



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

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**Strategic Initiatives**  
July 2023 Report  
The Community Engagement Edition



# Community Engagement Goals

## Increase Interactions with Youth Outside of SPD Youth Programs

### Engagement with Schools



Spokane Police Department will focus on school connections and increase activities like Safety Talks, Career Fairs, Job Shadow Experiences, Drug Education (especially Fentanyl), College Career Learning Readiness, and Police Academy tours and demonstrations. Participating schools will include both public and private schools.

In 2023, SPD has facilitated activities at Scott Elementary, Stevens Elementary, All Saints School, Trinity Catholic School, East Valley High School, Highland Middle School, Northwest Christian School, Woodland Montessori School, Rogers High School, North Central High School, Lewis and Clark High School, Salk Middle School, Glover Middle School, and Shaw Middle School, as well as various preschools. Community Outreach officers are working with City of Spokane youth with behavioral and/or attendance issues who are in City of Spokane schools (Arlington, Jefferson, Lidgerwood, Shaw) and those attending school outside of the city limits. In several cases, counselors have asked officers to meet with the students as they make progress.

Activities with Scott Elementary, All Saints School, and the Secondary Transition Education Program (STEP)



### Work with Partner Organizations

Spokane Police Department will continue to partner with organizations that serve youth such as Junior League, Boys and Girls Club, Scouts, YMCA of the Inland Northwest, Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, West Central Community Center, Northeast Community Center, Emmanuel Family Life Center, Northeast Youth Center, West Central Spokane Partnership, Spokane County Juvenile Justice, Crosswalk Youth Shelter, and Excelsior Wellness Center. At right, Chief Meidl and Captain Meidl at Northeast Youth Center.



## Increase SPD Youth Outreach Programs

### Police Activities League (PAL)

SPD's flagship youth outreach program, the Police Activities League (PAL), began in 2013 and continues to serve hundreds of young people each summer. PAL engages youth with activities such as flag football, basketball, soccer, and lawn games. Officers and community volunteers serve as mentors for the young participants, provide positive role modeling, and teach core values. The program is held at neighborhood parks in West Central, East Central, and Northeast Spokane.

In 2022, we served 984 total participants over 15 sessions (403 unduplicated children). The PAL program is adding additional partners in 2023 as well as activities, such as art, martial arts, and drug prevention education in partnership with the DEA.



### PAL Boxing

In 2020, SPD added PAL Boxing. Thanks to the support of the Spokane Police Foundation and its donors, youth participants train with police officers at Spokane Boxing Gym. The program has an enormous impact on the youth boxers. Coaches build positive relationships with the teens. In 2023, SPD is collaborating with new partners, such as ESD 101.



### Thrive Nation Soccer Camp

In 2023, SPD is partnering with Thrive International on Thrive Nation Soccer Camp. The soccer participants are immigrant and refugee youth.



## Youth & Police Initiative (YPI)

In 2023 and beyond, SPD will expand the Youth & Police Initiative (YPI) with the addition of new partners. YPI is a prevention program for at-risk high school and middle school youth, designed to meet them where they are and help them prepare for their future.



Police officers lead the YPI program, building trust and rapport with students through dialogue, role-play and sharing perspectives. Participants are encouraged to work hard in school, avoid substance use and gangs, and get involved in their communities. In 2023, SPD is holding the YPI program with partners such as NEWTech Prep and at Crosswalk Youth Shelter. Photos from the May 2023 YPI graduation at NEWTech Prep.



## Increase Education About Drugs

The Spokane community was identified by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) as a hot spot for fentanyl. Between February of 2022 and February 2023, there were 185 reported overdose deaths in Spokane County – most from fentanyl with methamphetamine a close second. Fentanyl-related overdose deaths grew 186% from 2020-2021 in our County. Our police officers and fire medics administer Narcan to help counter the effects of drug overdoses daily.

To combat the fentanyl crisis, SPD is partnering with the DEA for Operation Engage Spokane. Operation Engage Spokane is a comprehensive community-level approach to address the drug epidemic through prevention strategies, facilitating conversations and collaboration with local partners. SPD is also increasing drug education with other partners.

- SPD and the DEA teamed up to present a Citizens Academy to teach community members about the fentanyl epidemic.
- SPD participated in the Spokane Alliance for Fentanyl Education (S.A.F.E.) 2023 Youth Summit and the Fall Family Fest in October 2022. Both events were designed to raise awareness about the dangers of fentanyl. S.A.F.E. hosted a free family event with live music, food trucks, and activities for all ages.
- SPD Community Outreach Officers work with Wellness Coalitions such as West Spokane Wellness Partnership, Shadle Prevention & Wellness Coalition, and Northeast Support Team. The coalitions are part of the Community Prevention & Wellness Initiative (CPWI) and deliver much needed prevention programs and strategies focused on reducing underage use of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and other drugs. The coalitions also educate parents about signs of drug use and signs of human trafficking, behavioral health issues, and unhealthy relationships. SPD is a partner for community presentations such as “Fentanyl – What You Need to Know” at Northeast Community Center and events such as Drug Take-Back Events.
- Officer John Yen, a certified Drug Recognition Expert, is presenting on drug trends occurring in schools, with a special emphasis on middle school youth. He joins the Community Outreach Team at presentations at various locations such as Northwest Christian, Shaw Middle School, and Boys and Girls Club.
- SPD is involved with the Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (GSSAC). GSSAC has supported drug education activities in SPD youth programs like the Police Activities League and community conversations, such as Roll Call with a Cop.

Below, community members learn how to recognize fentanyl.



## Increase Services and Education to Vulnerable Populations

The Community Outreach Unit regularly partners with humanitarian organizations. Officers meet with new refugees to Spokane to help them get to know their police and to inform them about what police services are available. SPD works with organizations such as World Relief, Thrive International, and Lutheran

Community Services Northwest (LCSNW). Community Outreach officers teach classes and workshops on laws, driving, drugs, and safety. SPD is currently working on programs and services for unaccompanied refugee minors in Spokane. Below, SPD with World Relief, at World Refugee Day, and with women in Thrive International’s refugee women driving education program.



Children in foster care are at greater risk for homelessness. According to the National Foster Youth Institute (NFYI), more than 50 percent of America’s homeless population spent some time as foster children. With that statistic in mind, SPD is taking a proactive approach with outreach to children in foster care. SPD is engaging with Embrace Washington and Lutheran Community Services Northwest to meet youth in foster care and provide good experiences with law enforcement. At left, Officer Prim with youth from Embrace Washington. SPD leadership will continue to share information about the department’s programs for youth with organizations serving foster children, immigrants, and refugees (e.g., Spokane Translations, World Relief, Embrace Washington).

SPD is expanding the Safe Place Program for Victims. Safe Place is an agreement between businesses, the police department, and the community to report crimes (especially hate crimes) and provide a place for victims to safely wait for police. Business owners display a decal near their front door, agree to report crimes, and train employees, volunteers, and staff on the reporting of crimes. Our community currently has 40+ Safe Place locations. This program began in 2020.



SPD officers and volunteers will help people we encounter by connecting them to resources, such as Salvation Army, LCSNW, and MiA – Mujeres in Action. SPD will also utilize the Crisis Assistance Program (through the Spokane Police Foundation) to help individuals and families in crisis.

In 2023, SPD partnered with the Salvation Army on a program that allows officers to pick up “To Go” food bags for distribution to vulnerable populations, housed or unhoused.

SPD also supported the Challengers baseball team in 2023 and the Special Olympics Pacers team, attending practices and sending the team off to the state tournament.

## Build Relationship with Spokane Tribe of Indians

SPD will meet regularly with the Spokane Tribe of Indians (STOI) to ensure effective communication and progress toward strengthening the relationship. Meetings will help both SPD and STOI identify unmet needs and address those needs, coordinate between Spokane Tribal Police and Spokane Police Department for the safety and betterment of our community, and identify meetings, events, and ceremonies where both STOI and SPD should participate.

Additionally, SPD will continue to provide outreach such as safety talks to STOI youth at the Wellpinit Boys and Girls Club and Wellpinit schools. Teen Night in Wellpinit offers the opportunity to discuss decision making, mental health, and drug education with teens.



SPD and STOI will attend existing events together (e.g., STOI Annual Pow Wow and Celebration) and consider creating new events and partnerships. This will include coordinating with the American Indian Community Center on training, events, referrals to Goodheart Behavioral Health, and sponsoring families in need and helping them through the Crisis Assistance Program. Other ways to engage tribal members will include SPD youth programming (Police Activities League, PAL Boxing, YPI); Crime Prevention through Environmental Design assessments of properties; active shooter training; and parent education night on issues such as online safety and social media, preventing child exploitation.

## Engage at Community Events



Community events are a great way for officers and community members to interact and build positive working relationships. The Lunar New Year Celebration, Spokane County Fair, Unity in the Community, World Refugee Day, the Lilac Festival, Hoopfest, Bloomsday, and Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (ANHPI) Heritage Days are just a few of the events in our community that give officers a chance to provide an engaged and responsive presence in the community.

Events such as Coffee with a Cop, Roll Call with a Cop, and Cops & Conversations are crucial to provide opportunities for Spokane residents to meet the officers policing in their communities and neighborhoods. Below, officers at Roll Call with a Cop in East Central Spokane.



**Cops & Communities**  
 Welcomes The  
 North East Spokane Police  
 Precinct Officers For

**COPS & CONVERSATION**  
 Meet with the members of law  
 enforcement protecting your  
 neighborhood!

Grab Coffee, Chat and  
 Get to know your officers!

Everyone  
 Is Welcome!

**DATE:**  
 Friday, August 4th  
 11:00am – 1:00pm

**LOCATION:**  
 Starbucks  
 Heritage Village  
 9335 N Newport Hwy  
 Spokane, WA 992018

Cops & Conversation is a new event, put on by a community organization called Cops and Communities. Ferris High School graduate and current EWU student Tayla Tollefson came up with the idea to better connect community members with their police officers.

The Downtown Precinct held the first Cops & Conversation event on May 30, 2023. Baker Sector (Northeast Spokane) is excited to have a Cops & Conversation Event on August 4, 2023, from 11 am – 1 pm at the Starbucks at Heritage Village, 9335 N Newport Hwy.

SPD participates in the Pink Patch Program  
 SPD is selling Pink Patches, an innovative public awareness campaign to bring attention to the fight against breast cancer and to support breast cancer research.

## Enhance Communication with the Community We Serve



In April 2023, SPD introduced Meidl’s Minute, a regular video segment where Chief Meidl discusses public safety issues. Videos are posted on SPD’s Facebook page.

In 2024, the Public Information Office (PIO) intends to establish a podcast to increase community education and awareness of public safety issues. The PIO also intends to host a Media Academy. Representatives of local media outlets are involved in scenarios and discussion with officers. Media representatives get hands-on experience with handcuffing, controlling subjects, K9s, body cameras, weapons, etc. Officers provide an understanding of why and how force is used and provide clarification on policies and procedures.





## Provide Training and Demonstrations

### Demonstrations at the Police Academy

SPD will be providing hands-on training at the Academy. In early 2023, SPD has enjoyed introducing people to police procedures, defensive tactics, the SWAT team, the K9 Unit. Groups have included a class from Lewis and Clark High School, NEWTech Prep, Youth Leadership Spokane, Junior League of Spokane, and Reardan School District. SPD will also hold an Enhancing the Survival Mindset class at the Academy later in 2023 to provide situational awareness and personal safety education to women.



### Specialty Unit Education

SPD's Drone, SWAT, and K9 Units have given multiple demonstrations on-site for locations such as the Boys and Girls Club, multiple parks for the Police Activities League program, and schools such as Wilson Elementary, Willard Elementary, and Roosevelt Elementary.



SPD's K9 unit conducted 15 demonstrations during the first six months of 2023. Below, the K9 Unit conducts a demo at Thrive International, with the help of a Russian translator.



## Increase SPD Volunteer Program

Volunteers are critical to SPD operations and community engagement. In 2022, SPD focused on growing the Volunteer Services program, ending the year with 98 volunteers (double the amount from 2021). These volunteers contributed 26,330 hours to the department and community. SPD also added six Reserve Officers to the force.

In 2023, SPD will continue to recruit volunteers heavily for all programs: Explorers, Cadets, Reserve Officers, and Citizen Volunteers. Another Reserve Academy started in June 2023, which will add several more volunteers to SPD. Below, officers at Bloomsday, Hoopfest, the Spokane County Interstate Fair, Special Olympics car show, St. Patrick's Day Parade, 9-11 Remembrance Event, Embrace Washington shoe shopping for youth in foster care, and safety presentations for older adults and at Northeast Youth Center.



## Provide Enhanced Community Policing

SPD regularly meets and collaborates with dozens of organizations to include nonprofit agencies, government agencies, community centers, schools, universities, businesses, churches, and neighborhood councils. Even with SPD's patrol staffing challenges, it is critical that SPD leadership and Community Outreach continue to engage with those entities.



*Our neighborhood resource officer, Jake Willard, attended our meetings and graciously interacted with our residents. I was very worried we had lost community-oriented policing when he was reassigned to the patrol unit. The police updates are a popular agenda item. I am very happy the reorganization still allowed police officers to attend our meetings. Sgt. Brian Tafoya and Lt. Terry Preuninger have attended our meetings. They both have continued the great community outreach we had experienced with Officer Willard.*

~ Carol Tomsic, Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Council Chairperson

Community policing efforts include increased Collaboration with Spokane Community Oriented Policing Services (C.O.P.S.) to promote and support a safe environment for our community. The nonprofit organization hosts a multitude of programs that enhance community safety such as C.O.P.S. shops and Block Watch. Spokane C.O.P.S. leadership will be working with SPD to ensure that C.O.P.S. goals are aligned with SPD goals. The organization will be working towards becoming an essential part of SPD goals and initiatives. SPD and Spokane C.O.P.S. will work on community education and crime prevention initiatives together (e.g., preventing burglaries, identity thefts, and online scams).

SPD will conduct Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) Evaluations with schools, businesses, and agencies. Recently SPD has completed evaluations with agencies such as the American Indian Community Center, West Central Community Center, Thrive International, and Northeast Youth Center. SPD is bringing CPTED training to Spokane to train more employees, community partners, and volunteers on the CPTED program.

