



# THE SMITHFIELD THIN BLUE LINE

Smithfield Police  
Department

1st Quarter  
2009

## Meet Our Newest Officer, Chris Meier

Smithfield Police Department would like to introduce the newest member of our team, Officer Christopher Meier. Officer Meier graduated from the Hampton Roads Criminal Justice Training Academy on October 27th, 2008. He was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico to a military family. They moved quite a bit, and he finally settled down in Hampton. He graduated from Bethel High School in 2003, and from there he joined the United States Marine Corps Reserves. During his tenure in the Marine Corps he has spent time at Parris Island Marine Corps Recruit Depot SC, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point NC, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center-Twenty-nine Palms CA, and Djibouti Africa. He is currently serving the Marine Corps at his Reserve Unit in Virginia Beach.

Officer Meier enjoys spending time with his wife, family and friends. He also likes to go camping, fishing, and running.

The Smithfield Police Department is pleased to add Officer Meier our ranks. His respect for truth and justice will serve to enhance our service to the community.



## Congratulations to Detective Sergeant James Tragesser

The competition was fierce, all the candidates were highly qualified, and it was tough choice for Chief Marshall, but in the end it was James Tragesser that was selected to fill the position of Detective Sergeant. Sgt. Tragesser was a member of the Portsmouth Police Department prior to joining the Smithfield Police Department. His years of experience and his professionalism will serve him well in his new position.



Congratulations Sarge!

## Wedding Bells ring for one of Smithfield's Finest

Congratulations go out to Officer Kimberly Lynn Epps and her husband Craig Anthony Epps. They were married on November 15th, 2008, in a beautiful ceremony conducted at the Cypress Creek Golf Club. Kimberly and Craig met in 2007 when they both worked for Noland Company, a local plumbing/HVAC distributor. We wish them a long, happy life together.



## Lt. Kurt Beach - A Real Hometown Hero



Lt. Beach, a 20 year veteran of the Smithfield Police Department, is currently battling Hepatitis C, a debilitating liver disease he contracted while attempting to resuscitate an infected infant. Lt. Beach is in need of a living donor. The donor must have Type A or O blood, be between the ages of 18 and 55 and in good health, and should be close to 6' tall and weigh about 220 pounds. All medical costs of the donor will be provided for. If you are interested in applying to be a living donor and to get more information, contact the Living Donor Nurse, Nurse April, at 1-800-828-9249. Let her know you are calling in reference to Kurt Beach.



PHOTO  
FLASHBACK  
Can you guess  
which  
Smithfield Police  
Department em-  
ployee this is?  
Answer on next  
page

## Beware of Scams

**Secret Shopper Scam:** You respond to an ad looking for a mystery shopper or secret shopper. When you contact the company you are told you can earn money by purchasing items at different stores or dining at different restaurants. The company sends an employment packet that includes business evaluation forms, a training assignment, and a cashier's check, often ranging between \$2,000 and \$4,000. The training assignment is to cash the check, pose as a customer, and wire the money to an address in Canada. You are told by the company that you have only 48 hours to complete the assignment or you will lose the job. The scam is that the check is fake. The check bounces after you wire the money, leaving you liable for the fake check.

**Elderly Scam in local area:** There have been several reported incidents in surrounding counties where suspects have targeted elderly homeowners in order to commit larceny from their residences. When making contact with a homeowner, the suspects most often portray themselves as a town, city, or county employee. They attempt to distract and lure victims outside of their residence by telling them that they are there to cut trees, repair roofs and fences, or to conduct property or water line checks while another suspect enters the residence to commit the larceny. In most cases, the suspects are stealing jewelry and cash. In a few cases, the suspects begin work at a residence and then demand payment without the work being completed. In several incidents, suspects are described as having a cell phone/walkie talkie in their hands and talk on their cell phones to unknown parties in English and/or Spanish. Suspect descriptions of the males often vary between white, black, Asian or Latino.

**Tax Scam:** On the heels of the government's plan to stimulate the economy by sending out tax rebates, and our annual tax refund season, crooks are posing as officials from the Internal Revenue Service or Social Security Administration in an attempt to steal your money. They are calling and e-mailing people and asking for personal financial information so they can "directly deposit" your rebate or refund money. The promise of a fast refund sometimes causes people to reveal personal information they shouldn't be giving out. In one online variation, individuals around the country have received e-mails pretending to be from the IRS instructing them to click on a special attached form to provide personal information. But the e-mails are fake. The FBI expects scam artists will be working overtime this year. They are getting more sophisticated, he said, especially when it comes to online fraud. For the record, the IRS will never ask for bank account or similar information over the phone or Internet. Don't fall victim to tax scams. Remember that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If you think you're being scammed, you can report suspected tax fraud activity by sending completed Form 3949-A, Information Referral, to Internal Revenue Service, Fresno, CA 93888. You can download the form at the IRS web site [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or call 1-800-829-3676 to order by mail.

## LIVESCAN

LiveScan provides for the electronic capture and transmission of arrest and applicant data and fingerprints to the Central Criminal Records Exchange at Virginia State Police (VSP). This data both checks and updates Virginia's Criminal History and Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems in an automated manner. Identification information is returned electronically to the LiveScan agency that requested it.

Of the 220 LiveScan systems in 150 agencies in Virginia, two-thirds transmit arrest information and one-third transmit applicant requests electronically to VSP. These numbers are continuing to grow due in part to legislation regarding applicant requests as well as a marked reduction in prices of LiveScan equipment.

The Smithfield Police Department just came on line with a LiveScan system. The more than \$30,000 for hardware, software, and training were paid for through a grant from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, so there was little cost incurred by the Town. In addition to fingerprinting criminals, LiveScan can fingerprint citizens for other purposes such as employment, background checks, and adoption.

If you have your own fingerprint card that needs completed, or want to complete an Ident-A-Kid card, we still have the "old" ink pad system available.



PHOTO FLASHBACK answer: Ms. Nita Abernathy

## Crime Line

The Isle of Wight, Smithfield, Windsor Crime Line is a privately funded, volunteer administered program designed to support local law enforcement efforts. It is comprised of two representatives from each election district in Isle of Wight County. It was started in 1991 with the goal of raising funds to provide rewards of up to \$1,000 for information leading to an arrest and conviction. By empowering citizens to call and leave anonymous tips, Crime Line is helping to make our community a safer community. You can call Crime Line anonymously at these numbers:

Isle of Wight/Windsor: 357-5555

Smithfield: 357-2429

## Passing on the Right

It seems every driver is in a hurry. Unfortunately some "short cuts" people use are illegal and unsafe. One example is passing a vehicle that is stopped to make a left turn. Lots of drivers will pass them on the right, driving outside the lane of traffic, and sometimes off the pavement, just to get around the turning vehicle. Virginia law in part states the driver of a vehicle may overtake and pass to the right of another vehicle only: 1. When the overtaken vehicle is making or about to make a left turn, and its driver has given the required signal; 2. On a highway with unobstructed pavement, not occupied by parked vehicles, of sufficient width for two or more lines of moving vehicles in each direction; 3. The driver of a vehicle may overtake and pass another vehicle on the right only under conditions permitting such movement in safety. Except where driving on paved shoulders is permitted by lawfully placed signs, no such movement shall be made by driving on the shoulder of the highway or off the pavement or main traveled portion of the roadway. Please keep these rules in mind, and remember - don't leave the roadway to pass another vehicle.



## Inclement Weather Driving Tips

**DRIVING:** Winter conditions call for different driving tactics. Slower speed, slower acceleration, slower steering, and slower braking. Give yourself extra time to reach your destination safely. Here are a few tips to make your drive safer:

- Drive with your headlights on.
- Drive for conditions. Don't get overconfident with four-wheel drive. It won't help you stop any faster.
- Winter road conditions often result in longer stopping distances, allow additional room between your vehicles and others.
- Slow down when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges or shady spots. These all have potential to develop black ice.
- Avoid abrupt actions while steering, braking or accelerating to lessen the chances of losing control of the vehicle.
- Look farther ahead in traffic. Actions by other drivers will alert you to problems and give you extra time to react.
- Trucks take longer to stop. Don't cut in front of them.
- Avoid using cruise control or overdrive. Don't let your car make a bad decision for you.
- Stopping on snow and ice without skidding requires extra time and distance. If you have anti-lock brakes, press the pedal down firmly and hold it. If you don't have anti-lock brakes, gently pump the pedal. Either way, give yourself plenty of room to stop.

**VEHICLE:** Make sure your vehicle is ready for the winter driving conditions. Check your tire pressure (don't forget your spare), fluid levels, battery, lights and wiper blades.

**SUPPLIES:** Breaking down in winter weather presents more hazards because of the extreme cold. Here are a few suggested items to keep in your vehicle: Flashlight with fresh batteries, windshield scraper/squeegee combo, can of aerosol tire inflator, jumper cables, fire extinguisher (multipurpose for oil/gas and electrical), basic tools (such as a screwdriver, pliers, adjustable wrench, small hammer, multi-tool or pocketknife), length of cord or bungee cord, small spade or collapsible shovel (for digging out of snow), kitty litter (for traction), blanket, first-aid kit, cleanup wipes, roll of paper towels, toilet tissue or box of Kleenex, disposable rain poncho, work gloves, auto cell phone charger, coat, hat and gloves, bottled water and non-perishable snacks, chemical heat packs for hands and feet, extra windshield cleaner fluid, motor oil, and an empty gasoline container.

## Checkpoint Strikeforce Campaign

It's a zero-tolerance initiative designed to both catch and arrest drunk drivers via sobriety checkpoints and other enhanced law enforcement efforts and to educate the public about the dangers and consequences of drunk driving.

The campaign is supported locally by a grant from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles' Highway Safety Office. Males between the ages of 21 and 35 are the primary target audience. This demographic group is typically harder to reach with public awareness campaigns and statistically at the highest risk for drunk driving. The Smithfield Police Department conducted four checkpoints in September and October of 2008. A total of 722 vehicles were stopped resulting in the following arrests: 1 felony, 1 DUI, 2 underage possession of alcohol, 17 suspended drivers, 12 no operator license, 2 reckless driving, 2 uninsured motorist, 9 seatbelt violations, and 48 other offenses.



## Report Road Hazards

Road hazards are present year round, they are not a seasonal occurrence. They can lead to accidents, injuries, and even death. If you spot a road hazard please help others on the road and report it by calling the Isle of Wight County Sheriff's Department Central Communications at 357-2151. They will contact the proper authority to have the hazard removed or corrected. Some examples of hazards you might encounter are: snow banks, black ice, animals on the road, animal carcass, disabled vehicles, flooded roads, fallen trees, debris in the roadway, and large potholes.



## SWAT School Graduates



Congratulation to Officer Pablo Finelli and Officer Jared Vance, who graduated from the Hampton Roads Criminal Justice Training Academy Advanced Special Weapons And Tactics course in September. The curriculum included training in basic tactics, individual and team movement, and entry techniques. The school was mentally and physically demanding, but they were up to the challenge.

## Saved by the Belt

All across the Commonwealth, law enforcement agencies recognize individuals from young to old, even some in their own ranks, who were involved in a traffic crash and, because they were wearing a safety belt or were in a child safety restraint, their injuries were reduced or their lives were saved.

Nita Abernathy, a Smithfield Police Department Records Administrator, was involved in a vehicle crash in May of 2008. She was wearing her seatbelt, potentially saving her life. Nita received her "Saved by the Belt" award in October of this year in recognition of her life saving decision!



## American Legion honors First Responders

On September 13th, 2008, the American Legion Post 49 honored Isle of Wight First Responders in remembrance of their fallen brothers and sisters on 9-11. Those in attendance included the Smithfield Police Department, Isle of Wight Sheriff's Office, Virginia State Police, Carrollton and Smithfield Volunteer Fire Departments. Sergeant Jim Tragesser of the Smithfield Police Department, and American Legion 2nd Vice Commander, was the Master of Ceremonies.

## Sgt. Tragesser marks out at American Legion Boys State

Sergeant Jim Tragesser recently served as a counselor at the Virginia American Legion Boys State, held in Lynchburg, VA. During this week long event 51 high school Juniors were immersed in a program where each participant becomes a part of the operation of his local, county and state government. They are exposed to the rights and privileges, the duties and the responsibilities of a franchised citizen. The training is objective and practical with city, county and state governments operated by the students elected to the various offices. Activities include legislative sessions, court proceedings, law enforcement presentations, assemblies, bands, chorus



and recreational programs. The program is among the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students. Boys State has been a program of The American Legion since 1935 when it organized to counter Fascist inspired Young Pioneer Camps. The program was the idea of two Illinois Legionnaires, Hayes Kennedy and Harold Card, who organized the first Boys State at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors a similar program for young ladies called Girls State.

## Officer Jones joins Bicycle Patrol

Congratulation to Officer Thomas Jones on his recent completion of Police Bicycle Course hosted by the Portsmouth Police Department. Officer Jones participated in the week long course riding a Cannondale Mountain Bicycle. The course covered riding in a crowd, shooting from a bicycle, take-downs, off road riding, bicycle safety, and bicycle maintenance. He rode a minimum of 15 miles per day, with a 25 mile long final ride. Congrats to Biker Jones!

## Officer Miller Gets His Wings

Congratulations to Officer Bryan Miller, who earned his motorcycle wings after completing 80 hours of training at the Portsmouth Police Department Motorcycle Training Ranch. Although the certificate announces successful completion of two weeks of training, this accomplishment is actually based on Officer Miller's steadfast dedication and perseverance over approximately one year of efforts, including in-house training with his fellow motorcycle officers.



## The Winged Wheel

The Winged Wheel motor wing pin and patch worn by members of the Smithfield Police Department Motor Unit is rich in tradition to motor officers throughout the United States. The winged wheel is made up of distinct components, each with its own meaning. The wheel symbolizes mobility, the wings represent speed, and the arrow stands for precision and accuracy. All three symbols combined epitomize the motor unit officer's skills: fast, agile and precise!