

# HOLIDAY EVENTS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

How Two Departments Leveraged The  
Holidays To Create Engaging Community  
Events



## AT A GLANCE

**Washington County  
Sheriff's Office "Hop in  
the Park" Easter Egg  
Hunt**

**Jasper County Sheriff's  
Office Blue Santa Toy  
Drive**

**Conclusion**

## OVERVIEW

Hosting community events has become an integral part of community engagement strategy for law enforcement agencies across the country. Community events are a straightforward way to get community members to come together and interact with officers in a different setting.

## CHALLENGES

Brainstorming and executing creative and engaging community events can require a lot of time, resources, and manpower, which can be a tough obstacle to overcome for departments, especially those that are already spread thin. However, this challenge is not insurmountable.

## SOLUTIONS

While creating a calendar of events may seem daunting, one easy way to get started is to focus on events around the holidays. Holiday events have a pre-determined theme, which provides a stepping-stone for event planning. Below are two examples of holiday events from LAW Publications' partners.



*"[Washington County Sheriff's Office] is awesome. Always having community events and programs for our youth. Feel very blessed to have this department in my community."*

**Community Member**

Washington, Pennsylvania

# WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE "HOP IN THE PARK" EASTER EGG HUNT

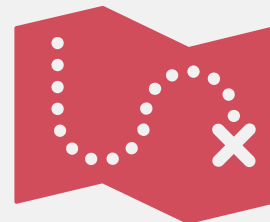
Easter is a perfect example of a holiday with a built-in event. Easter egg hunts are a great way to engage families in the community. With participation from local businesses, hosting an Easter egg hunt can be a relatively low-cost and easily prepared event for a department.

Last year, Washington County Sheriff's Office in Washington, Pennsylvania, hosted their inaugural "Hop in the Park" Easter Egg Hunt. The event offered three drive-through options and one walk-through option. In 2021, the event was spread over two weekends, with two locations and times available each weekend. Giant Easter eggs were hidden throughout local spots, such as parks and community centers. The department created a map and clues to help children search for the eggs. Over 2,000 treat bags were distributed by officers and first responders to children ages 12 and under upon completion of the hunt. The goodies in these treat bags were donated by local businesses.

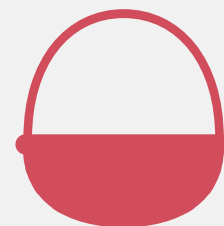
Whether participating in the drive-through or walk-through version of the event, children were able to take pictures with the Easter bunny. The drive-through aspect of this event made it accessible to all members of the community, including families who were concerned about COVID-19 but still wanted to provide a fun experience for their children. The event was so successful that they made it an annual event. This year, however, the event is one weekend instead of two.



**THREE DRIVE-  
THROUGH OPTIONS  
& ONE WALK-  
THROUGH OPTION**



**DEPARTMENT-  
CREATED MAP AND  
CLUES TO HELP  
CHILDREN SEARCH  
FOR EGGS**



**OVER 2,000 TREAT  
BAGS DISTRIBUTED  
TO CHILDREN UNDER  
AGE 12 BY OFFICERS  
AND FIRST  
RESPONDERS**

# JASPER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE BLUE SANTA TOY DRIVE

Christmas is another holiday that naturally fosters community togetherness. While there are a variety of elements of the winter holiday season to focus an event around, such as "Cocoa with the POPO" (shout-out to our 2021 College Department of the Year, Georgia Tech PD), one tried and true event that encourages community engagement is a toy drive.

Jasper County Sheriff's Office in Jasper, Texas, has been hosting their Blue Santa Toy Drive for years. This season-long event asks local citizens to donate toys or monetary contributions in order to provide Christmas

presents for local children who otherwise would not receive any gifts. Local businesses in Jasper and surrounding towns participate by serving as drop-off locations for donated toys and money. Some of the businesses even allow customers to add a donation amount to their total purchase at checkout so they can use their credit cards.

Last year's event was the biggest fundraiser Jasper County Sheriff's Office has ever hosted. They received over \$700 in donations and a trailer full of toys to be distributed as Christmas gifts for the local families in need.



**LOCAL BUSINESSES  
SERVED AS DROP-  
OFF LOCATIONS FOR  
DONATIONS**



**RECEIVED OVER \$700  
IN DONATIONS AND  
A TRAILER FULL OF  
TOYS**



# CONCLUSION

While planning any event for a large group of people is daunting, simple events such as these deliver a sure-fire way to engage community members, especially those who may be looking to get involved around the holidays. In addition to providing a service for citizens who may not have the means to do so themselves, these events allow members of the community to get to know each other and their local law enforcement officers in a new light. In fact, studies have shown that positive non-enforcement interactions with uniformed officers can substantially improve public attitudes toward police.



**Learn more about Washington County and Jasper County Sheriff's Offices:**



Washington County Sheriff's Office of PA (wcpasd)



[co.washington.pa.us/207/Sheriff](https://co.washington.pa.us/207/Sheriff)



Jasper County Sheriff's Office (jcsotx)



[co.jasper.tx.us/page/jasper.Sheriff](https://co.jasper.tx.us/page/jasper.Sheriff)