miller. Standing, left to right, are Nancy Ledford, Don Brittain, Bryon McDermott, Ken Falls, Doug Carpenter, James Howell, Rick Beasley, Sean Morris, Rebecca McCarver, Larry King, Randy Kistler, and Todd McGill.**

police department each week. Certified police officers, supervisors, and civilian instructors with a particular expertise conducted each topic.

Each participant was also required to do a ride along with the patrol division. Two police officers assigned to the Crime Prevention unit served as the program coordinators.

Enrollment in the initial class was limited to 20 participants. The smaller class size helped to reduce costs and encouraged discussion between citizens and officers.

Each participant received an academy manual at the beginning of class one and a certificate of completion at the academy dinner on the last night.

The first Gastonia Police

Citizen's Academy was a huge success and will lead to bigger and better academies to come. All with the help of participants from the first academy!

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# Strategic Plan: Process and Final Plan

(Continued from page 1)

the entire police agency. First, focus group meetings were held with select employees to help identify the barriers that existed to the implementation of a problem oriented policing philosophy.

Second, a questionnaire was distributed to all employees to validate the information provided by the focus groups.

Third, using this foundation, the team created a preliminary plan to serve as a starting point for discussion.

Fourth, a two-day retreat was held for the department at Crowder's Mountain State Park. On day one, Dr. Gary Corder of Western Kentucky University made a presentation reviewing the principles of problem oriented policing and outlined the constraints faced by other agencies implementing POP. The next day the draft plan was presented. The audience broke into small groups to critique the document and make suggestions for improvement.

Fifth, the group reviewed and revised the plan based upon the

input they received at the retreat. They presented the revised plan to a focus group of employees, the command staff, and the Chief until it reached its final form.

The plan is posted on our Web site, [www.GastoniaPD.org](http://www.GastoniaPD.org), and



**The strategic plan and annual report are companion documents and can be found online at [www.GastoniaPD.org](http://www.GastoniaPD.org) under "About Us."**

may be found under the heading "About Us." The final version contains these elements: Purpose Statement, Vision Statement, Values, Assumptions, Strategic Goals and Objectives.

For a long-range plan to be effective for an organization, it must be reviewed and updated regularly. In too many organizations plans sit on a shelf unread and unused. A strategic

plan that covers the 3- to 5-year planning horizon can only stay current and relevant (in an environment experiencing rapid and continuous change) if the agency insures that the plan is updated on an annual basis. Each

year our plan will be reassessed reviewing the validity of our assumptions, and adjusting the goals and objectives. In conjunction with the fiscal year, the updated plan will be released as a companion document to the annual report and the department's short-term strategic objectives.

When we undertook this assignment, the objective of our team was to develop a credible and relevant strategic process that is distinguished both by its simplicity and its power to assist our agency in making tough decisions in order to sustain the Gastonia Police Department's quest for success during challenging times. It is the responsibility of our entire work force to give the long-range strategic plan meaning and life.

## Check Out [www.GastoniaPD.org](http://www.GastoniaPD.org)

**W**eb site development has been a top priority over the last year and many changes and updates have been incorporated.

The primary domain name has been changed from [www.cityofgastonia.com/city\\_serv/](http://www.cityofgastonia.com/city_serv/)

[police/index.cfm](http://police/index.cfm) to a simpler, easier to advertise domain name: [www.GastoniaPD.org](http://www.GastoniaPD.org). The site can also be found at [GastoniaPD.com](http://GastoniaPD.com).

Employment information has been added to create a one-stop shopping center for interested applicants which has resulted in

many applications.

Other updates include expanded information about GPD Teams, District information and maps, crime statistics, and news releases. Slide shows have appeared but were recently replaced with home and car security videos.

## GPD News Briefs

# Biggest Loser Contest & More

**T**he Gastonia Police Department kicked off its own version of The Biggest Loser Contest to win money for losing weight on Jan. 16. The event is sponsored by the City and BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina.

The contest is open to all GPD employees whose weight is above a Body Mass Indicator of 25. The entry fee is \$50, and the grand prize is the total collected entry fee. The contestant who records the biggest loss of total weight during the period of Jan. 16-June 1, 2007, will be declared the contest winner.

“Our insurance carrier is providing participants with counseling and dietary information,” said Detective Mike Schwartz, contest coordinator. “Nine people have signed up. Some are using Weight Watchers and others are using weight loss clinics, but most are just controlling what

they are eating and exercising everyday.”

The person who has lost the most weight and maintained that loss will win the grand prize in June.

### Sniper Competition April 5-7

Fifteen public safety sniper teams will compete for top honors in Gastonia Police Department’s First Annual Police Sniper Team Competition April 5-7 at the Gastonia Police Firearms & Training Center.

The marksmanship competition will include three days of challenging events ranging from cold bore shots in the day to engaging targets at night. Prizes from local and national sponsors will be given to winning teams in each event as well as grand prizes

for the overall winner.

A Fun Shot to be held Thursday, April 5, will give all interested marksman - not just police sniper team members - an opportunity to sign up for a target shoot with the best shooter walking away with a cash prize.

More than 200 people - including participants, judges, and spectators - are expected to attend the event. For more information go to [www.gastoniasniper.org](http://www.gastoniasniper.org).

### GPD Career Day March 31

GPD’s Recruiting Team will host a Career Day from 1-4 p.m. Saturday, March 31 at the police department. The event will include an official welcome from Chief Sult at 1 p.m., PD tours, team displays, a lunch on the Chief’s terrace, ride alongs and application locations.

# Explorers Place Fourth At Survival Camp

**G**astonia PD Explorers took fourth place overall during the Survival Camp Weekend 2006 held Oct. 20-Oct. 22 at Camp Grimes, a Boy Scout Camp in McDowell County.

Attending Explorers were Allison Blevins (Explorer Captain), Mitch Vestal, Travis Kistler, Bobbie Bridges, Ashley Talley, Abby Talley and Shawn Duff. Attending advisors were Patrick Daley (senior advisor) and

Rick Caldwell.

During Survival Camp Explorer posts from all over North Carolina come together for the challenge of competing in various events and determining who is the best post of the weekend. There were seven different events offered with awards given in those individual events, and overall awards given in the top four posts.

Events offered were Obstacle Course, Piggy Back Relay, Tug-Of

War, Survival Run (male and female winners), Basketball, Felony Vehicle Stops, and Iron Man/Lady.

Gastonia has had an estimated 400 explorers in its Explorer Post 515 program, which started in the mid to late 70s with the help of a grant. Explorers are a group of young men and women between the ages of 14 and 21 who think they might be interested in a law enforcement career.

# Counselor's Insight

## The Heart's Desire: Real Peace

### Chaplain Warner Doles

BLB Columnist

**A**mid all the glitter, tinsel and bright lights of this past Christmas season it would have been easy to overlook the real cause of celebration!

The deepest desire of everyone's heart, regardless of what they might say, is peace. Real peace. With all the pressures of our culture, the unreasonable expectations others, as well as we, have on ourselves, heartfelt peace

gets smothered.

The lack of peace is one of the chief causes of emotional and physical health problems in our society. Peace comes when we can embrace God's purpose for our lives, and align our purpose with His.

There's a story of a wealthy European family that wanted to celebrate the birth of their baby with friends. Invitations went out and the guests began to arrive. The festivities got underway and after a time of food, drink and

celebrating, they called for the infant to be brought so everyone could rejoice with the family.

When the baby could not be found, panic set in and the parents and nurse searched frantically for the baby. Finally, the child was found, smothered under all the wraps and coats of the guests who had come to the party.

The main reason for the celebration had been forgotten. Do not allow Him to be forgotten amid the cares of this world. Blessings to you this year.

## GPD Tidbits

### Promotions, Transfers and Retirements

**C**hief Terry Sult announced Dec. 21 the promotion of Sgt. Robert Helton to captain and Officer Steve Colvard's promotion to sergeant.



**Capt. Helton**



**Sgt. Colvard**

Chief Sult announced Aug. 1 the promotion of Detective David Morton and Officer Eric Brice to the rank of sergeant.

Capt. Helton, 40, has 20 years of service with GPD. He holds a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Gardner Webb University. He's a graduate of the



**Left to right, Sgt. Morton, Chief Sult and Sgt. Brice. (Photo by Det. Mike Schwartz)**

221st Session of the FBI Academy. He holds the Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate and has served in Patrol, D.A.R.E., and Juvenile Investigations. He was promoted to sergeant in 1998.

Sgt. Colvard, 46, has 20 years of service with GPD. He holds an associate's degree from Gaston College in Criminal Justice. He holds the Advanced Law

Enforcement Certificate and has served in Patrol, Vice, with a specialized Drug Task Force, in Detectives and as a Community Coordinator.

Capt. Helton has been assigned temporarily as Administrative Captain, and Sgt. Colvard is assigned to the Central District.

Sgt. Morton, 45, has 22 years of service with GPD. He holds an associate's degree in criminal justice from Gaston College and is working on his bachelor's degree with Gardner-Webb University. He holds the Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate and has served in Patrol, Vice/Narcotics, CSI (Crime Scene Investigations), Bike Patrol, Crime Prevention, D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance

# Capt. Lifford Granted P.E.R.F. Fellowship

By Donna Lahser

BLB Editor



**Capt. Lifford**

**G**astonia City Council has approved a request by Capt.

Chuck Lifford to participate in a six-month fellowship - March through August - with the Management Services Division of the Police Executive Research Forum (P.E.R.F.).

This is the first time a Gastonia Police officer has participated with a prestigious fellowship with P.E.R.F., which is dedicated to improving policing and advancing professionalism through research and involvement in public policy

debate.

P.E.R.F., which is headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a national membership organization of police executives from the largest city, county and state law enforcement agencies, primarily in the United States. Since its founding in 1976, it has fostered debate, research and an openness to challenging traditional police practices.

The bulk of the work of P.E.R.F.'s Management Services Division consists of providing technical assistance and conducting studies for law enforcement agencies - both large and small - under contract to the agency. The Management Services group has conducted over 120 studies of

police agencies over the last 12 years and is involved, from time to time, in national-scope projects. Management Services fellows conduct research and develop written products as required by the project. Fellows work as part of study teams in on-site management audits of police agencies.

Capt. Lifford's personal research project will be an analysis of successful organizational transformation in police agencies.

"This is an opportunity for Capt. Lifford and the Gastonia Police Department to gain experience from national experts on a first hand basis allowing for enhanced opportunities to reduce crime in our community," said Chief Terry Sult.

## GPD Tidbits, continued from page 6

Education), and as the department's training coordinator.

Sgt. Brice, 38, has 16 years of service with GPD. He holds an associate's degree from Gaston College and attended VMI (Virginia Military Institute) for two years with a major in business. He holds the Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate and has served in Patrol, with a specialized unit called GETSET (Gang Elimination Through Strategic Enforcement Tactics), and Community Policing.

Sgt. Morton has been assigned to the West District and Sgt. Brice has been assigned to the Central District.

\*\*\*New members of GPD teams: A.S. Norton and A.D. Borja are new members of the SWAT

Team. S.W. Martin and M.S. Willis are new Sniper Team members. New Shift Tactical Officers are M.T. McDonald, Nancy Capistran, P.T. Daley, J.S. Williams, and B.E. Moore. Justin Eppers and Clay Anthony are new K-9 officers.

\*\*\*Gary Johnson was selected in August as the department's Training Coordinator. Sgt. Gene Weaver transferred to the Youth Bureau.



**Ofc. Pittman**

\*\*\*Steve Pittman was presented with the Distinguished Service Award during his retirement ceremony Nov. 1. Steve retired from GPD with 29 years of service with his last assignment being the downtown business district where

he was responsible for traffic, parking and responding to calls for service on Main Avenue.



**Det. Taylor**

\*\*\*Nolan Taylor was presented with awards and gifts in a retirement celebration Jan. 4. Nolan had 23 years with GPD with his most recent assignment being in the Office of Professional Standards. Nolan will now work part-time with GPD doing background checks.

\*\*\*Police Trainees are: Dustin Hunter - hired July 24; Bryan Lindsay and Randy Gantt - hired Sept. 11; Freddie Hurt - hired Dec. 4; John Smith and Bryce Carr - hired Dec. 18; Ellie Talbot - hired Jan. 5.



## Home & Car Security Tips

The Holiday Task Force helped educate drivers November-December about whether their cars were easy or hard targets for thieves. Det. Mike Chambers helped spread the word with a new video about the car break-in/motor theft prevention campaign. Det. Chambers also recently participated in a Home Security video. Both videos will air on the Government Access Channel and can be found online at [GastoniaPD.org](http://GastoniaPD.org).

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