

***Annual Report – 2023***

The Virginia Peninsula Crime Stoppers (VPCS), first incorporated by the State of Virginia in 1982, continued their longstanding contribution in helping make the Virginia Peninsula community a safer place to live and work. This private, citizen- based program obtains anonymously provided information from the public to help law enforcement solve crimes, make arrests, recover stolen property and guns, and seize illegal drugs. This private program is funded through donations by corporations, small businesses, organizations and individuals. The VPCS partners with the Hampton Police Division, James City County Police Department, Newport News Police Department, Poquoson Police Department, Williamsburg Police Department, Gloucester County Sheriff’s Office, York-Poquoson Sheriff’s Office and the print, TV, radio and social media to achieve its continued success. This report presents a summary of the activities, contributions, and success of this all-volunteer, citizen-based, charitable 501 (c)(3) Non-Profit Corporation during 2023.

**The Year In Review**

During 2023 the effects of COVID 19, and its variants, seemed to have abated. What impact the disease had on the Crime Line program is unknown. Although anonymous Crime Line tips fell off drastically during the initial Covid epidemic years of 2020 and 2021 there was a substantial recovery of calls in both 2022 and 2023 to pre-Covid levels. Additionally, in 2023 approved rewards for tipsters outpaced the previous 3 years. The economy also improved since the economic downturn in 2020 and the result was an improvement in VPCS investment values with the Peninsula Community Foundation (PCF) and a slight increase in donations and grants. Although VPCS’ total cash and resources increased by $4,000 over the previous year end, total expenses also increased and as a result the increase in our PCF investments is what allowed VPCS to maintain a positive cash flow. Estimated costs for 2024 of $8,000 for both the P3 software used by 4 agencies and the Salute to Law Enforcement (SLE) resulted in a Board decision to cancel SLE 2024 and seek a more economical method of honoring Law Enforcement personnel. The organization continues to download critical corporate documents to electronic format at the end of the year for storage in a safety box at Old Point National Bank.

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**Recognition of Area Officers and Civilians**

For the second time since the Covid years of 2020/21 we were able to hold the formal recognition of officers and civilians at our annual Salute to Law Enforcement. The event was held at the Marriott Hotel in Newport News City Center on May 25, 2023. Those individuals recognized by their local law enforcement agency included the following:

Hampton Police Division: MPO Keith R. Hicks

Sr Payroll Specialist Jill M. Blackburn

James City County Police Dept: SPO Justin L. White

Records Tech Belda Santiago-Purnell

Newport News Police Dept: Homicide Detective Andrew Gohn

Public Volunteer Anna Whalen

Poquoson Police Dept: Corporal Brandon Hargrave

Civilian Cristoforo Russo

Civilian Curtis Savchenko

Williamsburg Police Dept: Officer Amber Horner.

Gloucester County Sheriff Office: Deputy Dylan M. Moore

York-Poquoson Sheriff Office: Deputy Sheriff Joshua Walker

Special Assistant D’Shawn Wright

**The 41-Year Success Story Continues**

The primary mission of the VPCS is to provide a safe tool for citizens to anonymously report information concerning criminal activity to help law enforcement arrest wanted people and solve crimes. Callers remain anonymous, do not have to testify in court and could receive a cash reward of up to $1,500 if their information results in an arrest, recovery of stolen property or weapons, or seizure of illegal drugs. This is achieved using the highly publicized and well-known 1-888-LOCK-U-UP telephone tip number and using the P3 app, web and text tipping. In 2021 the Virginia legislature approved a bill allowing tipsters to be paid up to $5,000 as a reward but allowed local jurisdictions to determine their own reward scale.

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The minimum reward remains $100. However local city/county Crime Line organizations retained the right to make a reward up to the $5,000 state limit under exceptional circumstances. During 2023 VPCS approved rewards totaling $19,396. Many tipsters do not collect their approved rewards. Since the tipster remains anonymous, there is no way for us to know their exact reasons. This past year 49% of the approved rewards were not collected by tipsters.

**Quarterly Financial Comparison**

VPCS tracks the financial position by quarter for nine distinct categories. This chart depicts this information for the fourth quarters of 2021, 2022, and 2023.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** |
| OPNB Checking Acct | $14,393.93 | $15,532.93 | $12,752.65 |
| Credit Union Savings Acct | $23,868.37 | $23,850.36 | $21,065.82 |
| Investments | $100,993.67 | $84,580.34 | $94,254.94 |
| Total Cash and Resources | $139,225.97 | $123,963.63 | $128,073.41 |
| Deposits Year-to-Date | $21,728.43 | $20,815.41 | $25,811.33 |
| Expenditures Year-to-Date | $10,118.40 | $9,040.41 | $21,570.41 |
| Rewards Approved Year-to-Date | $11,475.00 | $18,341.00 | $19,396.00 |
| Rewards Paid Year-to-Date | $6,600.00 | $10,636.00 | $9,983.00 |
| Rewards Paid to Rewards Approved Percentage | 57.52% | 57.99% | 51.47% |

Grants and donations ticked up in 2023 primarily due to a $10,000 grant from BayPort Credit Union and other grants from corporate foundations as the economy recovers. The investment fund, initiated with the Peninsula Community Foundation in 2008, had seen substantial asset growth through 2021, but the stock market failures in 2022 caused a “paper loss” of $16,000. With substantial cash assets on hand in the checking and savings account VPCS has no reason to cash in stock assets. During 2023 those investments gained back almost $10,000 in value and there is reason to believe the investments will continue to see growth during 2024. The impact of Covid-19 and its variants during 2020 and 2021 may be the reason for the reduction in Rewards Approved and Rewards Paid during those years, however 2023 indicates a possible return to pre-2020 reward levels. Cancellation of Salute to Law Enforcement in 2021, caused by state restrictions on group meetings and hotel hiring issues, had a significant impact on expenditures. Expenditures increased in 2023 due to increased P3 software cost and the return of Salute to Law Enforcement expenses.

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**Interfacing with Other Programs**

The VPCS partners with six southside Crime Line/Solvers programs in Chesapeake, Isle of Wight/Windsor, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach. This regional initiative, the Greater Hampton Roads Regional Crime Line (GHRRCL) meets monthly to work on regional Crime Stoppers’ issues common to all 7 programs. The VPCS President Rich Biege was the VPCS’s representative to this regional group in 2023. The GHRRCL’s primary responsibility is operational control of the telephonic Crime Line (1-888-LOCK-U-UP) from contracted vendors, coordinating the reward system between the 13 cities and counties in Hampton Roads and the fund-raising activity for hosting the annual GHRRCL Top Cop Dinner and Awards event held in the Fall of each year. All 7 of VPCS’ law enforcement agencies are invited to participate in the Top Cop event. GHRRCL tracks the impact of each program in seven categories. The chart below shows the 2023 percentage share VPCS had compared to the aggregate total for all 7 programs.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Total of Seven Programs | VPCS | VPCS’ Percentage of Total |
| Total Tips | 4,487 | 1353 | 30% |
| Number of Cases Solved | 322 | 37 | 11.5% |
| Number of Arrests | 154 | 37 | 24% |
| Value of Stolen Property Recovered | $34,427 | $19,771 | 57% |
| Value of Illegal Drugs Recovered | 5,055,257 | $2,482,000 | 49% |
| Number of Rewards Approved | 126 | 31 | 24.6% |
| Value of Rewards Approved | $57,223 | $19,396 | 34% |

The populations of the Virginia Peninsula and Virginia Beach programs make up a sizable portion of the seven programs. However, comparative data shows the VPCS has an active and effective program in helping law enforcement keep our neighborhoods and businesses safer places to live, work and play.

**Major Corporate and Business Sponsors**

The major corporations and businesses supporting VPCS during 2023 were BayPort Credit Union, Langley Federal Credit Union, Newport News Shipbuilding, Virginia Natural Gas, Canon, Old Point National Bank, Adams Outdoor Advertising, and Channel 3 TV.

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**10 - Year Statistics Summary**

This chart illustrates the success statistics over the past 10-years. The average for Dollar Value of Stolen Property Recovered, Cash Recovered, and illegal drugs seized is a 9-year average due to unavailability of data for 2017.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Performance**  **Category**  **Year** | **Number of Calls** | **Number of Cases Solved** | **Number of Arrests** | **Dollar Value of  Stolen Property & Illegal Drugs Recovered** | **Rewards Approved** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2014 | 964 | 131 | 113 | $51,334 | $27,575 |
| 2015 | 1,046 | 96 | 92 | $75,680 | $24,146 |
| 2016 | 1,052 | 137 | 85 | $68,445 | $27,462 |
| 2017 | 1,020 | 98 | 96 | \* | $29,774 |
| 2018 | 2,238 | 102 | 70 | $72,068 | $24,154 |
| 2019 | 2,612 | 115 | 90 | $92,015 | $27,535 |
| 2020 | 1,034 | 76 | 63 | $13,908 | $16,815 |
| 2021 | 1,014 | 72 | 64 | $14,058 | $11,475 |
| 2022 | 1,700 | 61 | 51 | $78,430 | $18,341 |
| 2023 | 1353 | 37 | 37 | $2,501,396 | $19,396 |
| **TOTAL** | **14,033** | **925** | **761** | **$2,967,334** | **$226,673** |
| 10-Year Average | 1,403 | 93 | 76 | \*\*$329,704 | $22,667 |

\* Actual data not available for this dollar value for the year 2017

\*\*Nine-year average excludes erroneous 2017 data

The VPCS historical record of $2,501,396 in seized drugs and recovered property was primarily the result of a Newport News Police Department raid that resulted in the seizure of drugs valued at $2,481,000 in early 2023. The increase in rewards approved during 2023 is partially due to the increase in rewards from $1,000 to $1,500 for violent crimes. There were five rewards paid out in 2023 that were in excess of $1,000.

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**Directors and Officers in 2023**

Rich Biege President Retired US Army

Jorge Gonzalez Secretary BayPort Credit Union

Susie Bartlome Treasurer Old Point National Bank

Sherry Cassell Director Retired Equidata

Renee Foster Director The Mission Continues

Fred Kern Director Emeritus Retired NASA

Pearl King Director BayPort Credit Union

Rick Pittinger Director Retired US Navy

Chrissy Selleck Director 7-Eleven

Robert Szukelewicz Director Newport News Shipbuilding

Jim West Director Citizen, Chief Kingsmill PD

**Law Enforcement Coordinators in 2023**

Sergeant Steve Perry Gloucester County Sheriff’s Office

Investigator Lesa Barnett James City County Police Department

Lt James Fox Poquoson Police Department

Matt Michalec Newport News Police Department

Investigator John Heilman Williamsburg Police Department

Sgt. Michael (Adam)Cooper York-Poquoson Sheriff’s Office

Cpl. Shaun Stalnaker Hampton Police Division

**Election of Officers for Years 2024-2025**

At the December Board meeting the following Officers were elected for the years 2024 through 2025: Richard Biege (President), Susie Bartlome (Treasurer), Chrissy Selleck (Secretary) and Jorge Gonzalez (Vice President Administration). Both Biege and Bartlome were elected to their positions by Board approval of an exception to policy since they both had achieved the maximum time allowed to serve in the same position. There were no other nominations or volunteers for those 2 offices.

**VPCS Mailing Address: P.O. Box 12111, Newport News, VA 23612**

**Web Site: www.vapeninsulacrimestoppers.com**

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