A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood

Is Mishawaka Safe?

It is my pleasure to inform you about the happenings in the Princess City on these pages each and every month. I’m only sorry that a utility bill has to accompany it! As much as I like reporting good news (and there is plenty to be found in Mishawaka), it is also my duty to report the not-so-good news on occasion. After all, it is my responsibility to be truthful with you and we never shy away from tackling significant issues at City Hall.

Recently, crime is an area that is of top concern to our citizens and to my administration and rightfully so. Fortunately, crime has been going down eight of my eleven years on the job and in some categories, double-digit reductions. Recently however, there have been some high-profile crimes that have many asking; “Is Mishawaka safe?” I will address that in the coming paragraphs.

Crime is on the rise across the United States and here in Indiana. There are many well publicized factors and theories that are contributing to that. While no crime is acceptable to me and our police department, Mishawaka is not immune to the broader issues facing society as a whole. We are seeing an increase in several categories from traffic violations to burglaries. We have also seen an increase in high profile crimes here in Mishawaka over the past year including the mall shooting, the armed robberies at convenience shops and the shooting incident at Heritage Square. Each of these cases were targeted incidents and not random acts of violence.

Here is an update on those recent events:

- **Homicide at Central Park** – This was a targeted incident involving a man from Osceola and suspects from South Bend. Unfortunately, they chose Central Park as their meeting point. Thankfully, it was at night in the middle of winter so the park was not heavily attended at the time. The Mishawaka Police Department worked diligently to solve the crime expeditiously.

- **The Mall Shooting** – This was a targeted incident between two acquaintances. The St. Joseph County Prosecutors office has filed charges on two suspects. Mishawaka Police, working closely with the U.S. Marshals, apprehended the suspected shooter from South Bend in Gary, Indiana.

- **Recent Convenience Stores Armed Robberies** – These were targeted incidents committed by two small rings of suspects. Mishawaka Police, working closely with the St. Joseph County S. W. A. T. Team, have arrested suspects from both rings.

(Cont’d on next page)

### Sports and Sports Injuries

**Health Information from Saint Joseph Health System**

We are all glad to see schools open and sports start up again this fall. Certainly, there is value in learning about being part of a team, lessons that can be carried throughout a young person’s life. There are also, unfortunately, times when our student athletes experience an injury while playing sports.

Here are the 10 most common sports-related injuries:

- Runner’s knee
- Achilles Tendinitis
- Lower back pain
- Shin splints
- Concussion
- Tennis elbow
- Pulled muscle
- Shoulder injury
- Groin strain
- Ankle sprain

It is important to have an injury treated as quickly and efficiently as possible to avoid long-term issues and allow the athlete to get back in the game.

Call (574) 335-6214 to reach the experts at the Sports Medicine Institute at St. Joseph Health System.
A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood (continued)

- **Heritage Square Incident** – The large gathering on June 19th that resulted in over 70 shots fired and the death of an Elkhart man is being investigated. We ask that anyone who knows any details about the incident to step forward. We will partner with any and all agencies at the local, State and Federal levels to bring responsible parties to justice. Mishawaka Police are working with Indiana Excise Police to fine and penalize the business for violating multiple laws. We will pursue any and all means both criminally and civilly to go after responsible parties including the business and event promoters.

Perhaps you have detected a trend; most of Mishawaka's recent high-profile incidents do not involve Mishawakans. Of Mishawaka's last seven homicides over recent years, five of them involved no one residing in Mishawaka, either as victim or perpetrator. The ones involving Mishawaka residents were targeted domestic cases.

Why has Mishawaka attracted these high-profile crimes? Simply put, Mishawaka is a regional gathering place. We embrace that role. We are located at the geographic center of the region and people come here not only to work, visit, play, shop, eat, seek entertainment, healthcare, etc., but occasionally to commit crimes. It's the old adage, where people gather for commerce, sometimes that attracts people with bad intentions looking to take advantage of others. That makes police work extra challenging because it is more difficult to anticipate and predict. Then, as suspects flee back to where they came from, we must work with outside agencies to investigate and track down suspects.

The one area of crime on the increase that does involve Mishawaka residents is the uptick in vandalism that has occurred in a handful of Mishawaka’s parks. Here too, the Mishawaka Police Department is on task. We have increased police presence in our parks, developed a best practice, Citizens Alliance with Police (CAP) program, installed many high-tech cameras and emergency call boxes and developed new strategies for preventing issues in our parks.

These efforts have already shown success! Police have caught several kids involved in these nuisance crimes. Most have been middle school aged and live right here in Mishawaka. In cases where park property has been damaged, the City of Mishawaka is working with the St. Joseph Prosecutor’s Office to hold violators responsible, banish them from City parks and send their parents the bill for any damage. We have already sent out several bills for damaged property and some have been paid in full! It’s a difficult lesson but as my Dad used to say; “If some lessons can’t be taught, then they have to be bought.”

Police Chief, Ken Witkowski and his team work creatively to adapt to changing times. We are fully staffed at the police department and it is my priority to hire additional officers. Indeed, investment in law enforcement and the Mishawaka Police Department will be my biggest initiative for next year’s budget. We also utilize new high-tech tools, partner with outside agencies and develop new, creative policing strategies to help prevent, respond to and solve crime. Those efforts are working. While crime is occurring, it is solved at a very high rate. We hope that sends the message that Mishawaka is not the place to conduct crime.

It doesn’t just stop at the Mishawaka Police Department. We are also reviewing any and all city ordinances to make sure that we are doing everything possible to prevent future incidents. While we are business friendly here in the Princess City, we have an expectation that owners conduct their business responsibly. Thankfully, almost all do. For those very few that don’t, we will hold them responsible for chronic or significant problems and will pursue any and all options at our disposal including rescinding liquor licenses. Expect a new ordinance soon that will deal with large gatherings.

We know that living near problem/nuisance properties can be also frustrating for our citizens. There too, we employ creative strategies depending on each unique situation. Each circumstance can be different and some can drag on for what might seem like an extended period of time. But this I can promise you; We engage the full resources of the City and leverage many partnerships to respond and bring offending properties to full compliance. We are also persistent, we track these properties and don’t let them fall off our radar and always get positive resolution eventually as we work within the framework of the law to respond and resolve issues. We ask for your patience and understanding during that time.

Public safety is our top priority in Mishawaka and law and order is my expectation. The men and women of the Mishawaka Police Department are up to the task. Our highly professional officers have the expertise, equipment and training to effectively respond, come what may and they have my absolute support. There are threats and challenges out there to be sure. I see the daily calls that our officers are duty bound to respond to; some take my breath away. Our officers can’t spend a day entirely free from those threats. But they have risen to the challenges we face and in doing so, serve as an inspiration to us all. Our officers have routinely gone where we fear to go. They see what we fear to see, they have done what we fear to do and they have done all of these things to protect us, our property and our American way of life. I couldn’t be prouder to serve with them.

So...is Mishawaka safe? The answer to that is an emphatic YES!

Yours in Mishawaka,

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Mishawaka Utilities now offers the ability to start, stop or transfer service online!

Go to our website at [http://mishawaka.in.gov/mu](http://mishawaka.in.gov/mu) & click the Manage My Service button to get started. It will list all the important information needed to get started depending on whether you choose to start new service, transfer service, or remove service.

- It’s easy & convenient
- Saves you time
- Quick process with e-mails that guide you every step of the way

For questions, please contact our Customer Service Department at (574) 258-1630.

Send your questions, comments, or concerns to communicator_feedback@mishawaka.in.gov