

# THE BLUE LIGHT

## Bulletin

Official  
Publication  
of the  
Gastonia Police  
Department

Tim Adams, Chief of Police

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(Photo courtesy of Robert Lahser/Charlotte Observer)

## Gastonia's New Chief of Police: Stacy Conley

City Manager Jim Palenick announced Nov. 9 that Assistant Chief Stacy Conley has been selected to serve as Gastonia's next Chief of Police. Chief Conley, a 27-year veteran of the force and currently one of two Assistant Chiefs, will formally succeed current Chief Tim Adams, beginning Jan. 1 following Adams' retirement effective Dec. 31.

Mr. Palenick stated that the superior level of both talent and experience within the command staff of the City's Police Department made it possible for the selection process to be restricted to an internal search.

"With the candidates available internally, there was simply no

need to extend our search to external candidates," Mr. Palenick concluded. "The comprehensive interview and evaluation process was genuinely enlightening in that it allowed me to fully recognize and appreciate that Stacy Conley is the best possible choice to lead our department at this time. Chief Conley has a discernable passion for his profession and his office; he has a clear sense of direction in how he plans to move the department forward; and he commands respect from colleagues and employees alike for his dedication and professionalism."

A graduate of Shelby High School and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte where he

received a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, Chief Conley rose through the Gastonia Police Department ranks over a 27-year career highlighted by 21 years of supervisory experience.

Chief Conley has worked directly in nearly every aspect and facet of law enforcement. A 1999 graduate of the FBI National Academy, he has served as Assistant Chief since 2008.

"Stacy Conley has genuinely earned this appointment. His leadership will serve our community and our police department with both distinction and innovation," said Palenick.

Chief Conley says he is honored by the promotion and will be talking with departmental leaders about next steps to

continue progress. Getting more information to officers in cars is a priority along with crime analysis to maximize resource allocation, he says, as well as continued community partnerships.

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# Chief Tim Adams Retires

By Donna Lahser  
BLB Editor

A fun slide show of photos of Chief Tim Adams' past – from his boyhood, to prom, to Chief of Police – looped on two screens to the rhythm of '80s music in the Gastonia Police Department Community Room as a crowd gathered for Chief Adams' retirement ceremony Dec. 2 in the Community Room.

After an overview of Chief Adams' career by

Assistant Chief Stacy Conley, City Manager Jim Palenick presented Chief Adams with his retirement certificate as he spoke about his decision three and a half years ago to name him chief.

"We needed a steady hand of leadership and that man was Tim Adams," Mr. Palenick said. "I've been very, very pleased with that decision and the community has been very, very pleased. He was a good assistant chief and prepared himself well. We are certainly sorry to see him go."

Assistant Chief Rob Helton presented the exceptional duty award to Chief Adams for serving a third of his career in juvenile investigations and being a strong

proponent of youth throughout his career. Chief Helton told a story about a call involving the death of a child with many officers responding, and how he found Tim telling the dead child's sibling that everything was going to be okay.

For more than an hour, many



**Chief Tim Adams receives praise from the SWAT Team during his retirement ceremony. At right, Assistant Chief Rob Helton presents the Exceptional Duty Award. (Photos by Jonas Hansen)**

shared similar stories about the exceptional character of Tim

Adams, and many gifts were presented including a SWAT Team picture from the city's multi-jurisdictional SWAT Team and model patrol cars from the GPD Sergeant's Association.

Sherry Dunaway said Chief Adams is a man of integrity who "walked the walk" and that it has been an honor and privilege to serve as his assistant.

Sgt. Chad Hawkins talked of a time when he was in the hospital and afterwards receiving a check for off-duty work. "Assistant Chief Adams worked it for me and I got the pay."

"A true mentor is someone who is teaching and leading and Chief Adams has done that over his career," Sgt. Travis Brittain said along with sharing leadership traits from the late military Major Dick Winters about leading from the front and by example, and never letting power go to your head but remaining humble and earning respect not because of position or authority but because you are a leader of character and never, ever giving up.

Sgt. Jimmy Arndt and Capt.



Steve Duncan talked about Tim's approach to the SWAT Team after Major Dennis Crosby retired

leaving big shoes to fill since Crosby had led the team since it formed in the '80s. "In 1999 Tim started with the team and it was a volatile time for the team," Capt. Duncan said. "Tim didn't have the tactical experience, but went through all the training up to command where he stayed." Sgt. Arndt spoke of how he, Tim, and Rob Helton worked out every morning and pushed each other. "He has kept us at the top of our field."

Mayor Jennie Stultz said Tim

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# Chief Adams Retires, continued from page 2

has character traits she aspires to have: he never loses his cool and talked to her by phone while he was in Canada or on vacation and she never knew he was away. When she was in the hospital in intensive care in Boone and couldn't locate any family to bring her home, she called Chief Adams. A friend of Tim's from Louisiana called when Hurricane Katrina devastated his home, and a group from here went there to help. "Gastonia's finest – Chief Adams epitomizes that," Mayor Stultz said.

"My dad looks for no reward; he's a great man who serves others," Chief Adams' son Nick said with his sister Jennifer and mom Jackie by his side. "He raised us the right way and I'm thankful." They presented Tim with a guitar.

Retired Belmont Police Chief David James said, when he was chief, Chief Adams was his

conscience because of his faith in God, service to others, teamwork and leadership. "The interagency SWAT Team – that's something



**Chief Adams' son Nick speaks with his sister Jennifer and mom Jackie by his side. (Photo by Eddie Green)**

we've got to keep going."

Sheriff Alan Cloninger said Tim has "always been the rock you could turn to" and that spirit of

partnership means a lot and saves taxpayers money.

Many others also spoke including Ben Bailey with the North Carolina chapter of graduates of the FBI's National Academy; Dale Richburg, the Assistant Special Agent in Charge with Immigration Customs Enforcement; Gastonia Fire Dept. Chief Phil Welch; Chaplains Warner Doles and Kimberly Morton; and retired Sgt. Rusty Friday.

"It took me a while to learn how to be successful: put God first," Chief Adams said. "It's not my ability but God's. People have helped, mentored me through the years. People helped me out along the way. Things accomplished through the years are through people here. The department is in wonderful hands. Jim, I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to be the chief; it's been a great ride."



**Program volunteers assist officers in GPD's training room.**

The Young Lawyers Division of the North Carolina Bar Association conducted its 20th Wills for Heroes program Sept. 24 at the Gastonia Police Department. A total of 183 free estate planning documents were prepared for 61 first responders and spouses by 112 volunteers.

The running total for Wills for

reads as follows: 1,187 volunteers (lawyers, law students, paralegals and notaries public); 3,039 first responders and spouses; and 8,897 documents.

Upcoming Wills for Heroes clinics will be held on the following Saturdays: Jan. 21, Boone; Feb. 25, Raleigh; and April

## Wills For Heroes in Gastonia

Heroes, which was adopted as an NCBA YLD project in 2007, now

21, the 25th Wills for Heroes program will take place where it all began in Charlotte.

The Wills for Heroes Foundation was established by attorneys Anthony Hayes of South Carolina and Jeff Jacobson of Arizona following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The foundation works to assist first responders across the country in a number of ways, including providing free estate planning.

More information can be found at [www.willsforheroes.org](http://www.willsforheroes.org).

# Fallen Officer's Photo Found

As construction got underway for the new Gastonia Police Memorial and Commemorative Park, one important piece was missing.

The GPD did not have a picture of Officer John H. 'Bill' Smith. Since bronze plaques with photos and biographies were being created for each of the nine fallen officers, John Smith's photo was very much wanted as well. A news release was sent out, and Tim Sheppard of Belmont read a story



**Officer Smith**

about this dilemma in the *Gaston Gazette*.

Mr. Sheppard used his experience in tracing family genealogy along with the website [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com) to track down a niece of John Smith's who was living in Hampton, Va., 74-year-old Carole Manley Lynn. He contacted Ms. Lynn who, after much digging, was not only able

to locate a picture of her uncle, but to find a picture of him in his GPD uniform!

Officer Smith's photo now joins the PD's other fallen officer photos – bronzed on the memorial and among other photos in the interior lobby near the Community Room along with information of how he died.

On Sept. 5, 1937, Officer Smith was on his way home from working a security detail at a Gastonia High School ball game when a car crashed into him. The car had been stolen from someone who was attending the ball game. Officer Smith, 32, was a motorcycle officer who had been on the police force for five years. Chief J.C. Elliott said he was a valuable and efficient member of the force.

## Online Tools at GastoniaPD.org

Print out accident and crime reports, use interactive crime mapping, and sign up to receive crime alerts on GPD's website [GastoniaPD.org](http://GastoniaPD.org). The department is offering these new tools online for interested citizens, and hopes crimes will be prevented as a result.

"We are pleased to be able to offer the convenience of getting free copies of incident and accident reports online," Police Chief Tim Adams said recently. "The interactive crime mapping and crime alerts can help the community become better informed, and help prevent crime. For example, if citizens learn several car break-ins have occurred in an area of interest, they might take more steps to protect their own car, which could prevent them from being a victim."

To get free copies of crime and accident reports, look for the "Retrieve a Crime or Accident Report" link on the homepage of [GastoniaPD.org](http://GastoniaPD.org). You can search for reports by date, name or location. You can also use case report numbers to search for crime reports.

Free crime mapping and a sign up for crime alerts can be found in the Crime Statistics section of [GastoniaPD.org](http://GastoniaPD.org) by clicking on a link for RAIDS Online. With the RAIDS Online interactive mapping system, you can search for crime information by location, date and crime type. When searching by locations you can select to receive crime information within 1,000 feet or for up to five miles from the location of interest.

Check out these new online tools for yourself at [GastoniaPD.org](http://GastoniaPD.org). If you have questions about the online

reports, you may contact the Records Bureau at (704) 866-6702. Call (704) 866-6972 with any questions about the online crime mapping.

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# GPD Memorial Park Dedication Day 9-11-2011



“This is a solemn day as we remember all those who lost their lives ten years ago today in the terrorist attacks against our country in New York City, Washington, DC and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. May we never forget the sacrifice made by so many and the innocent lives that were lost. May we always maintain vigilance to prevent such attacks on our homeland in the future.

This is also a very special day for the Gastonia Police Department as we gather to dedicate this memorial park that is intended to recognize the officers of the GPD that also sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. Nine officers' photographs and names are listed on the two walls you see before you.

May this park stand as a constant reminder to all our current and future officers to remain vigilant and safe in their duties so that no more names will ever be added to these walls. May this park also stand as a constant reminder to all that drive by of the sacrifice our officers make each and every day to protect and keep this city safe.”

– Chief Tim Adams  
(Dedication speech excerpt)



Photos courtesy  
of Ben Goff /  
Gaston Gazette

# Counselor's Insight

## Goals and Recognition

I stepped into the gym of our church last week. It was a typical Wednesday night scene with many children waiting to be picked up by parents. They were scattered all over the gym waiting for their name to be called by some relieved children's worker.

What caught my eye was one little boy that I don't think I've ever met. I guessed him to be about 8 years old. When I walked in the gym door, I saw him standing in the circle right in the center of the basketball court. With all the pandemonium surrounding him, this little boy had a ball in his right hand and his eye on the

basketball goal at the west end of the court. He launched the ball from center court and I watched it drill through the goal hitting nothing but net.

The boy went crazy...running around...trying to let somebody know what had just happened. I jumped in and gave him a high five and confirmed to one of the leaders that he had just made the shot from center court. "He's been trying to hit that shot for weeks," the leader replied.

I have two observations about this true story.

1. I'm inspired by the boy who doggedly pursued his literal

long shot goal. Despite the many distractions around him, he wanted it, and he pursued it with dedication in the middle of chaos.

2. I'm so happy that I was there to see it. Achievement with absolutely no recognition is a drag. It just helps sometimes to know that SOMEONE took note of what you did.

Let's be the kind of people that pursue long shot goals, no matter the hindrance. And let's, at the same time, be people who watch carefully for what others are doing. I promise you won't regret it!

Be safe!

Dennis Boyce

## GPD Tidbits

### Chuck Lifford Promoted Assistant Chief

**G**astonia Police Capt. Chuck Lifford has been promoted to assistant chief, effective Jan. 1.



**Asst. Chief Lifford**

Assistant Chief Lifford joined the Gastonia Police Department (GPD) in 1983 and was promoted to sergeant in 1988 and captain in 1996. Currently commander of the East District and the Executive Director of the Gastonia Police Foundation, Capt. Lifford has devoted much time to assisting the GPD with specialized training of new officers, creating policy, strategic plans and reports,

and the creation and maintenance of strong relationships in the community. Capt. Lifford holds a master's degree, and is currently pursuing a Juris Doctorate from the Charlotte School of Law.

Sgt. Mike Smith has been promoted to captain, effective Jan. 1. He joined the GPD in 1995 and has served in the Patrol Division, and with the Street Crimes Unit. He was promoted to sergeant in 2005, and served as night shift patrol sergeant in the Central District until transferred to the community coordinator sergeant's position in that district. In 2011, he transferred to day shift patrol sergeant in the West District. Since 2002 he has served as a member of the Sniper



**Capt. Smith**

Team, which is part of the department's SWAT Team, and became the Sniper Team supervisor in 2007. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Sgt. Reid Brafford has been promoted to captain, effective Jan. 1. Capt. Brafford joined the GPD in 1995 and was promoted to sergeant in 2002. He has served in Patrol and Detectives, and currently serves

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as the Office of Professional Standards supervisor. He holds a bachelor's of science degree from Appalachian State University, and is an executive board member for the North Carolina Internal Affairs Investigator's Association.



**Capt. Brafford**

Officer Brian Atkins was

promoted to sergeant, effective Nov. 1. Sgt.



**Sgt. Atkins**

Atkins joined the GPD in 2001 and has served in the Patrol division, the Street Crimes Unit, and as a community coordinator. He served as a shift tactical officer in 2001 and has been a member of the SWAT Team since 2002. Sgt. Atkins holds an associate's degree in criminal justice from Gaston College.

Det. Eric Wiggins has been promoted to sergeant, effective Jan. 1. Sgt.



**Sgt. Wiggins**

Wiggins joined the GPD in 1998 and worked in Patrol for 6½ years, the Traffic Unit for 3 years, and joined the Youth Bureau in 2008 where he currently serves. He was a sniper on the SWAT Team for 8½ years and currently serves on the Shift Tactical Team. He holds a bachelor's degree in liberal arts from Belmont Abbey College.

Det. Laura Biggerstaff has been

promoted to sergeant, effective Jan.

1. She joined the GPD in 2004 and has served with Patrol, the Street Crimes Unit, and currently serves in Juvenile



**Sgt. Biggerstaff**

Investigations. In addition, she is an advisor to the department's Explorers program which helps youth explore careers in law enforcement. She holds a master's degree in business from Pfeiffer University.

\*\*\*Malcolm Campbell and Adrienne Walker have been selected for the Juvenile Investigations detective positions. Clint Bridges has been selected as a new detective in the Street Crimes Unit.

\*\*\*Capt. Kevin Gilreath was honored with a retirement ceremony on Nov. 10 where he received many gifts including special recognitions from his father David who said Kevin is his hero, driving instructors who expressed appreciation for his mentoring, and Vice and Narcotics Unit members who called him Poppa Bear. A tabletop photo collage showed Kevin's life through the years.

\*\*\*A retirement ceremony for Sgt. Jeff Dobbins was held Oct. 27, and he was presented with a retirement certificate and plaque, his service weapon, a gift from PD employees, and received special recognitions from the Traffic and K-9 units. He thanked everyone for their support to make a 30 year career possible.

\*\*\*Transfers are as follows: Capt. Turas to Vice and Narcotics, Sgt. Chad Hawkins to Traffic sergeant; Reggie Hicks to Central District

Coordinator; Ryan Smith to PTO on C Rotation; Sgt. Rodney Aldridge to Central District Coordinator sergeant; Sgt. Mike Lari to the Office of Professional Standards sergeant; Chad Welch to Environmental/Litter Enforcement Officer; Mark Peeler to Property Officer; and Sgt. Jamey Blalock to the Street Crimes Unit.

\*\*\*Ryan Smith has been selected as the new Hostage Negotiator and Mike Watts is a new K-9 handler. Jarod Ewers, Randy Gantt, Gladys Grier and Frank Towle have been selected for the Honor Guard. Christopher Waldroup and Tony Cape have been selected as Shift Tactical Officers.

\*\*\*Capt. Don Roper was among 249 law enforcement officers graduating from the 246th Session of the FBI's National Academy Program at Quantico, Va., on Sept. 16. His coursework included Executive Leadership, Understanding Terrorism, Investigative Strategies for Violent Crime, and Fitness for Law Enforcement.

\*\*\*Todd Carpenter has graduated from the 2011 Certified Government Chief Information Officers Program™ at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Government. The program covers strategic technology planning, communication, project management, emerging trends, risk assessment and management, acquisition management, change management, leadership, security, legal issues and financial trends.

\*\*\*Recently hired officers: Jordan Reese, 7/25/11; David Pilkey, 9/6/11; and Eric Nelson, 11/14/11.



### **Citizens on Patrol Graduation**

GPD's Citizens On Patrol (COP) program has three new volunteers, left to right, Lamar Gardin, Betty Hamilton and Joe Mayes. Also pictured is Officer Amy Hawkins, COP coordinator. The program started in 2008 and duties include patrolling Gastonia, school checks, and assisting with motor vehicle accidents and stranded motorists. COP volunteers do not take enforcement action; they observe and report suspicious activities to police. COP requirements include 21 weeks of training before reporting for duty. (Photo by Anthony Borja)



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