



For Immediate Release

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Portsmouth Police Department Launch Personal Safety Initiative

(PORTSMOUTH, VIRGINIA - January 31, 2020) – The Portsmouth Police Department is taking a page from the playbook of 19th century British police officers, and implementing a personal safety program titled, *Whistle Your Way to Safety*. It's an effort to empower citizens to be vigilant about their personal safety, and to provide them with an effective means of safety – a whistle.

"In our city manager's vision, we're going to blow the whistle on crime. Using the low tech and budget-friendly tool, the whistle as a deterrent to crime is making a comeback," said Portsmouth Police Chief Angela M. Greene. "The police department has already started implementing the *Whistle Your Way to Safety Program* through our various meetings with property managers/owners at our ACTION (Apartments and Cops Together In Our Neighborhoods), the Chief's Forum and Faiths Behind the Badge meetings this week. We will continue to educate the public through our regular monthly community, and civic group meetings in addition to a vast social media, and video campaign. Whistles will be available free of charge to our citizens."

Here's how it works: If a citizen feels threatened or wants to alert other individuals in the area that they need help or police intervention, they can blow their whistle, which will attract attention to the individual in the vicinity of the incident. If the whistle blowing does not deter the offender, the premise is that someone nearby, hearing the whistle will call 9-1-1. "We believe the deployment of whistles to our citizens will afford them a simple and easily used resource to help prevent crime," said Portsmouth City Manager Dr. L. Pettis Patton.

In the 1800s, British police used the whistle to alert their fellow officers that backup was needed or trouble was afoot. In 1802, the Saint Paul (Minnesota) Police Department issued instructions for its police officers in Rule No. 74 . . . "If he is opposed in the performance of his duty, he shall blow his whistle and the policemen who hear it shall answer the same by forthwith proceeding to his assistance." Back in 2009, the Oak Park (Illinois) Police Department equipped citizens with brass whistles in response to a 46 percent spike in robberies reported in the community. The community effectively implemented the strategy during the 1980s.

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"I believe this program will prove to be an effective and practical means of additional security for our citizens. Today, law enforcement still depends on the unique sound a whistle provides that will garner the attention of distracted drivers, and assisting with control of large crowds. We would like to employ these same tactics for our citizens when they are out in the public. Should a citizen feel threatened and want to alert bystanders, the whistle is an easy and valuable way to alert any individuals in the area that you may need assistance," concluded Chief Greene.

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