

Portsmouth Sheriff's Office

# Community Advisor

## The New Year

I hope everybody had a wonderful Holiday Season and brought in the New Year healthy and safe. We at the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office would like to wish everyone a belated, but prosperous Happy New Year. As we are facing 2009 with all it's new challenges and rewards, I would like to take the time to reflect on the last three months of 2008 and report to you what has been happening in the Sheriff's Office and the Community as I know it. As always I hope that you find the Community Advisor informative and if you have anything you would like to contribute, please do not hesitate to contact me at 393-5461 or 449-7631. This is your Newsletter and should be to benefit of the residents of Portsmouth and their neighborhoods.

Best wishes for the New Year,

*Lt. Karin E. Johnson*

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## Safe Ride Home

In the last three years, the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office offered the Safe Ride Home for individuals that have consumed a few alcoholic beverages on New Year's Eve. A couple of weeks prior to the event, we notified the Media and carried out flyers to all restaurants and bars in our City. Our objective was to inform the community of this option, in hopes they would take advantage of it, and to eliminate any alcohol related accidents, or fatalities in Portsmouth. Several Deputies volunteered their time. We are great supporters of the Drive Safe Hampton Roads and M.A.D.D. The Sheriff's Office is proud to announce that this past New Years Eve we were able to provide 40 citizens with a Safe Ride Home. This has been a very successful service thus far. AAA also supports this event with free tows and with the combined efforts, our City had no reported drunk driving fatalities, or accidents in those years. If you would like any information on juvenile driving, children seats, or vehicle safety, please visit their website at [www.drivesafehr.org](http://www.drivesafehr.org). For information on M.A.D.D. go to [www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org). These websites are truly educational.





# Throughout the Holiday Season

Throughout the Holiday Season the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office along with the Portsmouth Police Department represented our City in several Christmas Parades in the Tidewater Area. Norfolk, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Smithfield and the Poquoson Parade were amongst them. The night of the Norfolk Parade was bitter cold and I was there to take pictures of the event and to get in the spirit of the Holidays. I found the best way to go to Norfolk on that evening was the ferry. Which I took from High Street Landing and was surprised to see that it still runs every 30 minutes, even in the winter months. The fare has increased to \$1.25 from \$1.00, which I didn't find out until I went a board, but it is still a tremendous value and very convenient. Getting there was one of the easiest things that night, coming home was a totally different story. The line of people waiting for the ferry to return to Portsmouth went around Waterside. I believe everybody in Portsmouth went over on the ferry. Just shows that we are a City of smart folks. Our City had a float of a sailboat in the parade, the P.P.D. had their Crime Busters Unit there and all in all Portsmouth made a decent show of it. Last but not least two of our High School Bands participated too and did good. It was worth braving the cold night and brought some residents of all cities together to watch the Santa coming to town.



## Christmas at Cradock

The Cradock neighborhood got together and under the leadership of Ms. Brenda Darlene, who trumped up support for her idea, made Cradock look as it did a few decades ago! With the help of some work crews of the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office, the neighbors decorated Afton Square and all the surrounding businesses. They had a little parade and the Grinch visited the festivities. Councilmen Steve Heretick dressed up as the Grinch, gave out candy and read the Christmas Story to the children there. Brenda Darlene said that she wanted the neighborhood to gather and celebrate as it happened when she was a child and Afton Square sparkling with lights. I believe she has reached her goal, a lot of people came out to soak up some of the Christmas sprit. The Sheriff's Office had the Ident-A-Kid program set up in the library and was able to issue ID cards of the children to the participating parents. It was a very nice evening in a neighborhood that was not as nice a little over one year ago! Kudos to Cradock for taking their neighborhood back. To Ms. Darlene, Thank you for having such a wonderful idea and making it a reality for the children in Cradock.



# Fraud, Scams and Burglaries

I do not want to sound like the dark prophet, but with the economy in decline, we may see an increase in fraud, scams and burglaries. The best way to guard against them is knowledge.

## Here are some tips of what we should be aware of with Insurance Fraud:

- Be aware of staged accidents, such as intentional sideswiping or cars that cut in front of other vehicles, forcing collisions due to quick stops.
  - Be aware of individuals that try to get you to leave the scene of an accident without calling police or obtaining a police report.
  - Be aware of individuals that claim no previous injuries or continue unnecessary medical treatment which inflates medical benefits.
  - Be aware of fraud rings that specialize in "slip and fall" schemes with fake injuries and faked claims.
  - Be aware of attempts to convince you that "everybody is getting rich" so you may as well try to get additional money also.
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## 10 ways you can lower your risk of Identity theft:

- Burn or shred, with a cross shredder, any mail or financial papers with your personal information on it. Never recycle them.
- Call 1-888-5OPTOUT and ask to stop credit card companies from sending pre-approved credit card applications to your house. They are ticking identity theft time bombs.
- Ask your credit card firm to cease delivery of "convenience checks." They, too, are ticking time bombs. You're entitled to one free credit report each year. Get it as soon as possible and review it carefully. Go to: [www.CreditReport.com](http://www.CreditReport.com).
- Order a credit report a month or more before you make a big purchase or apply for credit, to be sure there are no surprises in your history.
- Hassle companies that ask for personal information, such as your phone number at a checkout line. The harder we make it on companies, the less they will be inclined to continue the practice.
- It's impossible to tell what's real and what's fake online. Just delete any e-mail that asks for personal information.
- Just hang up on telemarketers, particularly ones who seem to be fishing for personal information, like your birthday.
- Limit the number of credit cards you hold, and religiously inspect your financial statements each month. Consumer rights quickly fade over time; the sooner you discover an identity theft incident, the better.
- Most of the time, you can't prevent an ID theft incident from occurring, because two-thirds of the time, some company that leaked the data is to blame. So be prepared, and be organized. Save paper bank records for a year, at least. You'll need them to prove your account balance in the event of an ID theft incident.



## **Tips to protecting your Identification and credit**

- **Destroy pre-approved credit offers that you don't want**
- **Don't write your Social Security number on checks to merchants**
- **Draw a line through blank spaces above the total when you sign card receipts**
- **Avoid signing a blank receipt, whenever possible**
- **Carry your cards separately from your wallet, and carry only the cards you use**
- **If you have questions about a company, check with your local consumer protection office or the Better Business Bureau before making a purchase**
- **Keep a record of credit card numbers, their expiration dates, and the phone number and address for each issuing company in a secure place**
- **Keep your card in view, if possible, after you give it to a clerk**
- **Never cosign or complete a credit application for someone else's use unless you are directly related to the applicant**
- **Never leave your cards, receipts, billing statements, or credit applications lying around**
- **Never lend a credit card to someone other than an authorized user on your account**
- **Never put your card number on a postcard or on the outside of an envelope**
- **Open billing statements promptly and reconcile your charges each month (just as you should your checking account)**
- **Notify card companies and financial institutions, in advance, if you change your address**
- **Never give your number over the phone unless you are initiating a transaction with a company which you know is reputable**
- **Quickly report any questionable charges to the card issuer**
- **Request credit reports, up to once per year, to look for unauthorized use of your credit identity.**
- **Retrieve your card promptly after use**
- **Save your card receipts to compare with billing statements**
- **Sign credit cards as soon as they arrive**
- **Try to block other people's view of your card when you use your card at phone booths or in shops**
- **Use a post office box if you are concerned about the security of your mailbox**  
**When you mail in payments to a financial institution, make sure you use their post office box (when possible).**

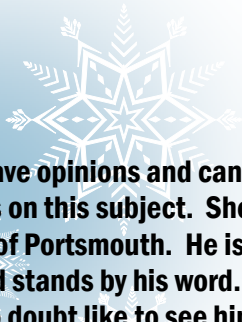
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## **Phony Charity Scams:**

- **Never give payment information to a telemarketer claiming to be with a charity.**
- **Never give payment information to someone emailing you claiming to be with a charity.**
- **Ask them to send you paperwork on their organization.**
- **Research the organization online to make sure it's legitimate.**
- **Research the organization with the Better Business Bureau to make sure it's legitimate -- and that you've got the right contact information.**

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**In these times we need good information and I would like to ask you to share this with neighbors, family, and friends. If you have elderly in your immediate neighborhood, please watch out for them, as they are more often targeted. I have found this website: [www.fraudguides.com](http://www.fraudguides.com), which holds an array of tips and advice, to include mortgage and foreclosure fraud insides and how to prevent it.**



# Is the Sheriff a “Bully” ?

We all have opinions and can voice them as we like. So, I would like to take this opportunity to speak freely about my thoughts on this subject. Sheriff Watson is a colorful and outspoken man that cares deeply for his employees and the citizens of Portsmouth. He is not a politician, if he was, he would choose his words more carefully. He speaks his mind and stands by his word. With his approach, he has become a thorn in the eyes of a lot of city politicians, and would no doubt like to see him go away. Sheriff Watson has kept all promises he made during his campaign for Sheriff of Portsmouth. I guess this is why he is so discouraged with City Council and the City Manager. For decades he witnessed as the City Government benefited from the Sheriff's Office and he knew of the empty promises made to the former Sheriff and himself over the years, by the City. City Council had asked for his endorsement and in return they promised to consider raises for all Public Safety Employees. He was informed that any time the City would refer to Public Safety, the Sheriff's Office would be included. This was an empty promise, but the Sheriff followed through on this once again, and cut off services the Inmate Work Crews provided for the City. City Council would like you to believe, they were informed of this only a couple of week ago. This is not true, he told them months ago! This does not affect the Sheriff's Inmate Work Crews, who work around the City and do jobs for non profit organizations, such as churches and civic leagues. With budget cuts imposed by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Portsmouth, the Sheriff is forced to rearrange Deputies throughout the Sheriff's Office and cut out certain Divisions that have been formed by the previous Sheriff and by Sheriff Watson. We will know if this has to happen in the next few months. We are all facing difficult times, lay offs, the loss in revenue with real estate, increase in the cost of living in this tough economy. The majority of deputies in the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office work in Corrections, Court Security and Civil Process and went through the Basic Jailer Academy, which is a Department of Criminal Justice approved school. This certifies and educates them for their duties. However, almost all deputies in the Sheriff's Office, who work on the streets (Civil Process, Traffic, CEU and in other divisions) also attended the Law Enforcement Academy, this is also a certified school with DCJS (Department of Criminal Justice). We have a lot of employees who worked previously in various police departments and retired, or moved to Portsmouth. We are not asking the City to bring our pay (supplement increase) up to the same standards as the police department, we merely would like to have a more competitive pay which is comparable with other Sheriff's Offices in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Portsmouth is one of the lowest supplemented Sheriff's Offices in Virginia. We are losing good people to all other jurisdictions and police departments in an alarming rate. We are the training ground for deputies in the Tidewater Area and we are losing tons of money because of that. Deputies are in line for public assistance and are turned down because they make too much money (28,000), but not enough to make ends meet. We are working all kinds of part time jobs to meet our obligations to our children and families. The Deputies of Portsmouth are not greedy, we would just like to be able to say that the City recognizes us. The City is giving the Hampton Roads Regional Jail corrections officers yearly salary increases and this is a private business, how come they can't do anything for us? There are a few citizens and police officers who think that we are playing "Police". Let me say this, any Deputy with LEO training can do the job of a police officer, however, police officers can't do the deputy's job. We are authorized to do criminal and civil law, our jurisdiction is statewide and not bound by locality. Police can only do criminal and are bound by locality. If you are in a place of business and it is being robbed while you are in there, you turn around and see a deputy, I think you would expect that deputy to help and protect you! What would happen, if that deputy says: " I work in Corrections and Court Security, call 911. I can't help you! We took the same oath, to serve and protect as the police department. Any Deputy would put his/her life on the line to ensure the safety of a citizen or a fellow LEO, regardless of the color of the uniform. We need your help! Write or call City Council.

The Police Department has the F.O.P., the Fire Department has their Union, we only have Sheriff Watson. No he is not a bully, he is only trying to look out for his people. He doesn't benefit from this! He is coming up for reelection and is aware that this may cost him votes, but he says, he needs to speak up and if this would mean not being Sheriff anymore, he will retire. Sheriff Watson, if this happens, you can walk out of here with your head held up high. You will always have the respect and gratitude of the Deputies of the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office. THANK YOU!

# Deputy of the Year

Congratulations to Deputy Garland Butler. He was selected as Deputy of the Year and honored by the Rotary Club of Portsmouth. He received a basket full of gift certificates and goodies. Dep. Butler was chosen for his dedication, willingness and pride to serve the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office and the Community. For the people who do not know him, Garland is one of the most caring and helpful people you will ever meet. He was a little embarrassed by all the hoopla around him, because he really doesn't like to draw attention to himself. Garland is a retired Portsmouth Police Officer who became a Deputy, because he was not ready to sit at home. He worked for the Sheriff's Office for a few years and then left for 5 years to pursue other things. He came back a little over two years ago, resumed the duties in Civil Process and it seemed as nothing has changed. He has made a tremendous impression on all his former and current supervisors over the years and he had a few, to include; former Lt. Col. Jeff Locke, Sgt. E. Keller, Lt. A. J. Roberts. Still with the Department are Lt. B. Smith, Lt. E. Branch, Sgt. R. Spruill, all praised Deputy G. Butler for his professionalism. We are fortunate to have him.



## Rotary Club?

I didn't know what the Rotary Club does and who they are. So here is what I found out about the Rotarians.

Rotary is a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders that provides humanitarian service, encourages high ethical standards in all vocations, and helps build goodwill and peace in the world. Approximately 1.2 million Rotarians belong to more than 32,000 Rotary clubs located in 200 countries and geographical areas.

**Rotary Club Deputy of the Year  
Garland C. Butler  
2008**

# Olde Town Ghost Walk

I have lived in Portsmouth since 1996, but have never participated in the Ghost Walk or the Olde Town Candlelight Tour for Christmas. However this year I purchased a ticket for the Ghost Walk and enjoyed it a great deal. This is fun for the entire family, children, or adults just looking for a little entertainment. These two events are the brainchild of the Olde Town Civic League and are coordinated by them as well. They have an array of volunteers who dress up in period costumes and take you through their neighborhood from house to house. Outside some of the homes a ghost will appear and tell you the story of his/her demise and will try to spook you! This is an absolute wonderful event and brings in money for the Civic League and the downtown merchants alike. I took a couple of pictures, not all of them came out alright, some of them actually look spooky.



## Thanksgiving Day

Last Thanksgiving Day we had several volunteers from the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office come out and serve meals to the elderly and homeless in our City. Some churches and other organizations contacted us and asked if we would participate. We have a few people at the Sheriff's Office who are very active in their community and are always willing to help. Please keep us in mind for your upcoming events and see if we can be of any help to you!

## Annual Report for the Sheriff's Office

I am working on the Annual Report for the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office. If you are interested in what we do all year, please contact me so I can mail, or e-mail you a copy of the report when it is completed. As always do not hesitate to contact us for any issues we may be able to assist you with.

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