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Police, community unite against crime

Neighbors and law enforcement celebrate National Night Out

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Club member Xaria Jones accepting Youth Police Academy certificate of completion during National Night Out event

NASHUA – With tensions running high nationwide across political spectrums and among various branches of law enforcement, the need for neighborhood unity may be more urgent than ever.

Recognizing the importance of coming together, community members, Nashua police officers, firefighters, and emergency personnel withstood the sweltering heat on Tuesday to participate in the 35th annual National Night Out at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua.

National Night Out is an annual campaign that promotes partnerships between police officers and community members. It enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement, while fostering a sense of community.

It also provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together in a positive situation.

The first National Night Out involved 2.5 million neighbors across 400 communities in 23 states. Today, 38 million neighbors in 16,000 communities take part in the event.



Chief of Police Andrew Lavoie delivering remarks at National Night Out

“This annual event is a culmination of the city coming together with crime watch, with the Boys & Girls Club, with Emergency responders, with police officers and Nashua PAL and having the conversation about drug prevention and how to keep our city safe,” Police Chief Andrew Lavoie said. *“This is something we’re happy to be a part of and will always be a part of.”*

Emphasizing the importance of camaraderie between community members and the police officials who keep them safe, the event encouraged participants to engage in community strengthening activities, such as safety demonstrations, touch-a-truck stations, dive team presentations and even a friendly street hockey game between the community’s youth and police officers.

“We’ve been fortunate to be the host of this great event and are proud to be able to do it with the commitment and support of the Nashua Police Department, Nashua PAL, the fire department and all of our other community partners who are here tonight. Through this event we’re able to promote friendship, partner-building and come together to fight crime,” club Executive Director Norm Bouthilette said.

“We want to show that Nashua is a strong community and that we have a good bond developed between community member, police officers and emergency officials who are responding to the community’s needs on a daily basis,” Mayor Jim Donchess said.

Family games, presentations and activities took place both inside and outside along the front and sides of the Boys & Girls Club building with more than 25 resource tables run by local organizations stretching across the parking lots.

On the main stage, Lavoie and Boys & Girls Club Director of Teen Services Joe Maryanski conducted a formal ceremony recognizing teen graduates of the Police Youth Academy. Eighteen graduates received certificates of completion and shook hands with Nashua officials including Lavoie and Donchess.

“The Youth Police Academy was a great experience,” Nashua PAL member Valeria Valencia said. “Through the academy, I learned about the justice system and got to complete obstacle courses. It also taught me how important the police are for our safety.”

“The program made me feel that even through police work is dangerous, it’s also a great job to have because you really are able to help a lot of people,” program graduate Xaria Jorres added.

Inside the club, dive team members used the swimming pool to demonstrate their process for organizing a search and rescue mission and instructed community members on special equipment, rope tugs, and various diving methods. In the Education Room, Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent Joe DeLena presentation focused on the opioid epidemic. He discussed ways parents can protect their children from its harmful effects.

“I have three kids of my own and what’s happening now with the opioid epidemic keeps me up at night,” DeLena said. *“I’ve been doing this law enforcement job for 26 years, but what we’re seeing in New England is unlike anything I’ve seen before. It means a lot to me to share my experience with parents and their kids, especially at the club. I grew up at club, so it’s really a great opportunity to be giving back in this way.”*

Parent and attendee Janell Davis said, *“I think it’s really important to be aware of what’s happening in the community. National Night Out is a great way to receive the information I need to protect my kids and my family.”*

“Hopefully people will continue coming out and take advantage of all the services offered during this event,” Community Policing Coordinator Ed Lecius added. *“We appreciate the commitment of the Boys & Girls Club, Nashua PAL and we could do it without all the city managers. We will continue to hold this event as long as we have turn out like this.”*