

COMMISSIONER'S CORRESPONDENCE – Celebrating two decades of Metro Air Support, and taking advantage of community engagement opportunities:

While seeing police officers in marked patrol vehicles, on foot and on motorcycles, bicycles or even horseback might be most common, police officers also help protect and serve the City of St. Louis from the skies.

This summer, we are celebrating 20 years since the formation of the Metro Air Support Unit, which includes five police helicopters serving the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County and St. Charles County. This multijurisdictional unit includes personnel from each of the three departments, including four SLMPD officers and one sergeant.

In addition to responding to calls for service, flight crews conduct regular patrols – barring extreme weather – and also support homeland security efforts by patrolling potential targets like bridges, power plants and large venues.

Patrols can take place during the day or overnight, as crews are equipped with night-vision goggles and infrared cameras. Each of the five helicopters also includes real-time augmented reality mapping and special software that overlays street names and addresses into their live camera feeds, which allows them to provide precise locations to officers on the ground.

Last year, the Metro Air Support Unit completed nearly 1,000 flights totaling over 1,800 flight hours, and the crews helped recover over \$3 million in property – including firearms and stolen vehicles.

We are proud of this unit, and this long-standing partnership with our neighboring police agencies!

I also wanted to take this opportunity to recognize our police officers, and their efforts to take advantage of opportunities to engage with the community.

I recently joined our officers at the Youth Bike Giveaway, which is a phenomenal partnership including White Castle, Walmart and the African American Business and Contractors Association. Despite the high temperatures, we all enjoyed the chance to enjoy some time with young people and their families.

A number of our North Patrol officers also participated in a recent back-to-school event in the O'Fallon neighborhood, at Memorial Ministry Baptist Church – another great chance to build on our relationships with the community!