

Watsonville Police Department

# Annual Report

2021





## A message from your Chief of Police

2021 was quite a year. A virus that was only supposed to last a couple of weeks has now lasted almost two years. But the adversity that this pandemic has brought has shown us how to come together as a City and as a Community.

This year's report is just a glimpse of our accomplishments and events, and I want to thank our Department members for their dedication and perseverance over these past 12 months.

This past year, we were awarded two Traffic Safety grants totaling \$125,800. We continue to use that money to prioritize the safety of our drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. We also embarked on an incredible project, the Ad Hoc Committee on Policing and Social Equity. Through this, we received nine recommendations that we are currently evaluating and putting together a work plan for. Finally, through the outstanding work and generosity of the Watsonville Police Assistance Fund, in partnership with the Katz Cancer Resource Center, we raised a record-breaking \$21,610 through our Pink Patch Project in support of Watsonville residents stricken with breast cancer.

As you read this report, I hope you glean some insight into what our Department members do every day. It has truly been an honor serving our community as the Interim Chief of Police.

## WATSONVILLE POLICE

**Our Why:** Impacting our community in positive ways, every day, through strong relationships and problem-solving.

**Our Mission:** Committing ourselves to public safety through engagement, education, enforcement, and professional development.

**Our Core Values:** Character, Competency, Compassion, Communication.

## Keeping Our Community Safe

71 Sworn Police Officers

15 Professional Staff (FT)

2 Professional Staff (PT)

2 Interns

Retiree  
Chief David Honda





- 54,239 calls for service
- 4,953 cases taken by officers
- 3,991 life-threatening & in-progress felony calls
- 500 online reports received



**Cases assigned to Detectives: 216**

**Search warrants served: 185**

**Items processed as evidence: 16,576**

**Firearms seized: 148**



**Property Crime**

Down 8.2%



Compared to 2020

**Violent Crime**

Down 2%





# 2021 Highlights



In 2021, our department began meeting with several local organizations to create a Critical Incident Response Multidisciplinary Team for community members directly impacted by a traumatic event.

We recognize that violence is a public health condition that requires input, participation and collaboration from diverse sectors, including health, education, social services, justice, and the community at large.

Our department and community-based organizations have been visualizing a new way to provide critical, trauma-informed services during and after times of crisis via the multidisciplinary team. Members of the team will be clinically trained, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed to respond to violent incidents.

This pilot program is expected to roll out in April/May of 2022.

A final report from the Police and Social Equity Ad Hoc Committee was presented and approved by the City Council in October of 2021. The department received nine recommendations that we are currently evaluating and putting together a work plan for.

The committee was formed in September of 2020 to help shape the future of policing and community services in Watsonville. This community engagement process was initiated by the City Council in July 2020.

Twelve community members were ultimately selected to serve on the committee. Over the course of nine months, and 18 community and committee meetings, the committee developed and finalized its report.



Towards the end of the year, the School Resource Officer program at Watsonville High School was reinstated at the request of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District.

The new pilot program will run through June 2022 and consists of partnering a School Resource Officer (SRO) with a Mental Health Clinician.

The goal of the partnership is to help provide students, their families, and school staff with readily available support and resources they might need to promote overall student health and wellness.

The SRO will continue to promote a safer school environment, conduct criminal investigations when necessary, participate in youth drug and gang prevention and work to foster positive relationships with youth.



Two grants totaling \$125,800 were awarded to the Watsonville Police Department in October of 2021 to help us continue to prioritize the safety of drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

An \$80,000 grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety will allow our department to provide necessary traffic enforcement measures to deter dangerous and illegal driving behaviors that increase the risk of serious injury and fatal crashes in our community.

A \$45,800 grant will focus specifically on the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians. Grant funds will pay for a comprehensive safety program that will teach valuable skills for all types of road users.



Our 2021 Pink Patch Project campaign came to an end with a record-breaking \$21,610 raised for the Katz Cancer Resource Center.

A November check presentation brought the total for the past five years to \$70,135.05. Every penny goes to support local Watsonville families impacted by breast cancer.

Generous sponsors and community members participated in this project by either donating and/or purchasing official Watsonville Police Pink Patch Project merchandise.

# Special Assignments



## K-9 Unit

Police dogs have been used by the Watsonville Police Department since 1986. Over the years, we've used police dogs that are trained in the apprehension of suspects wanted for felony crimes, narcotics detections, tracking, evidence recovery, handler protection, building searches, and area searches. K-9 Axel spent all of 2021 as the only police dog assigned to the department after K-9 Ranger retired in 2020.



## Crisis Negotiation Team

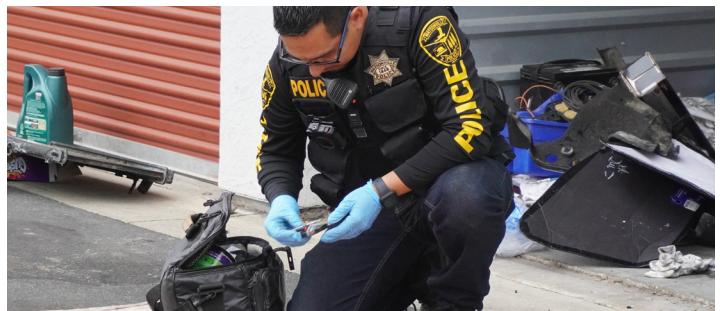
The Crisis Negotiation Team provides a support element of specially trained negotiators who assist our Special Response Team in safely managing hostage situations, barricaded persons, suicidal persons, terrorist acts, and anticipated barricaded or hostage situations.

Members of the team have been highly successful in enabling tense situations to be resolved without the use of force.



## Traffic Unit

The primary duty of the Traffic Unit is to enforce traffic laws to reduce traffic collisions, their resulting injuries, and to facilitate the safe and expedient flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The unit is also responsible for investigating major injury and fatal traffic collisions.



## Detective Bureau

The Detective Bureau consists of one detective-sergeant and six detectives who investigate crimes for which they are specially trained.

Three detectives are assigned to follow-up on sexual assault investigations, one detective is assigned to investigate persons crimes, one detective focuses on gang crimes and testifies as the department's gang expert, and the remaining detective is assigned to investigate property crimes.

When major crimes occur, all of our detectives will come together and collaborate on those investigations.



## Special Investigations Unit

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) takes a proactive and progressive approach to fight crime. The unit's daily responsibilities include proactive street-level enforcement, crime suppression, and community engagement.

Members of SIU investigate law violations connected to narcotics, firearms, and gangs. They also help our detectives with operational planning, background, surveillance, collecting intelligence, and fugitive apprehension. Often, the unit is tasked with preparing and executing search and arrest warrants on targeted locations and suspects.



## Special Response Team

The team is composed of 18 members who are specially trained to perform a variety of advanced duties.

The team trains monthly and is on-call 24/7 to handle high-risk search warrant services, resolve situations involving barricaded suspects, conduct hostage rescues, and any other needs that arise and exceed the response capabilities of our patrol officers.



## Crisis Assessment Response & Engagement Team (CARE)

The mission of the CARE Team is to provide coordinated, professional, and compassionate police response to families and individuals affected by mental illness.

When an officer receives a call for service involving a person in a mental health crisis, the officer can respond to the call with a mental health liaison. Taking this approach allows the officer to focus on the safety issues while the liaison focuses on the clinical needs of the individual, and assists with ensuring that the mental health crisis is addressed with the most appropriate service.



## Santa Cruz Auto Theft Reduction & Enforcement Task Force

The Auto Theft Task Force was established in 1998 and provides services primarily throughout Santa Cruz County. The task force is supervised by the California Highway Patrol and operated by the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office.

The team is composed of officers, deputies, and investigators from local jurisdictions, including the Watsonville Police Department. Their primary function is to recover stolen vehicles, investigate suspected auto theft operations, and educate local auto body shop owners about criminal practices.



## Santa Cruz County Anti-Crime Team

The Santa Cruz County Anti-Crime Team is a local multiagency task force composed of personnel and other resources from law enforcement agencies in Santa Cruz County, including the Watsonville Police Department.

The Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office supervises and operates the team. The focus of the team is to prevent and reduce violent crimes and narcotics trafficking and apprehend suspects responsible for those crimes.



## Professional Standards Division

The Professional Standards Division (PSD) has the responsibility of investigating all allegations of misconduct by members of the Department and reviewing and adjudicating all minor complaints, which are handled by supervisors.

This division also has the responsibility to oversee all department training and that all training records are maintained for uniformed and professional staff. Recruiting and hiring is also an area of responsibility overseen by PSD.

## Community Outreach



Patrol officers got a chance to meet some of our youngest residents while handing out dozens of toys that were donated to us by Jacob's Heart Family Center.



Our Special Investigations Unit continued its community outreach efforts by paying a special visit to players from the Aztecas Youth Soccer Academy during their first outdoor practice since the start of the pandemic.



For the second year in a row, officers participated in an Easter Egg Drop organized by the Watsonville Police Activities League. They had an eggstraordinary time handing out goodie bags to dozens of kids in our community!



As part of the Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run, officers carried the "Flame of Hope" during a 5-mile run through Watsonville. Each stride taken by our officers helped raise awareness and funds for athletes with special needs.



Coffee with a Cop made a comeback in 2021. Officers had the opportunity to meet with Watsonville residents and discuss some of the issues that matter most to them.



Our Traffic Unit teamed up with the California Office of Traffic Safety to provide helmets and other safety equipment for local kids. A state grant has allowed us to provide bicycle safety equipment for nearly 600 kids since 2019.



Officer Javier Ayala and his partner K-9 Axel had their first in-person presentation since the start of the pandemic. There was lots of tongue and tail wagging from Axel and tons of smiles and laughter from dozens of kids participating in the Youth Summer Soccer Camp at Pajaro Park.



Another year and another successful Watsonville PAL Golf Tournament! Our annual golf fundraising tournament raised nearly \$10,000 for the Watsonville Police Activities League. The funds will be used to service PAL youth and their programming.



National Night Out was once again a total hit! Officers got a chance to make new friends, reconnect with people we hadn't seen in months, but most importantly, we all came together as a community.



Nearly 340 pounds of Halloween candy was donated by Watsonville police officers and staff for the city's first-ever Downtown Candy Crawl. Police personnel also volunteered their time to run the police department's candy booth.



We're always amazed by our officers' generosity and willingness to give back to our community! The Watsonville Police Officers' Association donated \$1,000 to the Salvation Army to help local families have a happier holiday season.



Our Shop with a Cop program sponsored seven deserving families from our youth programs in 2021. Thanks to our community partners, local businesses, volunteers, and staff, each family received Christmas gifts, a warm meal, dessert, and non-perishable foods.



We are constantly looking for innovative ways to connect and expand our two-way communication with the community.

Over the years, our increased engagement on our various social media platforms has given residents a unique opportunity to get involved in their community and help our officers make Watsonville a safer place.

This established partnership has proven to be effective. Residents have gone as far as assisting us in the apprehension of suspects involved in serious crimes, to finding missing persons at-risk.

Undoubtedly, our social media platforms have allowed us to reach residents quickly and effectively.



### **Like, Follow, Subscribe, Download & Register**

**Non-Emergency Police Dispatch:** 831-471-1151

**Crime Tips Anonymous:** 831-768-3544

**Records:** 831-768-3370

**Investigations:** 831-768-3350

**Police Chief's Office:** 831-768-3300

**Some of the photos used in this report were provided by:**  
Tarmo Hannula & Steve Kuehl

A black SUV, identified as a Watsonville Police vehicle by the text on its rear, is shown from a rear three-quarter perspective. The vehicle is driving away from the viewer on a paved road. The road features a double yellow line marking. The background consists of a coastal landscape with hills and a clear blue sky.

WATSONVILLE POLICE

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