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1st "National Night Out" in Livingston: A Great Success

By Stephanie DePalma

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LIVINGSTON, NJ - The opening ceremonies at the "1st National Night Out in Livingston" on Tuesday, August 4th, began with speeches given by officials from the community including Essex County Prosecutor Paula Dow; Chief of Police Craig Handschuch; Michele Meade, Township Manager; Gary Mankowitz, Community Policing/D.A.R.E Unit Officer; Vincent Bove, National Expert on Character Development, Violence Prevention & Crisis Planning; and the Mayor of Livingston, Charles "Buddy"

August. The event was held outside, on the grounds of Livingston High School.

Essex County Prosecutor, Paula Dow, addressed the question, "Why are we here?" by saying, "The pursuit of happiness is why our families are here today. When we read the papers and watch the news, we have witnessed violence in our schools, drugs and prejudices. We must appreciate what we have by coming together, recognize the greatness and partnership in that and enjoy what we have. Pick up your papers. Complain when you think something is going wrong in your area. Change occurs with the act of participating. Be kind, compassionate and look out for one another. " Bagpiper Jack Gary concluded the opening ceremony by filling the night air with sounds from his bagpipe.

The event began at 5 p.m. and continued until 10 p.m., with more

and more people attending throughout the night to celebrate the event's main theme: "Unity and the Community -- Livingston Police and their partnership with the community."

Officer Gary Mankowitz, Community Police Officer and Organizer of the event, explained how the night was born by stating, "It all started with Township Manager, Michele Meade, and Chief of Police, Craig Handschuch. They decided it would be a great idea to have a "National Night Out" in Livingston. These "National Nights Out" have been established and in existence for 25 years. This is the first year for Livingston. We hope it grows forever and ever and continues on and on after we're long gone."

There were several sponsors that made the night possible including local banks, restaurants, mom-and-pop-shops and big industry organizations. Dozens of businesses and organizations helped to sponsor and donate food and drink including Nirvana Water, which gave approximately 40 cases of water, and the West Cedar Street QuikMart, which donated approximately 50 cases.

PSE&G sponsored the movie "Hotel for Dogs," shown at dusk on the football field. "The great thing about tonight is that with the donations from all of the sponsors, we are able to give back to the community. The hotdogs are even for free; from the rolls to the mustard and ketchup, which [are all donated]. Cotton candy and cupcakes were donated, as well. Popcorn was provided from the East Hanover Target, one of the main sponsors, for the movie, as well as promotional items for the kids," said Officer Mankowitz.

Activities such as a dj performing with motivational dancers, carnival games, and inflatable rides were available for the children to enjoy. Many activities from the YMCA, which also participated as a sponsor, were also enjoyed, including hula hoops and parachute games. There were also face painters and balloon animals for the younger children.

A five piece band performed on the stage located on the main oval at 6:30 p.m. The band, "Crossfire," consisted of a group of youths, ranging from 12 to 14 years of age.

Several law enforcement agencies attended the event including the FBI (which attended with recruiters as well as with their armored trucks), Essex-Union Auto Theft Crime Team Unit, NJ Transit, Montclair State University Community Policing Division, Canine Unit, NJ Police Corrections and the Livingston Fire Department.

There were different events held by the various agencies including a safety demonstration, a Decontamination Demonstration, Jaws of Life demonstration, and a K9 Unit demonstration. Two helicopters also flew in including Atlantic Healthcare Air 1 and a NJ State Police helicopter.

Programs such as D.A.R.E and Take 25, which specialize in missing and exploited children awareness, attended. Take 25 encourages taking 25 minutes out to speak with your children to promote open communication. Three community police officers from Livingston, Stan Valles, Joy Klupal and Gary Mankowitz, helped promote the DARE program and educate people about it.

Also in attendance at National Night Out were the Kiwanis Club of Livingston, the Amber Ready Organization and Sgts. Ken Hanna, Kelly Riley and Derek Wyatt, who are working to increasing bike patrols throughout Livingston.

"The main focus of tonight is to bring partnerships together to have a safer community and help fight the war against crime and drugs. By doing that, we strengthen the [bond] in the community between citizens and law enforcement officials. Our citizens are the eyes and ears of the community. If they see something they report it to us and, with their information, hopefully we can stop a lot of crime from happening." concluded Community Police Officer/Event Organizer, Gary Mankowitz.

Photo above:

Photo by Stephanie De Palma

Special thanks to all those who contributed to make this event great!

AAA	Ingersoll Rand	Shoptite
All Around Entertainment	Investors Savings Bank	Sullivan Shirts
Amber Ready	Jan Price PhotoMedia	St. Barnabas Medical Center
Anthony Franco's Pizzeria	Julith A. Heller	St. Mary's American Church
Antonio's Salon & Spa	King's Hardware	St. Raphael's Church
Angyle Marketplace	Kings	Stan Uchick
Atlantic Ambulance Corp.	Kiwanis Club of Livingston	Staples
Blackbuster Video	Little Ones	Starbucks Coffee
Boaters	Livingston Ragel	State Farm Insurance
Buick King	Livingston Fire Department	State Surplus Auto Sales
Big King	Livingston First Aid Squad	Target
Boy Scout Troop 11	Livingston Library	TD Bank
Build A Bear Workshop	Livingston Mall	The Silverstein Group
Calabria Pizzeria	Livingston Mart	Verizon
Caliente Jewelers	Livingston Summer Rotary Club	Walbert of Rockaway
Cheryl Francione	McDonald's of Florham Park	Walbert of Ludgousset
Coca-Cola	Mikulas Locksmiths	Webber Gill
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Craigie's Auto Styling	Nivana Water	Youth Sports Link
Deer Diner	Olive Garden	
Deer Lifestyle Spa	Pam's Garage	
Dr. Michael Harris	Panasonic Restaurants	

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