



## **Operation School's Out**

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What could make for a better display of police presence than a parade of 87 police officers on bicycles rolling through neighborhoods? For two days at the beginning of this summer, the Milwaukee Police Department flooded our city streets and schoolyards with our entire bicycle unit. Our bike unit is comprised of 87 IPMBA trained officers, most of whom cycle for their tour of duty every day they work.

Historically, the last couple days of the school year for Milwaukee Public Schools are filled with excitement, enthusiasm and the eagerness of young graduating scholars being released into the world.

Unfortunately, often accompanying all the excitement of the last days of school are overwhelming feelings of liberation on the part of some students. These emotions can lead to disruptive behaviors and even criminal actions. Intended or not, these are issues that occur annually during the release of our schools. They need proper police attention, and in most instances, can be addressed before criminal behaviors arise.

Using past experience, crime statistics and the concept of power in numbers, our Department's leaders got together with the Public Schools Superintendent and devised a plan to deploy all of MPD's bicycle officers to the schools that most often experience problems during the end of the year dismissal. These problems, which begin during the school's dismissal, tend to pour out into the surrounding neighborhoods, negatively affecting both citizens and businesses.

The reasoning behind using our IPMBA officers was to build enough presence so that students would see 10-12 officers at every school. These efforts, reinforced by the school staff and security, resulted in two days of minimal troubles, with nothing more severe than a bit of loitering that occurred after the school day.

The benefits of such an increase in police bicycle presence to these parts of our city proved to be a reduction of crime, fear and disorder. It also communicated to the citizens that the police are working to rid their neighborhoods of threats, public nuisances and violent crime. It is vital to let our citizens know that not only can they depend on their police department for presence, but also that we are doing our best to reduce and prevent crime, and make their neighborhoods as safe as possible. Public visibility of this magnitude, coupled with the use of additional resources, including the Milwaukee Police Bicycle Unit, demonstrated to the community that its officers are focused on identifying problems that already exist and preventing new problems.

As school came to an end on June 14th and 15th, MPD's 87 bicycle officers were on the grounds of Milwaukee's schools with the highest probability for problems. Our officers congratulated seniors in tassels, offered smiles to excited young people and provided a safe departure for thousands of kids on their last day of school. This year's dismissal showed improvement over years past in numerous ways. The biggest effect was that there were no major incidents on school property or in any of the neighborhoods surrounding the schools at which IPMBA officers



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were deployed. Another achievement seen by this mission was a noticeable reduction in calls for service involving students and young adults causing problems for citizens in neighborhoods near schools. And finally, our most gratifying result was the showing of appreciation and praise for the police presence our department received from school staff, parents of students and residents. The community gave us very positive feedback, stating what an incredible difference this year's school dismissal was from previous years. When we look at the success of this project as a whole we can find three things for sure: 1) a pleased community, 2) a safe school environment for our children, and 3) a police department and a group of IPMBA officers who found a way to be more effective and make a difference.

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