

National Night Out is about hope

Written by By Bernie Dotson
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National Night Out is, on the periphery, a light-hearted event.

On Aug. 2, Gallupians gathered at the parking lot of Rio West Mall, chatted, ate free food, and explored things like the latest in fire and police equipment.

Grinning politicians made adorable speeches in an effort to boost neighborhood cohesiveness and their own approval ratings.

The city got the word out about the event and a lot of folks from around Gallup were in attendance this year. It's almost as though cities and towns nationwide compete to see who can stage the most elaborate event.

National Night Out is about bringing police and members of the community together, Mayor Jackie McKinney and Police Chief Phillip Hart suggested.

In short, National Night Out is an evening of good fun. But while politicians shake hands and give good speeches, and kids eat hot dogs, the specter of recent violence around Gallup may underscore the communal festivities.

An Iyanbito man was shot and killed recently in a Gallup housing project, and a full report on the matter has yet to be disclosed.

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In opening remarks on Aug. 2, McKinney stressed that National Night Out is something that fosters community and police relations.

“There’s a lot of [negative] stuff happening around the country and the world,” McKinney noted.

The police need the community’s help in fighting crime, and McKinney, Hart, and the members of the Gallup City Council see National Night Out as a way for police and city officials to show their gratitude for civilian cooperation. And they are right in believing this.

At the same time, there are some within law enforcement who are frustrated at residents’ complacency about crime in their neighborhoods. This mentality is not uncommon; if not anything else, National Night Out will reinforce the notion that communities must get involved when it comes to fighting crime.

In celebrating National Night Out, people are encouraged to turn on their porch lights and meet their neighbors.

It is our hope that police-community relations everywhere grow better and stay that way.

By Bernie Dotson