

Police, CAPS & Community Relations Committee

The Archer Heights Civic Association has had, and continues to have, a long standing positive working relationship with both the police officers and Commander of the 8th Police District and we are active participants in what is popularly known as CAPS.

CAPS – Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy

CAPS, the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy Program, was started in a few select police districts in 1993 and was expanded to all of the City of Chicago's 25 police districts in 1994. It is the successor program to the community originated Police Beat Representative Program that was started in 1977.

The goal of the CAPS program is to encourage community members and police to work together to prevent or reduce incidents of crime in the community by increasing the lines of communication between the police and residents at monthly CAPS meetings held in each Chicago community neighborhood. At the meetings, community members have the opportunity to meet the police that actually patrol their neighborhood. This allows residents to become familiar with the officers. Officers in turn get to know the resident's and their grass roots concerns and issues. Community crime "hot spots" or chronic problems are discussed by residents who have first-hand knowledge of issues or problems on their specific block. Issues can be brought up during the open session of the meeting, or discussed in private with the officers after the meeting.

Two police beats cover the Archer Heights community: Beat 815 which encompasses the area of Pulaski Road west to Cicero Avenue; and Beat 821 which takes in the area of Pulaski Road east to Lawndale Avenue and into the community of Brighton Park. CAPS meetings are coordinated by a Beat Facilitator and attended by the 8th Police District CAPS Sergeant and the two beat officers of each beat who are on duty during the time of the meeting.

CAPS meetings for Archer Heights are held the first Wednesday of each month in the St. Joseph meeting room of St. Bruno School located at 4839 S. Harding Avenue starting at 7:00 PM. Entry to the meeting room is at the northeast corner of 49th & Harding and plenty of parking is available in the church parking lot.

The Archer Heights Civic Association has been a long time supporter of our police and actively participated in several facets of police and community relations (civic association President Thomas S. Baliga was Vice President of the 8th District Beat Rep Program). We currently actively participate in, and encourage our association members to participate in CAPS.

Civic Association Vice President Michael Kovac is our liaison to the 8th Police District and is the current Beat Facilitator for Beat 815 (Brighton Park resident Odette Raphael-McElroy is Beat Facilitator for Beat 821). In addition to presiding over monthly Caps meetings, Mr. Kovac represents the Archer Heights community at the semi-monthly DAC (District Advisory Committee) meetings at the 8th Police District Headquarters.

District Advisory Committee - DAC

The District Advisory Committee is comprised of a diverse panel of community leaders and stakeholders. At these meetings, the District Commander has an opportunity to share information regarding current strategies aimed at reducing crime in our neighborhoods. Likewise, the community representatives have an opportunity to present concerns and provide input on how to build stronger bonds between the police and the community.

The DAC program is divided into several subcommittees such as youth programs, senior issues, faith-based initiatives, domestic violence, and court advocacy. Each of these subcommittees offers additional opportunities for citizens to work together with the police in providing increased safety and an improved quality of life for all of our residents and businesses.

Of the various DAC subcommittees listed above, one of the most active and well-regarded is the Court Advocacy Subcommittee in the 8th District.

Court Advocacy Subcommittee

Currently, there are over forty residents from various 8th District communities who participate in the Court Advocacy program by attending court hearings on criminal cases in our district to support the victims of these crimes as well as show our support for the police who made the arrests. **The presence of the court advocates sends a clear message, that we will not tolerate criminal activity in our neighborhoods and that we closely follow these cases until there is a final resolution.**

As a long-time court advocate, Civic Association Vice President Michael Kovac attends criminal court hearings on a weekly basis to follow the status of numerous criminal prosecutions, particularly those cases which occurred in Archer Heights. While there have been a handful of Archer Heights residents who have participated in court advocacy along with Mr. Kovac, it is hoped that a larger number of individuals will step forward to represent Archer Heights in this valuable CAPS activity. Due to his continued participation in the various facets of the CAPS program, Mr. Kovac has been able to provide highly informative reports on crime prevention and police related issues at our monthly general membership meetings as well as occasional articles in our newsletter.

The motto of the CAPS Program is “Together We Can”. Through our civic association’s participation in the CAPS program we have had many success stories of eliminating criminal activity in our neighborhood, fighting against and eliminating gang activity and making Archer Heights a safer community. By participating in any of the CAPS activities, you can only enhance the positive effects of this program.

How You Can Help

If you would like to become a member of the Court Advocates, the time commitment is not great and can be arranged to accommodate your schedule. Court Advocates are never assigned to a case alone; there always is one or more experienced advocates with you. The principle function of the advocates is to stand up when a case is called therefore letting the judge, prosecutor and victims know that the community is there to support them. You are not required to testify or provide any personal information.

For further details about this dynamic group, please call our civic association office at 773-843-2232 and leave your name and phone number on our office answering machine or use the “Contact Us Box” on this web site

Anyone with blocks of time on your hands, or recent retirees, this can be a very fulfilling new chapter in your life.