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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 16, 2018

City, MTSU Police introducing Crime Free Multi-Housing safety program

Rental complexes enrolling in credentialing program in partnership to combat crime

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — The City of Murfreesboro Police Department, in partnership with Middle Tennessee State University, is pleased to announce the first training for a Crime Free Multi-Housing Program.

Thirteen rental communities participated Friday (Feb. 16) in the first, free education and certification training. MPD conducted the daylong training at the Police Annex, 324 S. Church St.

Rental facilities that meet certain criteria for the program and implement the city's recommended best practices for safety are eligible to become certified and receive a special emblem displayed to prospective residents.

"We are pleased with the initial level of cooperation and support from the apartment complex managers and owners," said Murfreesboro Police Chief Mike Bowen. "The City, MTSU, and privately-owned apartment complexes are implementing Crime Free strategies, sharing data and increasing shared police-apartment approaches to ensure the safety of residents and students who live in off-campus housing."

Certification training (Phase 1) is required for rental property participation in MTSU CUSTOMS orientation, beginning April 21 for transfer students, May 17-18 for freshman students, and throughout the summer. CUSTOMS helps new freshmen and new transfer students transition into the university; prepares them for educational opportunities; and introduces them to the intellectual, cultural and social climate of the university.

The City of Murfreesboro and Middle Tennessee State University officials first met in the summer of 2017 to initiate the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program with owners and managers of privately-owned apartment complexes due to an increase in criminal activity within multi-housing rental properties. The communities have cooperated in developing other effective strategies to combat crime in areas surrounding campus.

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“We’re excited to participate with MPD in a proactive program that has shown to increase safety and to effectively lower crime in apartment complexes across the country,” MTSU Police Chief Buddy Peaster said. “Being a part of this ongoing initiative allows us to continue to engage positively with a number of our students off campus, too.”

Participating Murfreesboro rental communities will complete the three-phase credentialing process and become fully certified members.

Phase 1 introduces property managers to effective property management, including rental agreements, ongoing property management, crime prevention, warning signs of gang and drug activity, the role of police, crisis resolution, and housing assistance programs. Phase 2 involves an on-site property review. Phase 3 incorporates tenant involvement.

Murfreesboro Police Sgt. Harry Haigh is coordinating the City of Murfreesboro Crime Free Multi-Housing Program. To participate or for more information on the program, visit <http://www.murfreesborotn.gov/1475/Crime-Free-Multi-Housing-Program>.

The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program was first introduced in Mesa, Arizona in 1992. Residents sign a Crime Free Addendum with their lease as a “contract” not to commit, or allow any family members or affiliates to engage in, criminal activity while a resident of their communities. Violations can result in those individuals being removed as residents. Some Crime Free communities have seen as much as a 70 percent drop in crime. Currently there are 48 states who are members of the Program.

“Rental properties presented a special challenge for us at the Mesa Police Department,” said Timothy Zehring, Crime Free Program executive director and founder. “While neighborhood watch programs work well for single-family neighborhoods due to the financial investment of homeowners, renters don’t typically have a significant financial investment or long-term commitment to the property. Renters are not as motivated to defend their property.”

To watch a YouTube video of the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program, simply click <https://youtu.be/cb1clEMkMkE>.

The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program is a special initiative geared specifically to rental housing and is essentially a crime prevention program. Adoption of an apartment credentialing or certification program informs the public about apartment complexes that utilize “best practices” such as third-party security, gated access, monitored parking and visitor registration.

Both City and MTSU officials, including Mayor Shane McFarland, MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, MTSU Police Chief Buddy Peaster and Murfreesboro Police Chief Mike Bowen were among leaders who met with more than a dozen apartment complex managers last summer.

On Sept. 6, 2017, the City of Murfreesboro and MTSU signed a Law Enforcement Mutual Assistance Agreement to provide mutual assistance by their respective police departments on a consistent and on-going basis. Mutual Assistance authority is authorized in Tennessee Code Sect. 49-7-118(e)(1).

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Under the agreement, the law enforcement agencies for MTSU and MPD agree to provide mutual aid and assistance to make arrests, execute search warrants, and perform other law enforcement functions, when necessary, to act outside their jurisdiction.

Initiatives developed in partnership between MPD, MTSU and rental properties include:

- The City will maintain an online site of complexes who earn recognition in this Crime Free program <http://www.murfreesborotn.gov/1475/Crime-Free-Multi-Housing-Program>. The site will eventually include crime data and links to digital maps, now already available through CrimeMapping.com, showing reported incidents by area.
- The signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) gives MTSU Police broader enforcement authority outside the university campus.
- The City and MTSU are developing a public awareness crime data webpage to share law enforcement data on calls for service at apartment complexes so potential renters, students and parents can make well-informed decisions before choosing multi-family rental property.
- MTSU administration is reinforcing to students that the Code of Conduct can apply to off-campus behavior. Local law enforcement has the option to refer cases to the university's Office of Student Conduct for review.
- The university recommends on-campus housing as the best residential option for students, especially for freshmen. However, when considering an off-campus housing option, the university urges students and parents to see and inspect such units in person before making a commitment.

For further information on how to become a member of the "Crime Fighting" team and the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program, contact Sgt. Harry Haigh at 0367@murfreesborotn.gov or call 615-895-3874.

For City News online, visit www.Murfreesborotn.gov.

Photos and Logos attached:

1. *MPD Chief Michael Bowen addresses rental property community managers at Crime Free Multi-Housing Program, Feb. 16. The Phase I credentialing program was held at the MPD Annex, 324 S. Church St., Murfreesboro, Tennessee.*
2. *MPD Sgt. Harry Haigh, who is coordinating the Murfreesboro Crime Free Multi-Housing program, addresses the rental property community managers, Feb. 16.*
3. *MFRD Fire Marshall Carl Peas addresses Crime Free Multi-Housing Program, Feb. 16.*
4. *MPD Patch.jpeg.*

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