Sheriff Ed McMahon and Chief Deputy K. W. Sarvis hold the coveted “Triple Crown Award” given by the National Sheriff’s Association for excellence. (Story on page 9)
From the Desk of the Sheriff

I am ready and excited to start a new year and a new decade. I am looking forward to maintaining our accreditation and continuing to hold ourselves accountable to our Community.

On a personal note, we have been blessed by God’s Grace and Teena’s cancer treatments have prevailed.

I am grateful to each and every person in the organization for all your hard work and all you do.

God bless you and I hope you have a profitable and productive year.

Sheriff Ed
When one thinks of “at risk youth,” the next word that comes to mind is not usually “gardeners.” And yet, the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office (NHCSO) ELEMENTS program has creatively integrated a gardening program into their charter to help local young people learn positive habits and keys to a successful life.

The ELEMENTS program was created by the NHCSO 14 years ago as way to help address the problem of youth violence. Through a combination of education, prevention, intervention and diversion, the ELEMENTS staff helps young people (primarily in grades 4-8) avoid paths of self-destructive behavior.

The program, which is staffed by only six NHCSO employees, has generated impressive results. In 2018, for example, 200 youth were served by the program. Of those, 93 youth received “intensive case management.” And of those 93 youngsters, 71% successfully completed the program. Additionally, 86% of the youth enrolled either improved their school behavior or maintained prior good behavior. Also, 75% of the students showed improvements in social skills and making positive peer choices.

The ELEMENTS program operates from the Shaw Speaks building (718 S 3rd Street, Wilmington) and that is also the location of the program’s garden. The garden was initiated by Mr. David Brenner, who was not connected with ELEMENTS, but founded a non-profit organization called Wilmington Green, an offshoot of the NHC Master Gardener Volunteer Association.

Mr. Brenner recognized that a garden once existed on the grounds of the ELEMENTS building and he offered to help rebuild it. His idea made even more sense in light of the goals of the ELEMENTS program, where the thought of young people growing fruits and vegetables for use in their own community sounded like a win-win situation for everyone.

According to Ms. Kristy Williams, the ELEMENTS Program Coordinator, Mr. Brenner’s vision led to great benefits for ELEMENTS participants. “When Mr. Brenner learned about our program, he was even more motivated to transform a piece of land into an active garden,” she said. “He saw that our kids could not only learn gardening skills, but could make a real contribution to their community. And we use the garden to instill life lessons for them, such as learning that hard work, attention to detail, and patience really pay off.”

Ms. Williams says that her young participants learn that just like plants, people need time, support, and love to blossom into their full potential. When you invest time and effort into those around you, good things happen.

The ELEMENTS garden produces a bounty of good things — kale, sweet potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, collards, blackberries, okra, jalapenos, turnips, carrots and a variety of herbs. In the past year, the garden has generated over 240 lbs. of produce for the Good Shepard Shelter, to feed those who need a healthy meal.

The ELEMENTS program is a success in itself, but it now generates a second contribution to the community through its garden program. And the biggest winners of all are the young folks who make it happen — one fruit and vegetable at a time.
In July, the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office took on the task of adding toxicology and seized drugs to their already accredited forensic disciplines of latent prints and serial number restoration. The Sheriff’s Office took over what was previously the Wilmington Police Department Crime Lab and with that, gained two of their employees; one Forensic Chemist and one Forensic Lab Technician. In order to get the lab operational, they also hired a second Forensic Chemist, a Laboratory Manager, and a Quality Assurance Manager. The Sheriff’s Office is lucky to have acquired some very knowledgeable and hardworking employees to add to their already experienced staff. For now, the laboratory is located in two different facilities; the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office Main Campus and Bess Street. It is a goal in the future to have the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office Crime Laboratory personnel under the same roof.

It is law in North Carolina that forensic disciplines are accredited before they begin casework. Since July, the new lab staff as well as the previously established CSI and lab staff have been working hard to get the Blood Alcohol section operational. The employees worked on getting all of the blood alcohol procedures as well as general lab procedures up to accreditation standards. Prior to acquiring the Blood Alcohol discipline, the Sheriff’s Office CSI section has held accreditation in Latent Print Processing, Latent Print Comparison, 10-Print Comparison and Serial Number Restoration since August of 2013 and no analyst has ever failed an external proficiency test since that time. The chemists that are authorized to perform Blood Alcohol testing are also required to maintain certification through the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). It was our goal to obtain accreditation in the blood alcohol discipline and obtain the DHHS certification for the two Forensic Chemists, one we recently achieved.

In mid-November, the blood alcohol section went through an assessment with ANAB, the accrediting body for the Sheriff’s Office Forensic laboratory. The assessment lasted two days and included the assessors examining lab procedures with a fine tooth comb to make sure they were adhering to the set guidelines as well as observing the chemists conducting their daily operations. At the end of the assessment, the lab was pleased to hear the assessor had zero findings to report back to the accrediting body. This means they found the Blood Alcohol discipline to have proper procedures, felt the lab was following these procedures, and met standards set forth by ISO and ANAB. This is an amazing feat and could not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of each lab and CSI employee. The lab is expecting to begin testing blood alcohol in the beginning of January, and will be servicing law enforcement agencies in New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender, Duplin, Columbus, and Onslow counties.

According to the most recent statistics posted by the NC Division of Motor Vehicles, there were 11,342 alcohol related crashes across the state of North Carolina in 2017, and alcohol was the contributing factor in 26.4% of all fatalities. In 45% of all alcohol related crashes where the driver’s BAC was reported, it was 0.15 or greater. Forensic laboratories play a vital role in the criminal justice system, and forensic analysis is oftentimes relied upon by law enforcement to facilitate charges and by district attorneys to prosecute offenders. Timely analysis results in cases spending less time in court and a greater probability of a plea; thus spending less tax-payer dollars, and freeing up the courts for other cases. Backlogs at the State Crime Lab can delay results for several months which makes our service to the community beneficial. Because we analyze cases from our community and surrounding jurisdictions, we’re often able to provide results within a couple of weeks. Additionally, because we’re local, analysts are available to testify to their results in court if called upon. This means guilty offenders are less likely to have charges dropped, resulting in safer roads and an overall safer community for everyone.

What happens when the lab actually receives a sample? Once collected from the offender, the blood tubes, usually two, are sealed in designated cardboard boxes which we refer to as a blood kit. Before the blood kit is received by the lab it is inspected for any signs of damage, verified to be sealed, and the information on the box is verified against the accompanying request form. The kit is then opened, the case and offender information on the kit and on the blood tubes are verified, and the blood tubes are visually inspected. One of the two tubes is designated for testing. The case and offender information is entered into our Lab Information Management System (LIMS), and a unique lab identification number is generated and applied to the blood tubes. The case is then assigned to a Forensic Chemist for analysis.

Did you know that there are actually many types of alcohols? In chemistry, alcohols are organic compounds where a hydroxyl group (–OH) is bound to a carbon atom, which in turn is bound to other hydrogen and/or carbon atoms. Some alcohols include: methanol – commonly referred to as wood alcohol, which is used in many different solvents, isopropyl alcohol – which is commonly known as rubbing alcohol and is found in hand sanitizer, and ethanol – commonly referred to as alcohol, and can be found in a variety of products including alcoholic beverages. Our lab is looking for the presence and concentration of ethanol in the blood sample.

Upon testing, a small sample is taken from the blood tube, diluted, and placed into a vial for testing. The sample is (Continued on page 5)
In the early morning hours of Sunday, November 5, 2017, a few hours after midnight, Melquan Shteik Ironte Hicks-Bey, a 22 year old man known as Splash to his friends, was kidnapped from an apartment on 12th Street in Wilmington where he was visiting friends. Masked, armed intruders entered the apartment, held the occupants at gun point, and then took Melquan. Later that day, a citizen discovered Melquan’s body in a secluded wooded area in Castle Hayne. He had been shot. His murder is still unsolved.

Anyone that may have information regarding this incident is encouraged to contact the NHSO Detective Division Cold Case Unit at (910) 798-4260 or submit a tip through the Sheriff’s Office website.

https://www.newhanoversheriff.com/submit-a-crime-tip/
Please congratulate Deputies James Schlotterbeck and Kevin McGovern for their completion of Basic Law Enforcement Training. They are true testaments to what can be achieved with dedication and hard work and have now opened themselves up to endless opportunities within the Sheriff’s Office. To all who have not yet graduated from BLET, see this as motivation to continue moving forward and allow the process to work in your favor. We would also like to congratulate Deputies Brandon Fike, Angela Ocampo and Lori Short on their completion of BLET. Lastly, a big thank you to everyone in the Detention Division for your hard work and dedication for making this possible.

The Management Team would like to Congratulate the recent graduates of the December 2019 CFCC Field Training Officer Course. We would like to thank everyone within the Detention Division for your hard work and dedication to make this all possible. Stay motivated.
VIPR Patrols: Safeguarding Neighborhoods

By Jane Love

The NHC Sheriff’s Department utilizes its volunteer force (called VIPRs—Volunteer Intervention Prevention and Response Unit) in a variety of ways. One way they serve is through neighborhood patrols. You may see them driving a car with the word “VOLUNTEER” painted in large letters on both sides (see below). And here’s what they do.

The driver is an experienced volunteer who supports the Sheriff’s deputies who are also on patrol. But while Sheriff’s deputies respond to 911 dispatches and enforce the law, the VIPRs do neither on their patrols. Instead, they serve as another pair of watchful eyes wherever they go.

These “focus patrols” check on neighborhoods, schools, parks, stores, and industrial areas in the unincorporated areas of the county. The patrols also pay special attention to neighborhoods with “Community Watch” programs in place. Their tours typically take several hours.

As they drive, the volunteers check for anything suspicious, strange or unusual — broken windows, open doors, abandoned vehicles or people who may need help. They also check the homes of residents who have requested special attention from the Sheriff’s Office.

Sheriff Ed McMahon established the program in 2010, recognizing the value of volunteers conducting routine patrols. Two of the first VIPR patrols were manned by Marty Michaelson and Leon Daniels, who still serve as leaders of the VIPR program. Marty notes that the first volunteers were trained by riding with full time deputies and studying law enforcement policies, tactics and emergency procedures. He credits Sheriff McMahon and the Crime Awareness and Prevention Unit for supporting the focus patrols over the years.

It’s important to note that volunteer patrols do not engage in law enforcement duties. For example, they don’t challenge, engage with, or arrest anyone suspected of violating the law. Instead, they use in-car radios to reach 911 dispatchers, who will send the appropriate first responder to the scene within minutes. A sworn deputy then handles the situation from that point on.

Occasionally, a VIPR patrol may encounter a situation calling for immediate action. Examples include a disabled car, debris in the roadway, or an accident that just occurred. When these issues arise, the VIPR calls 911 and then takes reasonable action to safeguard the public until help arrives. And if the responding officer needs help, such as traffic control, the VIPR will remain there to assist.

The VIPRs who conduct patrols are carefully selected and trained. Kevin O’Connell, for example, is an experienced volunteer firefighter. He also holds a Class A driver’s license and is an instructor for a Federal Highway Administration program (called TIM — Traffic Incident Management). This means he trains officials to respond to traffic accidents.

When asked why he donates his expertise and free time for VIPR patrols, Kevin simply says: “It’s a good way to give something back to this community and support our law enforcement professionals.”

Similarly, Gerald Holland conducts VIPR patrols several days per month. He says: “This duty is rewarding because it helps full-time deputies cover their large areas of responsibility.” Gerald graduated from the Basic Law Enforcement Training Course and served as an auxiliary Wilmington police officer for five years.

So if you see a car marked “Sheriff’s Volunteer” slowly cruising your neighborhood, consider giving the driver a smile or wave. They are just one more way the Sheriff’s Office tries to be responsive in spotting and resolving problems in every part of New Hanover County.
Spring 2020 Sheriff’s Citizen’s Academy
Apply Now

The very popular NHC Sheriff’s Citizen’s Academy is now accepting applications from NHC residents interested in enrolling for the Spring 2020 class. This will be the 20th class offered by the NHC Sheriff’s Office and will run from March 3 through May 12, 2020 (11 weeks).

The course is FREE and open to NHC residents who are interested in the wide range of activities and programs handled by the Sheriff’s Office. The class is made up of about 45 people and meets every Tuesday night, typically from 6 to 9 pm. The classes take place at a Sheriff’s Office classroom (in Castle Hayne) or, more often, at the location of the night’s topic. This may be a canine training field, firing range, confinement facility, crime laboratory, or the courthouse. There are no textbooks, homework or tests — students simply watch and learn as Sheriff’s Office professionals explain and demonstrate what they do.

For more formation, please go to the Sheriff’s Office Webpage and click on “Citizen’s Academy” at the top of the page. You can also contact Corporal G. Moore at 910-798-4132 or gemoore@nhcgov.com. But don’t delay in signing up — this class will book up fast!

JUDICIAL SERVICES  By Lt. Jamie Knox

Department of Juvenile Justice

Effective Dec. 1, 2019, the General Assembly ended a century long practice of prosecuting teens as adults by the enactment of the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act. This means that 16 and 17 year old’s who commit crimes in North Carolina will no longer automatically be charged in the adult criminal justice system. In 2017, lawmakers raised the age of juvenile jurisdiction for nonviolent crimes to age 18, following years of research, study and education on this topic. The ‘Raise the Age’ initiative became law through a strong, bipartisan coalition of support from all three branches of government, law enforcement and advocacy organizations. This will mean North Carolina is no longer the only state in the U.S. that automatically prosecutes juveniles as adults beginning at age 16. The Office of Juvenile Justice at 138 N. 4th Street was demolished in preparation for the new 3-story state-of-the-art building that will be completed in 2021 in that location. This is an effort to accommodate the new law by creating a space that will handle the increased volume of court cases in the juvenile justice system. The Judicial Division is responsible for staffing both Security and Bailiffs in the new facility. The temporary location is at 216 N. 2nd Street (the old NHC Register of Deeds area) until the new facility is constructed and opened.

New Hanover County Department of Health and Human Services

The New Hanover County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), formerly the Department of Social Services, opened its doors to a new facility on Monday October 21, 2019. The new facility, located at 1650 Greenfield Street, faces even more construction and installation of IT logistics before the New Hanover County Health Department moves in (approximately Feb 2020). With the completion of the new HHS facility, the old Social Services building at 1650 Greenfield Street will be demolished and replaced with a parking lot for HHS customers. Parking for the approximately 300-400 HHS employees will be shared with the nearby Scottish Rite Masonic building parking lot, at 1415 S. 17th Street. The Sheriff’s Judicial Division provides the security personnel for the HHS facility.
By Lt C.O. Starman and Jane Love

In June 2019, the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office received national recognition from the National Sheriffs’ Association (NSA) by being awarded the “Triple Crown Award.”

The Triple Crown Award, established by the NSA in 1993, recognizes Sheriff’s Offices that achieve three national accreditations simultaneously. The accreditation bodies are:

- The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies;
- The American Correctional Association, and
- The National Commission on Correctional Health Care.

Each accreditation requires the Sheriff’s Office to engage in years of preparation, implementation of best practices, training, and on-site examinations by the accrediting bodies involved. For example, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) has established standards for enforcement operations. Its purpose is to ensure the Sheriff’s Office is using best national practices when providing law enforcement services to its citizens.

To earn accreditation from any one of these organizations is a notable achievement. But to earn all three at the same time is “an extraordinary feat,” according to the NSA. They note that the Triple Crown’s distinction is so rare that since it was established 26 years ago, only 65 out of 3081 Sheriffs’ Offices across the U.S. have achieved it. In addition, Sheriff McMahon’s office is the first Sheriff’s Office in North Carolina to ever earn the award.

In response to the award, Sheriff’s McMahon said: “You hear me talk a lot about professionalism, responsibility and accountability to our citizens. So what better way to show this then to hold ourselves and everything we do to nationally accepted best practices.”

According to Lieutenant C.O Starman, who is the Lieutenant in the Support Services Division’s Accreditation Unit, this award is difficult to achieve because each accreditation requires hundreds of varying standards that must be adhered to in order to ensure compliance. “We not only have to adhere to all the standards in policy and procedure, but we have to prove our compliance through on-site and web-based audits performed by the accrediting bodies,” says Lt. Starman. “We are setting the standard in North Carolina by the accreditations and being awarded the Triple Crown, as only the 64th recipient in the U.S.”

Lt Starman also notes that it took everyone in the Sheriff’s Office to earn this award. “There’s no way this achievement would have happened without the hard work of every employee and volunteer with the NHCSO doing their part. It was a total team effort.”
Sex Offenders – New Hanover County

How many sex offenders are there in New Hanover County? As of October 18, 2019, there were a total of 293 offenders; of these, 49 are in custody, 244 are not, and 9 of the 244 are homeless.

Who is required to register in the sex offender registry? Any person who has a “reportable conviction” and who resides in, moves to, or is a nonresident student or nonresident worker in North Carolina must register. And resident offenders shall register immediately upon conviction when an active term of imprisonment is not imposed. Otherwise, resident offenders shall register within three business days of release from a penal institution.

This registration program is best described by the 2012 edition of “Crimes: A Guidebook on the Elements of Crime,” (page 269): “The sex offender registration program is a complex set of statutes designed to assist law enforcement agencies and the public in knowing the whereabouts of sex offenders and locating them when necessary. State v. Abshire, 363 N.C. 322, 330 (2009). The twin aims of the program are public safety and protection.”

What are the restrictions placed on registrants? Registrants shall not knowingly reside within 1000 feet of any public/non-public school, child care center, or Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs. While registrants can contact the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office to obtain information as to the viability of an address where they wish to reside, they remain fully responsible for ascertaining that the proposed residence is acceptable.

As set by the relevant city and county ordinances, registrants are not permitted to enter or use any Wilmington City or New Hanover County Park.

Registrants having committed certain serious sex-related offenses (under North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 14 Article 7B) shall not knowingly be:

- On the premises of any place intended primarily for the use, care, or supervision of minors, including, but not limited to, schools, children’s museums, child care centers, nurseries, playgrounds.
- Within 300 feet of any place as defined above that is located on premises whose primary function is not related to children, e.g. malls, shopping centers, etc.
- At any place where minors frequently congregate, including but not limited to, libraries arcades, amusement parks, recreation parks, and swimming pools when minors are present.
- On the State Fairgrounds during the period of time each year that the State Fair is conducted, on the Western North Carolina Agricultural Center grounds during the period of time each year that the North Carolina Mountain State Fair is conducted, and on any other fairgrounds during the period of time that an agricultural fair is being conducted.

Who investigates violation restrictions? The Sex Offender Registration Program is supervised by the Sex Offender Registration Unit (SORU), which is under the Detective Division (CSI) of the Sheriff’s Office. While an individual is registered, the SORU regularly checks to ensure that the registrant resides at the address provided. A registrant’s failure to meet the notification and/or verification requirements regarding their address or physical appearance can result in an arrest warrant.

How can the general public obtain information about sex offenders in New Hanover County?

To conduct a search of sex offenders, start by going to the New Hanover County Sheriff’s website at www.newhanoversheriff.com. Once there, click on “Sex Offender Registry.” This takes you to the NC State Bureau of Investigation’s Sex Offender Registry. Read the ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY and indicate “Agree” if you wish to proceed. On the search page, choose your criterion of search and proceed. Remember: This information cannot be used to harass or threaten a sex offender. If you wish to be notified if a sex offender moves nearby, follow the same internet process as above, but on the search page, choose “Email Alerts” or “Telephone Alerts” from the list on the left hand side of the page.

For more information on this complex program, contact Detective S. Jones or Robin Swan at 910.798.4480.
Sheriff’s Office to Host 2020 National Police Dog Trials in September

By Sgt. Justin Stegall and Jane Love

The New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office has been selected by the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) to host the 2020 National Police Dog Trials on September 20th – 25th. The event, which is held annually throughout the United States, will be hosted in New Hanover County at Veterans Park, 835 Halyburton Memorial Parkway.

Over 100 K-9 teams from all over the United States will come to New Hanover County to participate in hopes of achieving a National Patrol Dog Certification. They will also compete to be crowned the “Top Dog.”

According to the USPCA, these dog trials bring together the best trained dogs in the world and are judged by police judges. Great strides in the standardization of training methods have been made through these dog trials. Properly trained police dogs give Law Enforcement officers one of the finest non-lethal aids in the prevention and detection of crime.

The events that the dogs and their handlers will compete in include Obedience, Agility, Evidence Recovery, Suspect Search and Criminal Apprehension with and without gunfire. Most events will be open to the public and start each day at 8:00 am.

The competition will also include a public “kid friendly” K-9 Demonstration, at a location to be determined soon. This demo will showcase the canines’ abilities in each event, introduce each K-9 team, and announce the “Top Dog” award.

The United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) is the largest and oldest police K-9 organization in the country. The USPCA National Police Dog Trial is an opportunity for police K-9 teams to certify their canines through nationally appointed judges and to obtain a national certification that helps confirm their canines’ abilities through the six different skill events.

According to Sergeant Justin Stegall, the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office is both excited and honored to be selected as host for this event. He points out that this is a great opportunity for the county to showcase what our region has to offer. “This competition is fun, but also competitive. Each team strives to show off the dog’s abilities and training. With over 100 canine teams in the competition from all over the country, every team is trying hard to get their national certifications and win the Top Dog trophy.”

It’s noteworthy that this unique competition is funded through non-government resources. This is obtained through fundraising activities, donations and business sponsorships.

If you (as an individual or business) are interested in helping sponsor this event, please contact the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office for more information or email Sergeant Justin Stegall at jstegall@nhcgov.com.
Canine Superstars

Name:        Ellie
Origin:      Florida
Breed:       Labrador Retriever
Age:         2 Years
Handler:     Deputy J. Sarvis

Fun Facts:  Ellie loves the water…she will find it and then jump right in. Her favorite toy is a tennis ball. Dep Sarvis says with a grin: “She is “the best smelling dog in the K-9 unit!”

Name:        Oscar
Origin:      Europe
Breed:       Belgian Malinois
Age:         4 years
Handler:     Deputy M. Hook

Fun Facts:  Oscar loves toys…and if it moves, it’s a toy! He obeys Dutch commands and so his nickname is the “Flying Dutchman” because of his origin and leaping abilities.

The NHCSO Newsletter Team sincerely hopes this publication has served to increase transparency and deepen the citizen’s awareness of the activities of the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office. This quarterly publication can be accessed on the Sheriff’s Website at https://www.newhanoversheriff.com/citizens-academy/, but we welcome you to join our electronic distribution by sending your name and email address to NHSONews@nhcgov.com. Your comments and suggestions are always greatly appreciated, and can also be directed to NHSONews@nhcgov.com. We would love to hear from you! If you wish to unsubscribe please send your request to NHSONews@nhcgov.com.