



ATHENS POLICE DEPARTMENT
Annual Report
2019

"To make Athens a safe and comfortable place to live, work, and raise a family."

Honor, Courage, Service, Excellence

Message from the Athens' Chief of Police



It's hard to believe that September 2019 marked two years I've had the honor of serving as your chief of police. It's been a wonderfully busy, hard, remarkable time. In 2019 the Athens Police Department worked through enormous challenges, but also enjoyed tremendous success.

Law enforcement, in any community, is a unique undertaking. Sir Robert Peel, often considered the father of modern policing, claimed that "The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of dealing with it." I agree with Sir Robert, but this makes the profession very difficult from a political or public relations viewpoint. Many other government functions are much more exciting or fun to deal with than ours. Reading about a program the schools do that helps children always warms the heart. Parks are fun to build, use, and talk about. It's easy to get excited about a new economic development venture that will provide new opportunities for Athenians and those that live near us.

Law enforcement isn't always like that. It often involves dark situations that no one wants to hear or talk about. Sometimes, it's easy for the profession to be forgotten about when folks talk about what makes a great city. But without public safety, none of those other great things can happen. We can't have growth, art, recreation or any of the other things that make life worth living without safety and order. In a city that doesn't have safety as it's foundation, these other things can't be enjoyed. We don't always like to talk about crime and those that fight it, but that fight is an incredibly necessary part of any community.

It's my hope that this report will help familiarize you with just how much your local police department does to keep you safe. As you'll see, the Athens Police Department has drastically increased the percentage of cases we're successfully resolving each year. In 2018, we obtained the highest clearance rate on record for our city. The preliminary numbers for 2019 show that clearance rate will be even higher! We're also proactively addressing drug issues in the community.

Unfortunately, it's not enough. We realize there's a lot more work to be done. The Department needs a lot more help to keep up this pace. To appropriately deal with our call volume, we need to add one Detective and five Patrol Officer positions. This is a huge, expensive need caused by the fact that the agency hasn't increased its manpower to keep up with the community's needs for decades. We need to ensure we have adequate staffing to make sure we're doing everything humanly possible to solve the cases you bring us. We also need to make sure we're doing enough to shut down even more drug dealers. No one should have to raise their family near that type of environment.

Most of all, we need to make sure that we have the time to continue developing a quality relationship with those we're sworn to serve and protect. That is perhaps the greatest need. When officers spend every spare minute just trying to handle the volume of calls coming in, it often precludes them from spending quality time with the public in the areas they're supposed to patrol. Building those relationships may not seem like an immediate need, but it pays great dividends in the long run.

I hope this report provides you with helpful information about what's important to your police department, as well as our accomplishments and the challenges we face. Most of all, I hope you can read it and be proud of the hard work that the officers of this department have put into keeping your community safe during the previous year. I certainly am.

Clifton D. Couch
Chief of Police

Highlights from 2019

Community Relations

Bicycle Patrol

This year, APD ramped up our efforts at utilizing alternative forms of patrol. Specifically, the Department replaced its very aged patrol bikes and implemented a formal patrol bike training program. Due to manpower constraints, it's often difficult for smaller police departments to send officers out to patrol on a bike or foot. Officers can't respond as quickly to calls without a car, so any officer on bike patrol typically must be "above and beyond" the normal number of officers working that day. Our department simply doesn't have the manpower to do this on a regular basis.

Corporal Casey Patterson and Chief Cliff Couch with Department's new e-bikes.



When purchasing new patrol bicycles, APD invested in several "E-bikes". These patrol bicycles are equipped with small electric booster motors that allow the bikes to reach around 30 mph. Through use of this increased mobility and creative redesign of patrol zones, the Department is experimenting with ways to let officers conduct their regular patrol duties on bikes, despite the lack of available manpower for this type of patrol.

Bicycle patrol allows officers to see things they normally don't see and go places that a car can't go. Most importantly, it makes it easier to interact the public we serve and protect.

Foot Patrol

At the Athens Police Department, we believe that a patrol car is just one of many ways that patrol should take place. In addition to using the bikes, our patrol officers are also encouraged to spend time on foot, walking the neighborhoods and talking with those on their “beat”. Although this won’t happen as often as we’d like until adequate manpower is available, we’re thankful for the time our officers have been able to spend out of the cars, in their community.

Shop with a Cop

Thanks to a generous invitation from our friends at the McMinn County Sheriff’s Office, we’ve participated in the local “Shop with a Cop” program for the last several years. Every year, around Christmas, kids who need a little help from Santa are paired with local law enforcement officers to check off their Christmas list at the Athens Wal Mart. We continue to be grateful for the people who organize this event and include us each year.

Coffee with a Cop

Each year the Athens Police Department is invited by the local McDonald’s franchise operation for their “Coffee with a Cop” initiative. Members of the community come for a relaxing meet & greet with members of the Department. This interface with the public reminds the citizens that we are community members as well and we seek only to provide for the public safety.



Student Resource Officer Program

In late 2017, the City of Athens was approached by the Athens City Schools with a request to assign an SRO to the school system. By early 2018, arrangements were made, and Officer Hunter Cardin was assigned to the school system. Under this arrangement, Athens City Schools and The City of Athens share the expenses associated with assigning an officer full-time to the school system.

In this role, Officer Cardin works to keep the schools safe and develop positive relationships with the students there. The benefit of this relationship goes beyond the role of one officer. In his role as liaison, Officer Cardin can connect the school system with the training, resources, and manpower of the APD.



Officer Hunter Cardin with ACS Elementary Students.

Social Media Outreach - Chief's Chat, Facebook, & Twitter



Emergency Response Improvements

As much as we'd prefer for all our interactions to be pleasant ones, police are usually the first on the scene when things go bad. APD is committed to being fully prepared to professionally handle any bad situation, and we're putting a lot of time into getting where we need to be. These are some of the things we did in 2019 to make that a reality.

Special Weapons And Tactics (S.W.A.T.)

As of several years ago, APD's emergency response team had essentially gone defunct. This year, the Department invested a tremendous amount of time and resources into getting this unit back on its feet and ready to defend the public.



Thanks to the hard work of the team leadership, a rigorous try-put process was established to ensure the suitability of applicants. Once a month, officers take time to train for this part-time function, in addition to all their regular duties. Other successes in this program during 2019 included a great deal of training and the provision of very important tactical equipment.

In addition, Crisis Negotiation Officers were added to the team. Individuals in these roles all received advanced training in how to successfully work with suspects to peacefully resolve dangerous situations.

CIT Training

At one point during 2019, officers found themselves dealing with a man in a mental health crisis. He'd made threats to harm himself and others, and then showed up at a local fast food restaurant. He pulled a knife on patrol officers who responded.

After securing the area and communicating with the suspect for several hours, officers were able to resolve the situation without anyone getting hurt. This wouldn't have been possible without the newly trained SWAT Team and Crisis Negotiators. *However, there was also another factor at play.*

For years, law enforcement agencies around the country have been embracing the idea of CIT. CIT is Crisis Intervention Training that teaches officers on the street how to better handle situations with folks in mental distress. Over the last several years, APD has embraced this concept and worked aggressively toward getting this training for officers. On that day, our efforts paid off.

Active Shooter Response Prep

Unfortunately, we live in a world where individuals sometimes set out to hurt large numbers of vulnerable people. APD takes this threat seriously. Over the last several years, we've invested a great deal of time and training in trying to prepare for these situations we hope will never happen here.



Officers training for active shooter response with paint rounds.

In 2019, officers spent a great deal of time doing hands on, realistic training about how to neutralize an active shooter as quickly as possible. Money was invested to purchase equipment kits for each patrol vehicle, so that officers have what they need to respond to these situations. The Department also continued it's ALICE Training Program. The APD has several officers on staff who are trained active

shooter response instructors. We think that helping our local businesses, churches, and individuals prepare themselves is one of the greatest things we can do. *If your church or business needs input or would be interested in hosting a class, please give us a call.*



Fighting the Drug Problem

DTF/ Counter Drug Progress

APD's new SWAT Team got plenty of practice serving Search Warrants in 2019. During the year, APD continued its relatively new relationship with the 10th Judicial District's Drug Task Force. Athens, along with other local agencies in the region, assigns an officer full-time to this task force. They work together to address drug related issues in our communities.



Drug House on Bud Street, served with two search warrants and deemed uninhabitable by City Codes Enforcement.

This partnership netted numerous search warrants throughout the year, successfully shutting down several drug houses.

Stats and Numbers from 2019

2019 Stats

**These numbers are from Department internal records. They may be slightly different from official TBI Stats that come out later this year, due to minor differences in categorization rules, records-keeping, etc.*

The TBI issues their annual report each spring *for the prior year*. In 2019, that report showed that Athens' Crime Clearance Rate had drastically improved. The report showed that Athens PD successfully cleared about 44% of our cases in 2018. That's a drastic improvement over the 33% we cleared just two years prior. It's also the highest clearance rate we've ever had since the TBI started keeping the stats.

Calls for Service

Total:	22,034
False Alarm Calls:	485
Traffic Stops and Citations:	
Traffic Citations Issued:	2,186
Traffic Stops Conducted:	3,276
Warnings Issued:	1,794
Driver Ethnicity:	
Caucasian-	1,398
African American-	171
Hispanic-	91
Asian-	11
Other-	3

Municipal Court Data

Municipal Cases Litigated:	1,158
Municipal Court Cases Dismissed:	366
Cases Dismissed with paid Court Cost:	143
Municipal Court Revenues 2019:	
Municipal Court Litigation Taxes Sent to State of TN 2019:	

Arrest Data:

Total Arrested Persons (other than drugs):	1,142
Athens Residents:	744

McMinn County Residents:	389
Residency Outside McMinn County:	480
Total Drug Arrests:	471
Arrests from Traffic Stops:	182
Arrests from Traffic Crash Investigations:	54

Drug Seizure Data **This does not include data from APD's Drug Task Force Officer*

	Number of Seizures
Prescription Drugs:	82
Marijuana:	159
Meth:	132
Opioids (Heroin, Fentanyl, etc)	11
Cocaine	5

