

# Spotlight on Public Safety

Monthly report to the HRM Board of Police Commissioners - February/March 2014



**S/Sgt. Scott MacDonald**  
HRM's Public Safety Officer

Collaboration and engagement with our communities are key components to progress. In February, a variety of community members, organizations and

businesses, along HRM staff and Councillors, joined in a unique gathering on both sides of Halifax Harbour to discuss the future of the downtown core of HRM. Safe communities are building blocks for further economic and social growth, and the HRM Public Safety Office looks forward to learning from the feedback received as we continue to help collaborate on tackling the root causes of crime and violence in HRM. It's still not too late to have you say when it comes to our downtown. Check out <http://shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/downtownimin> for more details and a survey you can complete.

Years of collaboration and community engagement have also led to a new program being delivered through HRM's Youth Advocate Program (YAP). The Souls Strong Project will be operating in the African Nova Scotian community of North Preston. Building on the successful wrap-around model already in use by YAP throughout HRM, the Souls Strong Project will help to prevent young men aged 15 to 20 from engaging in anti-social and criminal activities. This is an older age group than the youth participating in YAP which focusses on youth aged 9 to 14.

I recently had the chance to meet with the staff who will be running the project. Their passion and interest in growing and contributing to their community is obvious. By combining both a family and a community focus in their work, which is in keeping with African Nova Scotian traditions, Souls Strong will facilitate a more effective, holistic approach to crime prevention. The Souls Strong staff are planning a community open house for March 20 where more details on the program will be revealed.

You can learn more about YAP and the Souls Strong Project at <http://www.halifax.ca/YouthAdvocateProgram/index.html>

## Community Engagement

Engage citizens and community groups in playing an active role in public safety in HRM.

- HRM and IBM announced the Apps4Halifax contest winners during an awards ceremony and reception at the World Trade and Convention Centre on January 18. Two apps using HRM's Open Data crime dataset were winners. Majd Hussini won Gold and People's Choice in both the Your City and Go Green categories for [Halifacation](#), a one-stop-shop for key municipal notifications including crime near you and David Hamp-Gonsalves won Silver in the Your City category for [Halifax Crime Maps](#). You can checkout the 38 innovative, citizen-focussed apps entered into the contest at [apps4halifax.ca/apps](http://apps4halifax.ca/apps)

**apps4halifax**  
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## Partnerships

Align with all levels of government, social agencies and community partners to realize efficiencies and improve public safety programs and services in HRM.

- The last week of January was Bullying Awareness Week with educational events happening in schools throughout the HRM. On January 31, RCMP Cst. Marilyn Campbell participated with students, teachers, parents and friends in Bullying Awareness Week assemblies at Oceanview Elementary School and Tallahassee School to audiences numbering 300+ and 500+ respectively.

## Diversity

Strengthen HRM's connection with our diverse communities while at the same time addressing quality-of-life issues within those communities.

- Twenty students from the Discovering Opportunities pilot program at Graham Creighton Junior High will host African Heritage Day for HRP/RCMP members at the Black Cultural Centre on March 19. This is the second year for this event which will consist of African dancing and drumming, an African heritage quiz created by the students and a presentation on African Nova Scotian history by Principal Ken Fells and RCMP Sgt. Craig Smith.

## Police Community Response

Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and Halifax District RCMP must continue to implement policing strategies which reduce crime and enhance public safety.

- HRM Partners in Policing (RCMP and HRP) have been working diligently towards the introduction and implementation of the Hybrid Hub. This youth intervention and diversion model is designed to steer at-risk youth away from an overburdened criminal justice system and into evidence-based programs that have proven to reduce their propensity to offend. During the month of February, Community Policing and School Officers from both organizations participated in training on the model and related screening tool. The coming weeks will see the model rolled out in conjunction with other partners.

## Sustainability Initiatives

HRM as an organization must undertake a variety of initiatives to improve public safety.

- To date, the HRM Community Response Team has completed 11 Crime Free Multi-Housing Program assessments. The team continues to work with various HRM Business Units on 14 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) audits.

**Sexual Assault**  
Awareness Month

### April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Throughout April, HRM Partners in Policing will be involved in a number of initiatives to raise awareness about sexual assault and create a culture in our society that intervenes on abusive attitudes and behaviours directed towards women early on, before they've had the chance to escalate to physical violence.

Sexual abuse and sexualized violence in our communities is far more common than most people think. According to a 2006 Statistics Canada report, one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in their lifetime.

## HRP Volunteer Programs

HRP volunteers make many of our community outreach and crime prevention programs possible. Over 150 dedicated citizens volunteer contribute tens of thousands of hours each year to deliver the following programs:

### Burnside Watch

Burnside Watch works to curtail crime in the Burnside Business Park and Dartmouth Crossing.

### Citizens on Patrol - Central, East and West Divisions

These volunteers patrol their communities, looking for suspicious situations and alerting police to potential illegal activity.

### HRP Youth Program

The program includes youth aged 14-18, leaders-in-training 19-20 and adult leaders 21+. The youth take part in a variety of educational, fun and community service-related activities.

### Victim Services

This group primarily provides support to victims of crimes or traumatic situations. Victims of domestic violence are the main focus of the unit. These volunteers work with clients over the phone or on-scene during the evening.

### Cops 'N Kids Youth Leaders

These high-school age youth act as mentors for younger children and assist with the Cops 'N Kids camp, as well as subsequent events throughout the school year.

### Seniors' Home Safety Program

Volunteers aged 55+ conduct free home safety checks for their peers living in private residences to reduce risk of accidents, injuries and victimization.

### Neighbourhood Watch

These volunteers are the eyes and ears for the community. They communicate with their neighbours and police on crime and quality-of-life issues.

HRP is always recruiting volunteers. Citizens interested in making a difference in our community are urged to visit [www.halifax.ca/police/programs/volunteering.html](http://www.halifax.ca/police/programs/volunteering.html) or contact HRP's Volunteer Programs Coordinator at 490-6976 or [burnssh@halifax.ca](mailto:burnssh@halifax.ca).