



## COLUMBUS AND FRANKLIN COUNTY METRO PARKS

The Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks Rangers provide many outstanding examples of how they successfully integrate with their communities. According to Deputy Director Lawrence J. Peck, the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Park community policing falls into two distinct categories-- formalized programs and day to day activities.

**Formal Programs** Full time commissioned rangers are involved in numerous programs to engage the very diverse community they serve. Two popular programs are **Fishing with a Ranger** and **Biking with a Ranger**. The biking program is conducted on a weekly basis at several parks during the summer; families and children accompany a Range on a bicycle ride. This program in conjunction with their on-going **Safety Park Program** teaches bike safety, how to cross intersections and stranger-danger tips. Working with several partners, rangers also issue "citations" entitling the receiver to a free ice cream cone when they observe children biking with a helmet. The Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks continues their outreach to children by creating ID's using the agency's ID and camera software in conjunction with **Missing and Exploited Child Week**.

Integrating into communities means being constantly visible. **Rangers have a goal to stay very visible** with all major events hosted by the Metro Parks. One of the most successful annual events is the WAG festival. Last year the **Wag Fest drew 14,000 people** and over 10,000 dogs from the Central Ohio area. The Wag Festival is not only a perfect day for dogs and people, it is a perfect way for commissioned rangers to interact with a large number of the park users.

The Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks Rangers are also active with:

- Dragon Boat Race (as a part of the Asian Festival)
- Career Fairs
- Intern Programs to promote future diversity hiring
- Presenting Programs, revising signage and brochures to Spanish

**Day to Day Activities** Deputy Director Lawrence J. Peck believes that everyday activities are the best way to engage the and improve relationships with the public. He states that "**park law enforcement is community policing at its core**". Rangers are tasked with logging five positive visitor contacts per day. Rangers are further encouraged to approach visitors in as many non-enforcement encounters as possible. The efforts the Columbus and Franklin Metro Parks has instituted to **improve interaction with diverse cultures** is impressive. A Frequently Encountered Situation or FAQs document has been created to help bridge possible language barriers. **The agency has also done extensive training in the various cultures they are likely to encounter including Somali, Hispanic, Asian and African-American.**

Columbus and Metro Park Rangers subscribe to the philosophy of using the least amount of force to gain compliance. The approach allows the agency to quickly deal with issues before other forms of enforcement are necessary.

**The Columbus and Metro Parks Police Department provides many positive examples of successfully interacting with the public daily to build stronger relationships. And Deputy Director Pecks words are worth repeating, “park law enforcement is community policing at its core”!**