

Juvenile Justice Report

The official newsletter of the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Summer 2003

Neil Hernandez, Commissioner



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly swear in 1,350 recruits to the New York City Police Department at the Colden Center for Performing Arts at Queens College.

New York Remains Safest City in Nation

Over the last year and a half, New York City has remained the country's safest big city, ranking as the safest among the 10 largest cities nationally. Despite the economic devastation produced by 9/11 and a national recession, New York has surpassed the national trend, reducing crime 4.5% while the average drop was only 0.2%. In response to the FBI's recently released annual *Uniform Crime Reports* for 2002, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg said, "New York City has not only retained its title as the safest big city in the country, it has defied the odds and the economy to become even safer."

For the past 18 months, the Police Department has sharpened its fight against crime through various initiatives, from Operations Clean Sweep and Silent Night to Impact and Spotlight. As a result, New York City achieved a rank of 203 out of the nation's 225 cities of 100,000 or more population - with 225 being the safest. This placed New York City between Garden Grove, California and Henderson, Nevada, for overall safety.

The NYPD initiatives have also addressed quality of life issues. Through Operations Clean Sweep and Silent Night, NYPD issued more than 220,000 summonses for offenses ranging from aggressive panhandling to disorderly behavior. These initiatives resulted in 19,000 arrests. In one case, a man arrested for trespassing turned out to be wanted for shooting a police officer in New Mexico.

Operations Impact and Spotlight have significantly contributed to New York's impressive reduction in crime. Operation Impact alone resulted in a 35% drop in crime over the last six months by deploying 1,500 new rookies and seasoned officers to areas that have traditionally experienced concentr-

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'DJJ ALERT' Messaging System Delivers News and Information to Employees

Employees at the NYC Department of Juvenile Justice have been seeing pink lately thanks to the agency's newly installed electronic messaging system.



DJJ ALERTS: Spreading the news.

'DJJ ALERTS,' which made their debut on May 2nd, serve as the centerpiece of the agency's latest effort to keep its employees informed about important news and information affecting the Department.

When important developments merit notifying staff members, a bright pink alert is delivered instantly over all agency computers. Paper copies are also prepared and dispatched to all agency offices and facilities to be read during shift roll calls and for posting on

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Dial 3-1-1 to Access DJJ and Other City Services

On March 9th, the 311 Citizen Service Center officially opened its doors to provide callers with 24-hour a day access to all of New York City's non-emergency government services.



City government working for you

Anyone dialing 311 is connected to a live operator who can answer most questions about the Department of Juvenile Justice or any other city agency and provide a tracking number so that callers can follow-up on the status of their requests.

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'DJJ ALERT' –

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bulletin boards and in employee areas.

Since the system debuted, the agency has issued DJJ ALERTS on a broad range of topics, from the availability of free mammograms to the Commissioner's testimony at a City Council budget hearing. In May, the alert system was utilized to inform agency employees about colleagues critically injured in an automobile accident.

The first-of-its-kind messaging system was inspired by Mayor Bloomberg's mandate that all city agencies make optimal use of technology resources to best serve the public. The 'DJJ ALERT' system is administered by the agency's Public Affairs office and was created without cost, using existing Department equipment.



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Published by the
New York City
Department of Juvenile Justice

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Commissioner Hernandez during DJJ's celebration of 'Take Our Children to Work' Day.

Safest City –

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ated incidents of shootings and other serious crime. With Operation Spotlight, offenders committing a disproportionate number of low-level drug offenses, shoplifting and other misdemeanors, are targeted for prosecution by dedicated courts. Since its introduction, the percentage of Spotlight defendants receiving jail sentences increased 46%.

Mayor Bloomberg has also enacted measures to protect New York against the threat of terrorism. More than 1,000 police officers have been assigned terrorism prevention duties, from placement of uniformed officers on fixed posts at the Brooklyn Bridge to appointing detectives to work with Interpol and in various foreign capitals. The City has also executed several emergency simulations in concert with the Office of Emergency Management and state and federal officials.

Dial 3-1-1 –

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Callers inquiring about DJJ may obtain information concerning secure and non-secure detention, facility directions, job opportunities and a host of other subjects.

Individuals calling from outside New York City may access the Citizen Service Center by dialing 212-NEW-YORK. TTY services are available at 212-504-4115.

DJJ Promotes Eight to Supervisory Juvenile Counselor Positions

Despite the most challenging budget crisis in recent memory, the NYC Department of Juvenile Justice was successful in identifying alternative funding sources to promote eight Juvenile Counselors to critical Associate Juvenile Counselor-I [Supervisor] positions.

The eight counselors selected include: John Burkette, Terrence Clements, Tahia Johnson, Simone Merchant, Nelson Nieves, Frederick Ojeaga, Ronald Smart, and Peter Uba.

During the last week of January, each of the newly promoted AJC-Is received mandatory five-day training that focused on building supervisory skills while familiarizing these staff with their new responsibilities. The promotions became effective January 27, 2003.

Supervisors are essential to the daily operation of our secure detention facilities as they provide support during crises, counsel residents, administer staff evaluations, ensure optimal performance in each hall, address staff concerns, and monitor and maintain logbooks.

Oftentimes, the mere presence of a supervisor will deter aggressive behavior on the part of residents in areas such as the school, gymnasium, and cafeteria that are prone to incidents. Supervisors are also assigned to the Admissions Unit, whose function is to process the 5,000 plus residents that DJJ admits each year.

DJJ Commissioner Hernandez Talks Public Safety at Town Hall Meeting

DJJ Commissioner Neil Hernandez participated in an April 3rd Town Hall Meeting in Astoria, hosted by City Council Member Peter F. Vallone Jr., Chair of the Public Safety Committee, and the United Community Civic Association.

Held at Long Island City High School, the event drew hundreds of Queens residents who had an opportunity to interact directly with city, state and federal officials and get straight answers from those who administer public safety and security programs on a daily basis.

Commissioner Hernandez spoke about the agency's operations, special issues that developed in the wake of September 11th, 2001, and the unique challenges faced by DJJ in balancing its mission to protect public safety and its commitment to making positive interventions in the lives of the young people in the Department's care and custody.

"These federal, state, city and local officials are responsible for making this this the safest City in the world," Councilman Vallone said.

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Commissioner Hernandez, Commissioner of Correction Martin Horn, and Councilman Peter Vallone Jr. at Town Hall Meeting.

Commissioner's Message

By Neil Hernandez



Since my last message in the Winter 2003 edition of the Juvenile Justice Report, much has happened in New York City and at DJJ. Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg closed a \$6.4 billion budget gap – the largest in the City's history - by cutting City spending by \$3 billion. The City Council helped by raising income, property and sales taxes, and the State Legislature provided \$2.7 billion in assistance to the City.

When the Mayor took office 18 months ago, the "smart money" suggested that the weak economy and budget cuts would cause a surge in crime rates. With new innovations and hard work, however, the "smart money" was proven wrong as crime continues to drop and New York City has been recognized as the safest city in the nation.

At DJJ, we faced similar challenges. We reduced our budget throughout the agency, including Secure and Non-Secure Detention, the Community-Based Intervention Program, Court Services and Transportation, and Central Office. These cuts were not easy, to say the least. It required us to work harder as a team, whether it be juvenile counselors, special officers and houseparents working extra hours, or plant management maintaining facilities and support staff doing more.

Fortunately, through these cuts and our sacrifices, we did not have to lay off a single employee. The "smart money" suggested that fights between youth and assaults on staff would surge. In the end, the "smart money" was proven wrong. Last year, we reduced fights between youth by 13% and achieved a 41% reduction in the number of assaults on staff, the lowest level in more than four years.

As we celebrate the 24th anniversary of the creation of DJJ, we will continue to face similar challenges. This year, as in past years, we will continue to meet those challenges head-on and with an eye toward the future.

I had the opportunity to speak with many of you during my visits to DJJ's facilities. I appreciate your openness and the many suggestions you provided on how to make DJJ better. The central theme of your suggestions was "what we can do to make an even greater difference in the lives of our young people?" This commitment on the part of DJJ employees is as strong today as it was 24 years ago. It is also the main reason our mission remains just as important today as it was nearly a quarter century ago.

In the near future, we will be unveiling initiatives that incorporate your ideas. As a result, your help is even more essential to DJJ's continuing success than ever before.

Through a strategic partnership between DJJ and its employees, we will continue to champion over the conventional wisdom and make extraordinary achievements.

As we leave the challenges of Spring behind, I wish you and your family a safe and enjoyable Summer season. The City offers so much to do – from our parks, beaches and pools, to enthralling cultural events and museums. I hope you have an opportunity to share some quality time with family, friends and loved ones.

DJJ Holds Strategic Planning Session at Gracie Mansion

In April, Gracie Mansion served as the site of Agenda 2003, DJJ's strategic vision and leadership planning conference. Designed to plot the agency's focus and course in coming years, Agenda 2003 was established to set ambitious initiatives and goals and activate specific plans to achieve those objectives.

During pre-conference planning, ten areas were identified from which DJJ's management team would subsequently develop specific targets and objectives the agency would meet to enhance its delivery of services to the public, its juvenile residents, and employees. Included among these goals are: training, cameras on the living areas and in the courts, and automation of case management and medical records.

Once target areas were firmly established, DJJ's management team was assembled to begin the planning and activation phases.

On April 14th, 40 staff from all DJJ offices and facilities gathered at Gracie Mansion to discuss in specific terms DJJ's future as an agency and the manner in which key goals and objectives would be achieved.

During the conference, five working groups were formed, with each working group focusing on two goal areas. Their task was to brainstorm specific objectives the agency would pursue under Agenda 2003 and define the best way to achieve those goals.



DJJ's staff members gather at Gracie Mansion for 'Agenda 2003' strategic planning conference.

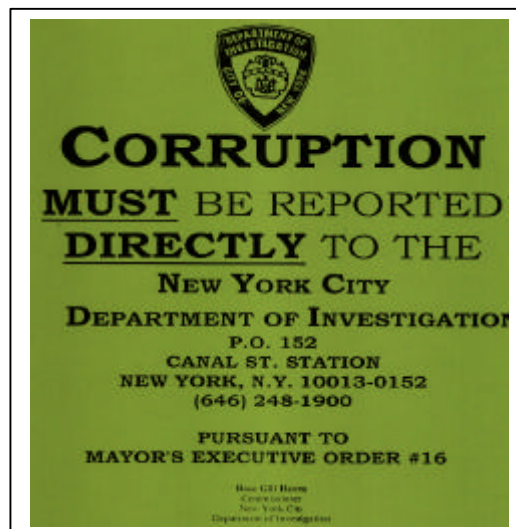
After the conference at Gracie Mansion, committees were formed to implement Agenda 2003 initiatives. The nine committees formed have begun their work, meeting on a continuing basis and mapping out a course to fulfill their respective tasks before the end of the fiscal year.

Town Hall –

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"I am especially thankful that they have taken the time to come here and answer the community's questions."

Questions posed covered a broad spectrum of topics, including subway safety, bias crimes, and anti-terrorism efforts.



Horizon Champions

By Susan Lukin

During the QWL Basketball Championship game, the sounds, the enthusiasm, the cheerleaders, and the emcee combined to offer an authentic pro-ball feeling that enveloped the gym.

Before the night was over, the 'Horizon Wrecking Crew' would defeat S.E.E.D.S. 66 to 59.

An NBA flavor emerged as both teams' members ran into the gym, breaking through the paper banner and marking the beginning of the game. The running commentary from Mr. Smalls was as authentic as any pro announcer. At half time, Smalls interviewed Commissioner Hernandez, Deputy Commissioner Monge and Horizon Executive Director Boccio. Each expressed a genuine enthusiasm for the effort and spirit of the players and cheerleaders. Winning coach, Mr. Haynes declared it an "excellent game!" and commended all for their outstanding performance. Tommy Starkes, #22, scored the game's final point.

With the 2003 Championship still fresh in the minds of residents and staff, everyone at DJJ is excitedly looking forward to future games.