

Moorhead Beat

COVID-19 Pandemic Edition

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Greetings, I hope this edition of the Moorhead Beat finds you all doing well amidst this unprecedented time of a global pandemic and civil unrest. I, like I'm sure most of you, have had to make adjustments to my daily life both professional and personal. I have been teleworking from home since mid-March, which was a huge adjustment for me. I miss my co-workers and my office, considering my current office is my dining room table. Most of all I miss all my community policing and outreach programs that have been affected by this pandemic. Our Police Volunteer program was suspended mid-March, Night to Unite is postponed to October, Neighborhood Block Club meetings have been cancelled, and the fate of this year's Citizens Police Academy hangs in the balance. Our juvenile Community Service Program was suspended mid-March, we had to cancel our Change Starts with YOUth at-risk summer camp and in an attempt to salvage what we could of our 30+ year tradition, our Summer Youth Program has gone virtual. Flexibility, patience and understanding have been key to surviving these times. One thing that has not changed is the perseverance and courage with which our officers have continued to do their jobs. It makes me proud to be a part of this department and I hope it brings you pride to live in this community. Hang in there everyone and stay safe!

Sincerely,
Leann Wallin, Community Policing Coordinator

A Message From Chief Monroe

The Moorhead Police Department is excited to tell our community about the new embedded mental health professional we brought on board early in 2020 and what this will do for our department and city. We are one of about 15 departments nationwide with an embedded counselor, and most of those are major city departments like Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC, and NYPD.

Dr. Aaron Soumala Folkerds is currently an Associate Professor in Counselling at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). He is also an ordained minister and first began with us as one of our first volunteer Chaplin's in our Chaplin Program.

I am very proud of the men and women of the Moorhead Police Department. People pursue a career in policing out of a calling to serve and protect others. They must attain a minimum of an AAS degree in law enforcement, have attended an additional eight-week law enforcement skills training, and pass the Minnesota Peace Officer's Standards and Training (POST) licensing exam to be able to be considered for employment. We do a thorough job of selecting new officers that includes an application, written testing, interviews, a psychological, medical, and fitness exam.

New officers start with our own three-week new officer academy and upon passing move to a 16-week field training program. In 2019, we hired 12 new officers with five released in training as not meeting our standards. As officers, we then must train a minimum of 48-hours in various courses over every three-years to maintain our license. We train our staff very well, expecting them to perform to a high standard. We are a human service organization, and my philosophy

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is always to treat all people with 'dignity.' That word is also contained in our mission statement. In becoming the Chief, I felt we were failing from that point on.

These good people go out on the streets day after day, often dealing with the worst in humanity. Death, homelessness, poverty, child abuse, addiction, mental health, gruesome crime scenes, and criminal activity that includes our people being assaulted and injured in attempting to perform arrests. All of this has an effect even on people that have been through our rigorous selection and training.

We have failed by not adequately providing those services or on-going training to deal with this cumulative stress and trauma especially considering what accumulates over a 30-year career, assuming we retain them at all. How do we effectively take care of our community if we are not taking care of our staff? We must be healthy to help our community be healthy. Dr. Aaron provides for our providers. Being embedded, he is known to our staff and builds trust. He trains us in stress management and resiliency to go out healthier, happier and prepared for the next shift. He also has assisted us in death notifications, along with our other Chaplain's Father Larry Delaney and Pastor Roger Grafenstein, to support grieving families in our community.

We hired a bright young woman, and she completed our training program with flying colors and was on solo patrol. In her first 4 months of work, she handled nine completed suicide calls, four with death by hanging. She has 32 more years until she reaches retirement age and will see a lot more. We had another incident where four of our officers performed CPR on a nine-month-old infant that ultimately didn't survive. Through the relationships he has built, Dr. Aaron provides support and debriefs our staff, checks on them, offer suggestions for managing stress, provides on-going training and serve as a bridge to other services if needed. I believe that this position is long overdue.

Most of the public has no idea what these men and women endure in a career. When most of our budget is in the investment of staff through hiring, training, covering shifts, and investigations, shouldn't we properly maintain this investment to keep and expect optimum performance in our organization? It is like having regular maintenance on your car to keep it running correctly and without significant issues. As the saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."



My name is Dr. Aaron Suomala Folkerds and I would like to share with you about my new role at the Moorhead Police Department (MPD) as an embedded part-time mental health professional and wellness coordinator. But, before I get into what that role is all about, I would like to share a bit about myself. My family and I have lived in Moorhead for the last eight years and we are so proud to be Moorhead citizens. This is a great community in which to live, work and raise a family. I have had so many opportunities while living here! I have worked as a mental health professional, a Lutheran pastor and now I work as a counselor educator at Minnesota State University-Moorhead.

This past April I started in this new role as an embedded mental health professional/wellness coordinator with the MPD. The first thing I want to say about the position is that it is very unique. In my best estimation we are probably one of maybe 15-20 departments across the country to have this type of position where a mental health professional is embedded into the culture of the police department. We can be proud of this fact! I will have two major tasks in this role including training and caring for our police officers in the very difficult and complex work that they do. Our officers have already received training in verbal de-escalation, wellness, issues of mental health and how to develop positive relationships with a diverse community. I will work on expanding those trainings especially around psychological resilience, wellness and mental health issues. I will also be available to support officers in debriefing difficult calls or to simply discuss the challenges of life. I will work to be a bridge between mental health professionals in the community and the police department. Being a police officer is challenging work and I will work hard to support them. It is an absolute honor to be doing this work.

I start this new role in a time of deep division, anxiety, pain and crisis in our community and world. I once heard someone say that we should never waste a crisis because there is always an opportunity for new life in the face of challenging times. Let's use this time of crisis to find new life in our community. It is my hope that we work on listening to deeply understand one another rather than listening to simply respond out of hate or misunderstanding. I want to end with a quote from a great philosopher of life, Mr. Rogers. He once said, "In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers." Keep listening, keep asking questions and keep learning about each other, for we are one, one community and one world. Peace and blessings to all of you and thank you Moorhead for being an incredible place to work and live. Moorhead Strong.



Minnesota's 12th Annual Night to Unite is Postponed Until Tuesday, October 6

Moorhead PD is following the Minnesota Crime Prevention Association's recommendation to postpone this event until the first Tuesday in October. Night to Unite is an annual tradition for many neighborhoods and a hugely successful event enjoyed by our officers and our citizens alike. The decision to postpone this event was not taken lightly, but we felt postponing it was better than cancelling altogether. As much as we want to host this event, we will need to continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic situation and must follow future recommendations and guidelines from the CDC and the State of Minnesota. A final decision will be made the beginning of September and I will contact all registered parties as well as my contact list from last year's event.

Register your neighborhood gathering at www.moorheadpolice.com (type "Night to Unite" in the search box) or call Leann at 218-299-5143 to have a registration form mailed to you. Registered neighborhoods will receive a gift bag of items to help with your party. These bags will contain 100 paper plates, napkins, forks, two Night to Unite t-shirts and some additional give away items. The bags can be picked up at the Law Enforcement Center (911 11 St. N.) on Friday, October 2, or Monday, October 5, from noon to 4:30 p.m.

Moorhead Police Department's Citizens Police Academy—TBD

Now more than ever, we would love the chance to welcome citizens in to learn more about our department. The Citizens Police Academy is truly a unique opportunity for our citizens to get to know us and be educated on the "how and why" of policing, all while having some fun doing it through hands-on and interactive learning experiences.

This program meets Thursday evenings from 6-9 p.m., for 10 weeks. This year's program is tentatively scheduled to begin on September 10, 2020. We will make a decision on whether or not we can proceed with the academy by September 1. As we look to make this decision, it would be helpful for us to know what interest we have from citizens to attend this year. Therefore, if you are interested in attending the Citizens Police Academy, apply online at www.moorheadpolice.com (type "Citizens Police Academy" in the search box) or call Leann at 218.299.5143 for more information.

Crime Alert: Vehicle Thefts and Break-ins

MPD has responded to a significant amount of vehicle break-ins in June and July. The amount of vehicle break-in this June compared to last June is up 40%. In June alone we responded to 20 incidents. Sgt. Leinen conducted an analysis of these break-ins and reported that out of the 20 reported in June, only two were involving vehicles confirmed to be locked and only one vehicle had any damage associated with the report. Therefore the data confirms that people are leaving their vehicles unlocked and becoming victims of this crime.

Sgt. Leinen said in his analysis that "generally these car prowlers don't want to draw attention to themselves. They work under the cover of darkness to get through as many vehicles as they can. It's safer to pull 100 door handles to look for 1 that's unlocked vs. break one window and set an alarm off."

Vehicle thefts has seen a significant increase in 2020 as well, and peaked in May with nearly 30 cases that month.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Association, over 770,000 drivers fall victim to this costly crime each year. They further state that a motor vehicle is stolen every 40.9 seconds in the United States. Don't become a statistic, follow these simple tips to protect your ride:

1. Lock the doors and close the windows. Don't make it easy for a thief to break-in or reach in and snatch anything of value.
2. Don't leave your car running. It can be tempting to leave your car running when you're just popping in and out of the store, but this also makes it pretty easy for a thief to hop in and drive away.
3. Hide any valuables. Better yet, avoid keeping valuables in your car at all. If you must leave something of value in your car, put it in your trunk, keeping it out of sight from thieves.

MPD is asking you to do your part in reducing these crimes in our city!



The Moorhead Police Department has teamed up with Lights On!, a Minneapolis based organization, to assist drivers in correcting lighting issues with their vehicles by issuing them a repair voucher. We will be out looking for those who have nonworking headlights, taillights, brake lights, turn signals or marker lights which may benefit from this program. Many other agencies in the State of Minnesota already participate in this program. There are several

businesses in Moorhead and one in Hawley that will accept these vouchers and make the necessary repairs to correct the vehicle's lighting and functioning correctly. The vouchers are valid for 14 days from the day they are issued. These businesses are:

Duggan's Auto Service Center at 1405 Main Ave, Moorhead
 Larry's Auto Body Shop, 128 16th St N, Moorhead
 Davis Tire Inc, 1429 Jetvig Blvd, Hawley

Some benefits of this program are:

1. The roads are safer, with fewer cars having broken headlights or taillights.
2. Police-community relations improve due to these opportunities to turn a traffic stop into a positive exchange with a motorist.
3. Police officers are allowed to be the bearers of good news and offer a restorative solution rather than punitive.

For more information on this program, you can visit: www.lightsonus.org

Storm Drain Community Art Project Call for Neighborhood Block Clubs

Project Description:

The Storm Drain Community Art Project will utilize Neighborhood Block Clubs paired with an artist to design art around a neighborhood storm drain that raises awareness about stormwater pollution and the effect it has on the Red River, our drinking water source. The goal is to have 4 community art pieces by 4 different artists or 4 community art pieces by the same artist.

River Keepers, a nonprofit organization with a mission to advocate for safe and sustainable use of the Red River, will choose the Neighborhood Block Clubs. River Keepers will coordinate a short (virtual?) meeting in which residents from the block club and the artist will brainstorm ideas of what their neighborhood means to them and what a design could entail. The artist(s) will provide neighborhood block club two designs to choose from. The neighborhood block club residents will vote electronically for their favorite. The artist will paint the piece around the storm drain.

Neighborhood Block Clubs will be chosen based on willingness to engage in the process, have a storm drain in a higher visibility area, and ability to work within a timeline.

This project is coordinated by River Keepers with funding from the Moorhead Community Fund.

Is your Neighborhood Block Club interested in participating? Please contact Christine Holland, River Keepers Executive Director, at christine@riverkeepers.org or 701.235.2895 to let her know how many people you anticipate could participate from your block club and the general location of your block club.

