

Media Release

Aberdeen Police Department

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Aberdeen Police Department is Aware.

Aberdeen, MD – The month of April is Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month. National Autism Awareness Day is April 2ND, The Aberdeen Police Department understands the importance of being able to quickly recognize the signs of autism and respond effectively. Officers are now equipped with both the knowledge and the tools to approach an autistic person, or any person with special needs, including those whose condition includes a sensory processing disorder.

The Aberdeen Police Department has partnered with Pathfinders for Autism, a statewide organization that provides training to officers in identifying, understanding, and deescalating situations when encountering autistic individuals or a sensory processing disorder. We have equipped supervisors with autism sensory kits to utilize in the field. These kits will be instrumental in helping a person ease some of the overwhelming stimulation that someone with developmental disability may be feeling during a police encounter.

Sgt. Robert Tice, who is the father of two autistic children, and understands the importance of autism awareness and acceptance throughout our community organized the training for officers and sensory kits. He rallied the three municipal police agencies and with the assistance of the Harford County Municipal Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge #128, arranged the creation of the local municipalities first ever Autism Awareness and Acceptance Police Patch. The patches are \$5.00 in person or \$6.00 online with all the proceeds benefiting Pathfinders for Autism. Patches will be available starting today April 1ST at each participating police department or by contacting Sgt. Tice at rtice@aberdeendam.gov.

The newly designed patches will join the nationally supported Autism Patch Challenge that was created in 2017 by New Rochelle, New York Police, Detective Christopher Greco. Det. Greco is the father of an autistic, non-verbal child who founded Christopher's Voice, a charitable foundation for autistic children in his son's honor.

Det. Greco formulated the Autism Patch Challenge to promote Autism Awareness and Acceptance in every community throughout the country. The objective is to create and attach a custom Autism Awareness first responder patch to at least one emergency vehicle within each community's police, fire or EMS department during April, Autism Awareness Month. Shoulder patches are a popular alternative. The Autism Patch Challenge also encourages police departments to fundraise by selling their autism patches and other memorabilia, then donate the proceeds to local autism charities. Once a police department accepts the Autism Patch Challenge, they are asked to pay it forward by challenging three other police jurisdictions. As of 2019, over 350 police departments have accepted the challenge.

-Images below-

Prepared By: Lt. Will Reiber

