



# EPISODE Q&A

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## EPISODE INFORMATION

**Episode Title:** San Mateo Police

**Episode # & Date:** Episode #8 – December 12, 2019

**Episode Description:** Judy contacted the San Mateo Police Department to ask about how safe San Mateo is, what to do about car break-ins, how the homeless are doing, and more.

**Episode Web Page:** <https://sanmateofocus.com/san-mateo-police/>

## EPISODE Q&A: Questions from San Mateo Focus. Answers from San Mateo Police:

### **Q1: Is there a general message San Mateo Police would like to send to our listeners?**

A1: Safety on our streets, security in our schools and in your homes, success of our businesses, and service to the members of our community is SMPD's mission. The men and women of the San Mateo Police Department are progressive and professional; dedicated peace keepers, defenders of our community's quality of life, and problem solvers protecting our community through professionalism, integrity, and excellence. We provide a safe and secure quality of life through resolution of issues and problems by aligning community partnerships and resources through ongoing collaborations. We have a committed, diverse, and outstanding group of men and women in this department dedicated to providing outstanding public service.

Fairness, equality, and justice are our guiding principles as we execute our duties and obligations while adhering to the highest ethical standards. The department is dedicated to protecting with honor and serving with pride. We provide creative, proactive, and long-term solutions to issues that arise, strengthening and securing our neighborhoods. We strive to be the model police agency that others will emulate and a leader in the county and our profession, adopting creative and innovative strategies to prevent crime and support those most in need. We provide our services through a trauma-informed restorative justice approach understanding that many who offend require more than jail to rehabilitate and restore their lives.

The Police Department is committed to improving the quality of life in our city, by recognizing community needs, forming partnerships, and working with allied agencies to ensure long-term resolution to crime and disorder issues. We will continue to do this through cutting-edge technology, creative solutions to problems, by respecting individual rights, conducting fair and non-biased policing, and good, old-fashioned police work.



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**Q2: Relative to other Cities in the Bay Area with roughly the same population, how does San Mateo compare from a crime and safety standpoint?**

A2: For a detailed view of how San Mateo compares with other cities, check out FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. Personally, I've found the Crime Data Explorer to be the most helpful tool. Check it out at <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/>. If you're looking for exact numbers, visit <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr>.

**Q3: What are the top 3 ways that San Mateo residents can stay safe from robbery, car theft, etc?**

A3:

## 1. Education

- a. Participate in a neighborhood watch. The program is total resident participation and involvement in a police-community cooperative battle against burglaries or other neighborhood crimes. Its primary purpose is personal and property protection for participants and their neighbors.
- b. Subscribe to Nixle and Nextdoor for emergency alerts from SMPD and follow us on our social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).
- c. Join San Mateo's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). CERT is made up of San Mateo residents who are trained to take care of themselves and their community in the aftermath of a major disaster, when first responders are overwhelmed or unable to respond because of communication or transportation difficulties.
- d. Take part in San Mateo's City Services Academy. This comprehensive, hands-on learning experience gives participants the opportunity to interact with City staff and learn about the challenges facing municipal government today. Interactive activities will give Academy participants a better understanding of the evolving principles of the City of San Mateo's Council/City Manager form of government. Academy participants will interact with department heads (such as the City Manager, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Public Works Director, City Librarian, Parks and Recreation Director, etc.) and City Council members to learn how new programs or ideas are implemented. City staff will discuss project challenges, budget and resource limitations, and how City Council policy decisions are implemented. Day-to-day operations would also be explored.

## 2. Awareness

- a. Stay alert! Keep your head on a swivel and eliminate distractions, such as a cell phone.



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- b. Trust your instincts. If you sense danger, move away from it and call the police.
- c. Travel with others and walk in well-lit areas.
- d. Keep your valuables out of sight.
- e. Lock all vehicle doors - Try setting a reminder alarm on your phone at 9PM.
- f. Don't leave ANYTHING in your car - You read that right. Thieves are now searching consoles and glove compartments if they don't see GPS devices, laptops/tablets, or personal bags in plain view.

### 3. Be a Good Witness

- a. Call 9-1-1 immediately and remain on the line.
- b. Don't chase the suspect. Leave this to the police.
- c. Don't touch anything the criminal may have touched.
- d. Write down a description of the suspect and weapon as soon as you are able.
- e. If the criminal had a car, write down the color, make, model, and license plate.
- f. Video and photographs are extremely helpful. We are solving more cases thanks to video surveillance – both facing your property and street facing. Our officers regularly canvass for available surveillance and our community can help us by notifying SMPD they have cameras. [www.tinyurl.com/SMPDNest](http://www.tinyurl.com/SMPDNest).

Nationwide statistics show that 64% of victims don't report their crime to the police. Be responsible, take charge of your community's safety, and call San Mateo Police as soon as possible so that we can respond and help.

Being a good witness means not placing yourself or others in danger. Remain calm enough to call the police and provide critical information. It's better not to confront or get involved in a conflict with the suspect. Be a good witness and call the police at 650-522-7700 or call/text 911 for emergencies.

Being a good witness will give the police the opportunity to apprehend the suspect(s) as quickly as possible. If the crime involves property, such as a auto burglary, ask yourself "Should I risk my safety and well-being for a property crime?" The answer is "No!" You may not see the suspect carrying a weapon, but keep in mind that handguns and other weapons are easily concealed.



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The type of crime committed won't tell you what type of suspect you are dealing with. Never get between a suspect and their escape route. If you see a crime in progress, call 911. If possible, and without endangering yourself, continue to monitor any activity you can observe.

A police dispatcher will answer 911 and will ask a series of questions relating to the activity you're witnessing. Being able to quickly articulate your location, suspect description, and suspect vehicle will assist the officers in their response.

During this stressful time it's important for you to remain calm so you can clearly answer the dispatcher's questions. Listen to the police dispatcher for direction and guidance. Some of the questions may not seem pertinent to you, but dispatchers are trained to know exactly what information the officers need to respond quickly and safely. This means that a dispatcher may need to interrupt you while you're relaying information. It is important that during emergencies, your answers are direct and brief.

Keep in mind during emergencies, officers are usually dispatched by a second dispatcher as the information is obtained by the dispatcher taking your call. The faster the dispatcher can obtain the necessary information from you, the faster it is relayed to the officers responding.

### **Q4: Where are the spots in the City that traffic officers have identified are more hazardous for drivers or pedestrians?**

A4: San Mateo is a very safe city, which is evident by the low collision rates. For example, in 2018 SMPD took 667 collision reports. Of these, 305 resulted in injuries and 107 were caused by DUI drivers. Of the 667 collisions, 240 were hit & runs and most of these collisions occurred on private property (parking lots). To put these low collision rates in perspective, E/B E. Hillsdale Blvd at Saratoga averages about 28,000 vehicles a day (more than 10 million a year). This is one for one direction of travel at one intersection. E/B E. 4th Ave at Humboldt averages 22,000 cars a day, which is more than 8 million vehicles a year.

The City of San Mateo is proactive in addressing safety concerns with the regular meetings and routine collaboration between the police, public works, fire, planning, city attorney and city manager's office. The leaders and their staff from each department share information received from the community, review collision reports, and share reports from field personnel. Our goals are to address traffic and parking issues using the three E's model - education, engineering, and enforcement. San Mateo is a large city and densely populated. Our traffic officers conduct routine enforcement on a rotating basis in areas identified from community members who participate in the City's Traffic Action Plan process.



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Wherever a motor vehicle or bicycle is involved there are hazardous conditions, which is why drivers, bicycles, and pedestrians need to remain alert, and to drive, ride, and walk responsibly and defensively.

**Q5: Bike lanes are all over the City these days. What message would you like to give to drivers & bicyclists about the bike lanes?**

A5: We've all heard the slogan, "Share the road." This applies motorists, bicyclist, and pedestrians. Everyone needs to obey the law and be responsible.

**Q6: What, from a police perspective, makes San Mateo a unique community?**

A6: Engagement. San Mateo PD has one of the most active neighborhood watch programs in the county. SMPD's success depends on a community policing model we call neighborhood safety partnerships. We believe success in crime prevention and control is a responsibility we share with the community; therefore engagement is the most vital component.

We provide San Mateo with updated, expedient, and accurate information about public safety, and in turn, the community partners with us by sharing information with neighbors, informing officers when they see suspicious activity, and participating in city programs.

**Q7: What would you like us to tell the community about PAL?**

A7: The San Mateo Police Activities League is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, founded in 1997 in collaboration with the San Mateo Police Department, and the San Mateo Parks and Recreation Department. San Mateo PAL's mission is to build relationships of trust between San Mateo police officers, San Mateo youth, and the broader community by providing a variety of supervised recreational, social and educational activities for youth and parent education sessions for their families. San Mateo PAL works hard every day to keep our kids on track, in school and away from negative and troubling behaviors, such as drugs, gangs and poor choices.

San Mateo PAL is a membership organization open to all youth ages 5 to 18 who reside or attend school in San Mateo, Foster City, and other surrounding cities. Most San Mateo PAL activities are free. A small number of activities may require a nominal fee; however, scholarship opportunities are available to all participants. Approximately 1,400 youth and hundreds of parents participate in San Mateo PAL activities every year.



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San Mateo PAL delivers life-changing opportunities for youth by promoting character development and improving educational outcomes. We deliver program activities in a safe and trusting environment, rich with care and goodwill, for those children in our community who are at-risk, low-income, or vulnerable to outside negative influences. San Mateo PAL improves lives through positive, interactive experiences with police officers, ultimately building a safer society and steering children away from crime and delinquency.

Thousands of children in San Mateo county cannot afford expensive after-school educational enrichment, or sports activities. Decades of research show that out-of-school programs are instrumental in helping kids learn, grow, and avoid risky behaviors. According to Afterschool Alliance, as a result of participating in enriching after-school programs, 65% of youth improve their homework completion and class participation rates. Nearly 60% improve their academic performance, and half of all students improved their math and reading scores. More than 70% of students in STE(A)M programs develop newfound interest in science careers.

That is why San Mateo PAL, along with our community partners, strives to provide quality out-of-school programming to “level the playing field” in our community. We very much need general program support to keep registration fees low and/or to provide scholarships funding for those who need it.

A partial list of San Mateo PAL programs:

- Juvenile Diversion – keeping youth out of the criminal justice pipeline. Juvenile arrests in the City of San Mateo are triple those of surrounding cities.
- Outdoor activities – fishing, hiking, adventure field trips
- Health and nutrition activities—health, wellness, and cooking classes
- Cultural experiences
- Sports activities—Jr. Giants, soccer, dance classes
- Mentorship, Jr. Police Academy, Youth Leadership Council
- Education activities—STE(a)M activities and classes, Mad Science, Arts and Crafts
- GREAT-- Gang Resistance Education and Training Program. GREAT is one of several focuses of San Mateo PAL and fulfill our mission of bonding kids with cops, promoting law enforcement, and giving kids the tools to resist gangs, bullying and other troubled behaviors. It also teaches kids the importance of giving back to the community.



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**Q8: Homeless - we will probably do an episode on the Vendome - does our City have an issue with people who do not have a place to live?**

A8: The San Mateo Police Department Downtown Unit has a team dedicated to helping people experiencing homelessness called the Homeless Outreach Team. A significant part of the Downtown Unit's duties involves homeless and mental health outreach.

We build and maintain a strong working relationship with homeless outreach and mental health professionals to help guide people experiencing homelessness off the street and into housing. These partnerships allow San Mateo Police to:

- Have immediate access to temporary and/or emergency shelter for the needy.
- Connect people experiencing homelessness with resources they need to receive financial assistance, medical treatment, mental health treatment, and long-term/permanent housing.
- Improve quality life for people experiencing homelessness, the mentally ill, and the community as a whole by helping the homeless get sheltered, which also alleviates many associated public complaints/concerns.

SMPD's Downtown Unit works closely with LifeMoves, an organization dedicated to helping the people experiencing homelessness. SMPD has a dedicated LifeMoves worker who works in our city, responding to homeless calls and does case management homeless clients to ensure no person "falls through the cracks."

Some of the other agencies SMPD collaborates with to help with homeless-related issues are:

- Samaritan House
- St Vincent De Paul
- First Chance
- Youth Drop In Centers
- Maple St and Safeharbor Homeless Shelters

Additional teams SMPD's Downtown Unit partners with includes:

- HOT / Field Crisis Monthly Meeting -Homeless Outreach Team, local field crisis.
  - Attended by Life Moves, County Mental Health, and other partners with the goal of helping local homeless and mental health clients, who have been referred to the team.



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- CIT - County Field Crisis Monthly Meeting
  - County-wide monthly meeting with representatives from police, mental health, DA, public defender, and private organizations that help with clients with severe mental health problems that have risen above the local level.
- AOT (Advanced Outpatient Treatment through County Mental Health)
  - Team created under County Mental Health/Caminar designed to help with clients with mental health issues who are resistant to getting help.
- FAST Team/Mobile Support Team (mental health outreach)
  - Team (part of CIT) that does outreach to engage clients suffering from mental health issues.
- IMAT
  - Medical Alcohol Treatment team of workers who engage with clients asking for help with alcohol and certain drug addictions.
- Health Right 360
  - Mental health and alcohol/drug outpatient treatment.
- P90
  - 90 day alcohol/drug treatment program.

SMPD's Homeless Outreach Team has many success stories. Several of the residents at the Vendome were formerly homeless and referred there by SMPD's Downtown Unit. One female resident there was such a chronic homeless presence in the downtown community that everyone knew her. She sat in the same spot every day, where the surrounding shrubs actually grew around her, and this void could be seen for years after she was housed. She has been successfully housed and living safely at the Vendome for many years.

**Q9: Any messages specific to traffic or other issues in downtown? We all end up there at some time in the year...**

A9: According to NHTSA, in 2018, 6,283 pedestrians were killed nationally; up 3% from the previous year. Downtown has the highest concentration of pedestrians therefore motorists and bicyclist need to be extra vigilant and remain alert. Slow down and obey the law. Stay off your phone. Distracted driving has become the leading cause of collisions. Also, if you drive for a ride share company, do not block the roadway and park in a safe location for pick up/drop off.

— end of Episode Q&A —