



**SPOKANE POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
**CHIEF OF POLICE**  
**CRAIG N. MEIDL**

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**Strategic Initiatives**  
**October 2021 Report**



**Public Safety and Community Health Committee Briefing**  
**October 4, 2021**



## Selected Excerpts of Officer Commendations

During fall, winter and spring 2020-2021 we had an eviction moratorium nightmare unfold in our rental house. The tenant, who moved-in September, 2020, absolutely took advantage our inability to take reasonable action for their immediate and copious breach of even the most basic lease provisions, and used the eviction moratorium to create the worst possible scenario for us, in spite of our best efforts and hiring of a landlord/tenant attorney and doing the little that the moratorium allowed. The tenant not only refused to pay rent-which we could have worked with- they also started using and dealing drugs from the house, allowed others to move in, basically starting to destroy the place, with constant day and night traffic of vehicles and people. Two legitimate renters in this shared house departed fearing for their safety, and neighbors were very distraught and concerned. Our efforts to remove this tenant were going nowhere using our attorney and the limited legal notices we could post, we even contacted the Governor's Office and the State Attorney General, both offices were sympathetic but had no way to help us retrieve our house and return peace to the neighborhood because the standard for eviction was so difficult to prove. We (and neighbors) had to resort to start calling SPD, crime check, even 911 on occasions when the tenant's activities escalated. Fortunately for us, the Spokane Police Department and the local **Neighborhood Officer, Tim Schwering**, came to our rescue. All responding officers were vigilant, patient, and empathetic. Officer Schwering reached-out, worked with us, and in a matter of weeks served a search warrant on the tenant, finding plenty of evidence of drug dealing and probably cause for arrest. The City Attorney's Office worked with our attorney and posted a Chronic Nuisance for the house and tenant. This was what we needed to remove a very bad tenant! We are forever grateful to Officer Schwering and his colleagues. We want to let you know how thankful we are for the dedication, hard work, and assistance that your officers provided for us. Please let Officer Schwering and those who helped him know how much we appreciate them.

**[Officers Christopher Benesch, Joseph Matt, Chad Herzog, Ryan Akins, Matthew Stewart , Whitney Hagan, Taylor Johnson, Benjamin Fuson, Corporal Keith Gonsalves, and Sergeant Dan Lesser.]**

Our family would like to thank your officers for their prompt response to a situation. Our granddaughter had her wallet and phone stolen. Her father and mother were able to track the woman who had stolen them using their Life 360 app. They called 911 to report the theft and the suspect's flight, which ended with your officers showing up in force and apprehending her just as she pulled a knife on our daughter and her husband. Today, our granddaughter's sense of peace, her wallet, and her phone have all returned to her. Thank you and the officers you lead for the professionalism you exhibit in handling situations like this one and keeping it from turning in to something far worse.

I volunteer my time as an advocate. I had the opportunity to speak with **Officer Ryan Akins** on the phone as I was consoling and de-escalating the victim. I was beyond impressed with his kind demeanor and professionalism in this very sensitive situation. Then, last night as I was at the victim's house, Officer Akins drove by. He let the victim know that she was increasing a presence around her home as he promised he would, and this morning she texted me and let me know that he was in communication with her throughout the evening regarding the apprehension attempts of her abuser. I share this with you because it is officers like this that are making a difference out there for our community. They are touching lives and making connections with people who are in fragile and emotionally vulnerable states. They are building trust between the police and the people. They are showing the human side of policing.



## Internal Affairs Unit Update

### January 1 through August 31, 2021 Commendations and Complaints

Commendations Received:    **Total: 143**

Complaints Received:        **Total: 57 (44 from community)**

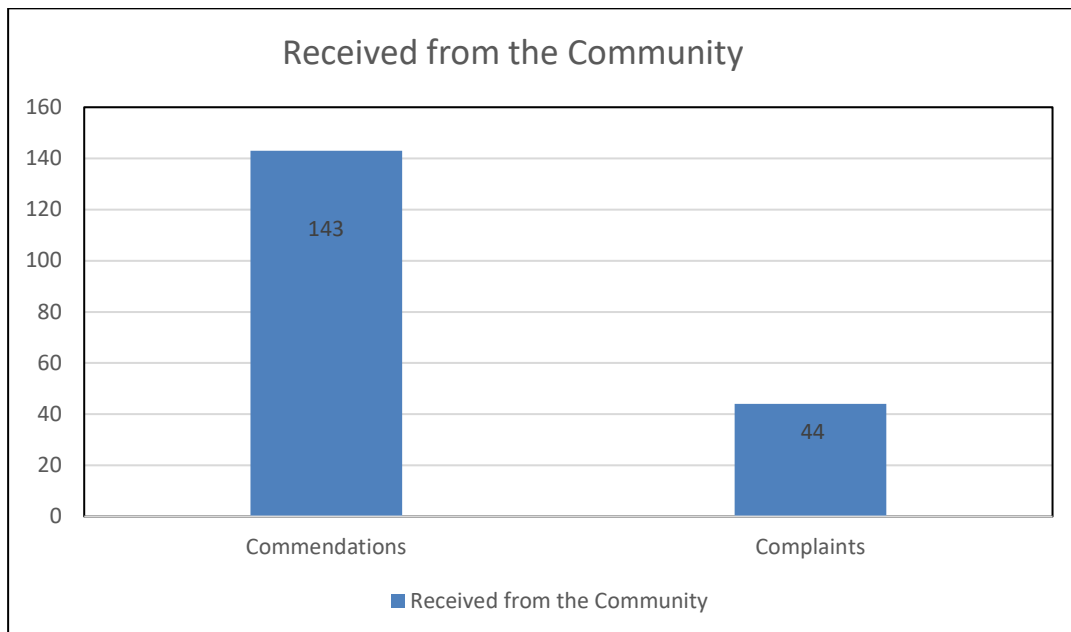
**Closed Out as Inquiries: 5 (As of August 31, 2021)**

*An inquiry is an initial complaint about employee conduct which, even if true, would not qualify as a personnel complaint and may be handled informally by a department supervisor and shall not be considered complaints.*

### Source of Complaints—January 1 through August 31, 2021

Received by the Office of Police Ombudsman	<b>Total: 20</b>
Received by the Spokane Police Department	<b>Total: 37</b>
Internally Generated by the SPD	<b>Total: 13</b>
Generated by the Community	<b>Total: 44</b>

As of August 31, 2021, the department has received 70% more commendations from the community than complaints.



## Use of Force Update

### 2021 Non-Deadly Reportable Use of Force Incidents

From January 1-August 31, 2021, there were 47 non-deadly use of force incidents- 9 K9 contacts and 38 other (e.g., TASER).

### 2021 Deadly Force Incidents (Officer-Involved Shootings)

From January 1-August 31, 2021, there were two deadly force incidents.

#### **Incident 2021-20002320 (Pending SPD Administrative Investigation)**

Incident 2021-20002320 took place on January 5, 2021 in the area of 5100 N Ash. The Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) conducted the criminal investigation. The Spokane County Prosecutor ruled the use of deadly force justified. SPD is conducting an administrative investigation.

#### **Incident 2021-20059960 (Pending SPD Administrative Investigation)**

Incident 2021-20059960 took place on April 17, 2021, in the area of 500 S Cannon. The Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) conducted the criminal investigation. The Spokane County Prosecutor ruled the use of deadly force justified. SPD is conducting an administrative investigation.

### 2020 Deadly Force Incidents (Officer-Involved Shootings)

From January 1-December 31, 2020, there were three deadly force incidents. Two are still open.

#### **Incident 2020-20136616 (Pending Deadly Force Review Board)**

Incident 2020-20136616 took place on August 7, 2020 in the area of Courtland/Crestline. The criminal investigation is by the Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) team is complete. The Prosecutor ruled the use of deadly force justified. The SPD administrative investigation is complete. The case is pending a Deadly Force Review Board.

#### **Incident 2020-20160038 (Pending SPD Administrative Investigation)**

Incident 2020-20160038 took place on September 11, 2020 in the 6300 block of East Broadway. The Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) conducted the criminal investigation. The Spokane County Prosecutor ruled the use of deadly force justified. SPD is conducting an administrative investigation.

## Items of Interest

### Impact of the 2021 Legislative Changes

This May, several new bills were passed affecting law enforcement. Most of the new laws became effective on July 25, 2021. As a result, SPD revised 20 existing policies and created a new policy for Protection Orders. These policy changes were made quickly to be in compliance with the new laws within the small window of May-July 2021. In July, SPD held two mandatory trainings for supervisors and provided roll call training to the entire department regarding the legislation and the subsequent changes. Additional training will be conducted during Fall 2021 In-Service, which takes place October 6-November 5, 2021.

#### Short Timeline to Implement Change Effectively

Implementing the changes effectively was challenging given the narrow window of time provided to consult with legal counsel, revise 20 policies, and train the entire department on those changes.

#### Lack of Model Policies

Model policies, due from the Attorney General in July 2022, ideally would have preceded the implementation of these laws. Instead, agencies and their legal advisors are trying to make sense of the vast changes without feedback or model policies from the Attorney General's Office.

#### Less-Lethal Equipment

Some of the new laws came with what appears to be unintended consequences. House Bill 1054 prohibits the use or acquisition of "military equipment." Many less-lethal weapons commonly used as an alternative to the use of deadly force are considered "military equipment" under the new law. Our less-lethal shotguns are a delivery system that is greater than .50 caliber. House Bill 1310 requires that officers, when possible, use available and appropriate less lethal alternatives before using deadly force; yet .50 caliber firearms are prohibited, making some less lethal tools prohibited. Before the legislation took effect, officers could use launchers to deploy less-lethal 40 mm foam blunt impact munitions (see photo below) in violent situations, such as when encountering an armed suspect who refuses to drop a weapon. Like many other agencies, SPD is not allowing use of the less-lethal launchers until the legislation is changed to no longer define these launchers as military equipment and thus, prohibit their use.



In the meantime, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) submitted a list of questions to Rep. Jesse Johnson (D-Federal Way) for clarification from an Attorney General's Opinion. WASPC stated

that they believe the AG opinion can provide important clarity, until needed legislative fixes for critical issues related to detention and use of force can be reached.

### Changes to Policies

Some of the legislative changes were easy to implement. For example, SPD already had a “duty to intervene” clause in the existing Use of Force policy, so the wording was changed to match the wording of the bill. Other changes, such as the updating of Victim’s Rights, were completed with policy changes and updating the card provided to victims. SPD’s pursuit policy was already more restrictive than many agencies in the state regarding which crimes officers could initiate a pursuit for and continues to be more restrictive than crimes the new law allows for pursuits. Other changes to this law are the requirements of probable cause and supervisor permission prior to initiating a pursuit. The prohibition on “No knock” warrants was added to policy, but “no knock” warrants were not a practice of SPD, so it did not have a significant impact.

However, the use of force bills had more of an impact on responding to calls for service. House Bill 1310 mandates that when possible, officers are required to exhaust available and appropriate de-escalation tactics prior to using any physical force, such as:

- Creating physical distance by employing tactical repositioning and repositioning as often as necessary to maintain the benefit of time, distance, and cover;
- when there are multiple officers, designating one officer to communicate in order to avoid competing commands;
- calling for additional resources such as a crisis intervention team or mental health professional when possible;
- calling for back-up officers when encountering resistance;
- taking as much time as necessary, without using physical force or weapons

With the expectation of less reliance on use of force and the mandate that officers take all reasonable steps possible to avoid using force, calls have become more labor intensive and require additional officers to handle. Response times to calls has therefore been affected since more officers are needed on many calls now.





## Promotions

On September 2, 2021, three officers promoted to the rank of detective and one officer was promoted to Sergeant. Congratulations to Sergeant Bob Collins and Detectives Erin Raleigh, James Stewart, and Josh Laiva.



## Spokane Police Department's Community Crisis Assistance Program

The program began in March 2021, and is made possible thanks to the Spokane Police Foundation. The intended purpose of the Community Crisis Assistance Program is for officers to have access to funds to assist those they contact during the course of their duties for emergency situations such as the following:

- Officers could use the funds to purchase food for a family/individual who have experienced extreme loss or are experiencing extreme hardship, like a family who experiences a fire.
- Officers enter a home on a call and see that the cupboards are bare, with no food for the children, the program can help.
- The funds can be used to purchase appropriate clothing for weather conditions, such as if officers come across a family in the middle of winter who have no coats or no blankets for their beds.

Officers who desire to use funds from the Spokane Police Community Crisis Assistance Program will contact someone in their chain of command to request approval to use the funds.

The assistance provided is temporary and not a long-term solution. Community Outreach will follow-up with those assisted through this program when possible to see if there are longer-term solutions.

Although these funds are not for housing, temporary or otherwise, two exceptions were recently given the entire set of circumstances where the Foundation was able to provide community members with stop gap assistance because an officer took the time to place a request for assistance.

In the first instance, an officer overheard a couple having an argument about where to stay until their housing became available the following day. The officer contacted the couple and their teenage daughter; through the program, he was able to provide them a secure place for the night.

The second example is when a domestic violence victim had no place to stay because her abuser was still at large. Officers were not able to get her into a shelter given the hour and nothing being available. The officer reached out to the foundation and he provided the victim with a safe place to rest her head for the night.

## Awards

### September 11 Memorial Event

At the September 11 Memorial Event organized by the El Katif Shriners, a specialty team and veteran officer were recognized for excellence.

### Spokane Police TAC (Tactical) Team

The Spokane Police TAC (Tactical) Team is a specialty team that trains and specializes in Public Order Policing events. These include all large public gatherings, concerts, demonstrations, parades, protests, and events where there are large political gatherings. The team is proficient in both Bicycle Rapid Response Policing, as well as Mobil Response Policing. SPD's TAC team is the largest Public Order Policing Team outside of Seattle PD that trains and specializes in Constitutional rights Events - specifically 1st and 2nd Amendment issues. The team averages around 85-95 activations a year and has become the region's leading experts in Public Order Policing. The Bicycle Rapid Response Team- a team within TAC -has been recognized as the leading Police Bike Team in the Northwest. The TAC team consists of 40 patrol officers, 4 Sergeants, a Lieutenant commander and a Captain. Over the past year - particularly last summer during ongoing protests, the TAC team worked tirelessly to keep our city safe.





### Officer of the Year - Officer Jeremy McVay

Officer McVay is a veteran officer who is always willing to use his experience to assist his team. In nominating Officer McVay for this award, Lt. John Everly wrote, "I have known Officer McVay since he was



hired as a Spokane Police Officer in 2007. During that time, I have had the pleasure of working with him as a patrol officer, as well as supervising him. In my opinion, Officer McVay's strongest attribute is his humility. He is an extremely accomplished Police Officer, yet he is willing to accept feedback from anyone. I have seen Officer McVay interact with officers as well as administrators and his ability to effectively communicate his message is second to none. Officer McVay is also an accomplished SWAT Officer. I have personally sought out his opinions on numerous tactical calls while working on patrol with him. He is able to critically think through complex situations while keeping in mind current case law, police trends, and departmental concerns. Officer McVay's experience, candor and ability greatly contribute to the overall success of the Spokane Police Department."

### 2020 Distinguished Service Medal Recipients (Awarded in 2021)

The Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to employees who have demonstrated outstanding sustained and exemplary performance along with diligence and devotion to duty.

#### Sergeant Isamu Yamada

Sergeant Yamada was recognized for his commitment to the Department and the Officers who work for him. Sergeant Yamada is always at the forefront on insuring that his team is quick to satisfy the department's training requirements and administrative tasks. By maintaining high standards on the small details, Sergeant Yamada is able to lead his team beyond minutia to stay focused on the higher objectives of service and compassion. His patrol team always has a high level of morale and productivity. He has a strong commitment to the neighborhood policing model that his team has adopted. Sergeant Yamada and his team take proactive policing "hot spots" to the next level with well thought out and directed operations. He provides detailed briefings of the team's activities and the effects of their presence.

#### Sergeant Nate Spiering

Sergeant Spiering was recognized for his work with the department since 1998. In the last five years, his leadership has been crucial. During the department's transition New World CAD/RMS, in addition to his patrol assignment, Sergeant Spiering conducted rollcall, in-service and supervisor trainings, along with attending numerous meetings to fix specific problems. He was tasked with revamping the Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team and incorporate less lethal tools, motivational interviewing and patrol tactics to improve SPD's response to people in crisis. Sergeant Spiering accepted the challenge and quickly developed a training program for officers and supervisors that ultimately laid the foundation for what has become the very successful Behavioral Health Unit. As the K9 Unit supervisor, his unit appreciates his relentless attention to detail, proactive and thorough approaches, and supportive leadership style. Finally, Sergeant Spiering has been the ideal model for how to effectively listen to issues being raised by the nation and community and respond productively.

#### Lieutenant Dave Overhoff

Since taking over the role of the Tactical Team (TAC) Commander, Lieutenant Overhoff has reviewed every aspect of the Team and outlined specific expectations. He has provided his members the highest level of

training and accountability. 2020 has brought about even more complex issues, as nationwide protests broke out and created a divide between law enforcement and community members. Spokane experienced its first large scale protest-turned-riot on May 31, 2020. Lieutenant Overhoff led the TAC Team through the event that started out as a peaceful protest and march and then shifted to violent and riotous behavior. There have been many more demonstrations, protests, and events since that day. Many cities experienced mass destruction and murders of innocent people, but Spokane was not one of them. Lieutenant Overhoff has consistently continued to monitor, analyze, and create operational plans for these incidents, while coordinating with many other agencies and organizations, to support the safety and security of the community. He conducts tactical briefings, debriefings, and after action reports for nearly every TAC Team involved incident and has created a command structure within the Team to support its ongoing success. In addition to all of these events, Lieutenant Overhoff has been instrumental in bringing training, equipment, and personnel to the TAC Team to support a Bicycle Rapid Response Team (BRRT). The TAC Team assignment is in addition to Lieutenant Overhoff's duty assignment, requiring this extra work to be completed outside his normal work hours, work days, and job description. Lieutenant Overhoff accepts all of these responsibilities and continues to try to improve every area possible to leave behind a successful legacy.

#### Detective Nick Geren

Detective Geren has been a part of the Spokane Police Department for approximately fourteen years. He has established himself one of the hardest working employees in our department and has never shied away from difficult assignments. Detective Geren is currently assigned to the Major Crimes Unit. He volunteers for additional training to maintain his technical expertise for his unit. His training and skill set allow investigators to look up phones, complete tower dumps, do mapping / analysis, and help with search warrants. Detective Geren continues to use this knowledge to help others across our investigative division with multiple serious felony cases. During the latter half of 2020, Detective Geren was tasked with the lead investigative role on an officer involved shooting. Detective Geren worked with numerous investigators from different agencies in order to accomplish this task. His leadership skills, expertise, and thorough documentation helped this team complete a professional work product. As a result, a dangerous multi-time convicted felon was charged with 1st degree assault on a Deputy U.S. Marshal. The meticulous work done on this case was presented to the prosecutor's office in short order to offer them the opportunity to evaluate the case and render a decision for our community in a timely manner.

### **Precinct Highlights**

#### **North Precinct**

##### Collaboration with Neighborhood Residents Addressing Quality of Life Issues

- In one location, alert neighbors contacted the NRO about stolen property at a nearby nuisance address. The NRO worked with a patrol officer at the location to arrest the suspect and return the stolen property to the owners.
- In another location, neighbors had complained about a nuisance residence. Code Enforcement had issued violations to the owner with no response. NROs issued a Chronic Nuisance Notice and work is in progress.



- Neighbors complained about drugs, noise, fireworks, and neighborhood disputes at one residence. NROs and Spokane C.O.P.S. assisted the owner and the renters signed an agreement to vacate.
- Criminal activity has slowed at Camp Sekani Mountain Bike Park. Vehicle prowling is down The NRO has made a presence at the park and park users have been reporting that things are more peaceful.
- Neighbors complained about campers urinating at a park in front of children. NROs trespassed the violators from the camp.
- One nuisance location drew concern from neighbors due to drug activity. NROs served an abatement agreement on the owner and filed a Chronic Nuisance Notice.
- In one location, the owner's adult son has been subletting the lower level to people. SPD responded 17 times over the course of four months with various arrests. NROs are working on the Chronic Nuisance Notice.
- Neighbors reported transients leaving needles all over Cannon Park. The NRO has been stopping by three times a day to run people out of the lot area who are dumping garbage.
- In one location with an abandoned residence, neighbors and NROs are working with Whitworth University and Code Enforcement to address trespassers. Code Enforcement is helping clear and board up the house again. Whitworth is sending a crew to help clean up with the City cleanup crew and supplying a garbage truck.

## **Downtown Precinct**

Video: A Day with Downtown Precinct Officer Casey Jones

<https://www.facebook.com/SpokanePD/videos/1032861014195876/>

### Crime Prevention Missions

The Downtown Precinct has been focusing on Pacific-2nd/Browne-Division, with a mission to reduce Part I crimes and calls for service. After focused enforcement using high visibility patrols and bike patrols and meeting with agency leaders, officers saw significant improvement around the shelters.

### Bar Issues

SPD reviewed staffing options to ensure bar patrol staffing numbers, primarily in summer. As a result, will add special emphasis patrols. SPD met with bar management to discuss safety guidelines for patrons. The City will address lighting issues to deter crime.

### Precinct Outreach

- Mental Health Stabilization Project team meeting
- Downtown Community Court triage meeting
- Hot spotters meeting
- Downtown security group meeting
- Spokane Treatment and Recovery Services Board meeting
- Business Improvement District Board meeting
- Salvation Army Board meeting
- Continuum of Care Board meeting
- Washington State Public Safety Review Panel meeting



- Riverside Neighborhood Council meeting

### Lifesaving Efforts with Narcan

On September 2, 2021 at approximately 3:00pm, Downtown Precinct officers were conducting a bike patrol when they encountered a male passed out on the sidewalk in the area of 200 W. Pacific Avenue. A bystander told officers the male had consumed “mexi-pills” and potentially overdosed. Officers immediately began medical assessment and determined the male had a weak pulse and displayed apparent agonal breathing. Spokane Fire medical personnel were requested as the officers continued their initial medical assessment.

Officers administered one dose of Narcan to reverse the effects of the potentially consumed substance. Spokane Fire arrived on scene and assumed medical treatment. Spokane Fire personnel assessed the male’s medical condition as life threatening and again in this incident attributed SPD officers’ actions to saving his life. The male was transported to a local hospital where he is expected to survive

## **South Precinct**

### Outreach

This summer, the South Precinct staff helped with the PAL program at Liberty Park in the East Central neighborhood.

### Crime Prevention Missions

- The South Precinct has been focusing on Coeur d’Alene Park. The park had multiple campers overnight and persons camping in vehicles on the street. South Precinct officers are actively contacting anyone that appears to be setting up camp in the park. Many people have been excluded from the park for camping in violation of park rules. South Precinct leadership saw a tremendous change in CDA Park, and were happy to see kids playing in the park again. They were appreciative of patrol officers checking the park frequently.
- The Riverside to Sunset/CDA to Oak area is a current hot spot, due to recent assaults, burglaries, vehicle prowling incidents, and stolen vehicles. The South Precinct hopes to see a significant reduction in Part I crimes due to the special emphasis.
- The Rockwood to 31<sup>st</sup>/Mt. Vernon to South Napa area is a new focus area due to recent burglaries and vehicle prowls. The South Precinct is teaming up with patrol to look for suspicious behavior.

## **Outreach Update**

### Police Activities League (PAL) Summer Program Concludes

PAL 2021 was conducted in the AM Cannon, Friendship and Liberty Parks. Each day there were approximately 75 PAL participants. Throughout the five-week PAL program, there were approximately 17 officers and 14 community volunteers in attendance. Our partnerships for PAL participants included the YMCA, Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Northeast Youth Center, and West Central Community Center. We are grateful for Numerica for providing volunteers and to SPD chaplains for providing water. The Junior League of Spokane and RESCU credit union provided treats. Zip2Water provided a water filtration system. Shadle





Prevention & Wellness Coalition and West Spokane Wellness Partnership provided drug/alcohol/vaping prevention education and games for the kids.

Survey data confirmed the program's success. 97% of youth reported that the program helped them trust Spokane Police officers. 99% responded that they would be comfortable asking an officer for help in an emergency situation. 99% of respondents reported that they enjoyed the PAL program.

Youth participants learned about substance abuse. 96% understood that vaping is harmful to their health, 99% understood alcohol use is harmful to their health, and 97% understood that marijuana is harmful to their health.

Please see website for more information.

<https://my.spokanecity.org/police/community-outreach/>



**97% of youth reported that the program helped them trust Spokane Police officers**



### PAL Boxing



The Spokane Police Department is proud to support our PAL boxers. Thank you as well to the Spokane Police Foundation for their continued support of our youth engagement efforts. Please reach out to Officer Graig Butler if you are interested in getting your youth involved. He can be reached at [SPDCOMMUNITYOUTREACH@spokanepolice.org](mailto:SPDCOMMUNITYOUTREACH@spokanepolice.org).

### Back to School Community Fair

SPD participated in the Back to School Community Fair on August 28, 2021, at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center. The fair provided free services: haircuts, immunizations, COVID-19 vaccine and COVID testing. Participants also received backpacks filled with school supplies, and some sneakers and socks (while supplies lasted).

