

MEET CHIEF GUZMAN



In 2003, I was a 23-year-old kid from New York City who had moved to Jacksonville in 1997. Before being hired by the city police department I had barely heard of Green Cove Springs; that didn't matter to me though. When officers from the police department came to my academy class in an attempt to recruit new members I applied. All that mattered to me was that I wanted to fulfill my life-long dream of being a police officer. I would have paid them to let me do the job if I could have.

Back in the early 2000s, Green Cove Springs was a different place than it is today. The City's population was hovering around 7,000, growth was not in the foreseeable future, and the open-air selling of crack cocaine was common in certain areas. The police department did not pay much, so keeping talent for longer than a couple of years did not happen often but the people who did stay were dedicated.

Today, Green Cove Springs is a much different place. The City is seeing fast-paced growth and most of the people selling crack cocaine on our streets were sent to state or federal prison. The City pays its officers a competitive wage, so retaining qualified people is much easier. Our department is no longer a training ground for new officers, it's an agency that other officers want to come work at.

These results did not occur in a vacuum; they are a result of committed police officers who worked hard to clean up the streets and city officials who had high aspirations for the community.

One of the officers who worked hard to rid our streets of bad actors was someone I worked alongside from the very beginning and someone who would go on to become chief of police, Derek Asdot. Chief Asdot and I enjoyed spending long nights chasing down the drug dealers and when he ascended to the position of chief, he promoted me to his first lieutenant. I would later be named

one of his two commanders and Acting-Chief of Police in his absence.

I have always been proud to be a member of the Green Cove Springs Police Department, and I was never prouder to be a member while serving under the great leadership of Chief Asdot. Under his tenure, we built strong relationships with the stakeholders in our community and became famous for our community partnerships and events.

When Chief Asdot passed away late last year, I had the immense pleasure of succeeding him in the top position at the police department. This was only made possible with the overwhelming support of our police officers, civilian staff, and citizens.

Although I know we had a great organization under Chief Asdot, I subscribe to the "Divine Discontent" mindset, in which I believe we can also improve and be better.

When I became Chief of Police in late December, I laid out a vision for the Department. That vision was to be a premier law enforcement agency, always improving for a growing community. My stated mission was for the Green Cove Springs Police Department to be dedicated to partnering with our community in order to improve the quality of life of our citizens and visitors. I introduced the mindset that our relationship with our community was transactional. Our citizens are our customers (via taxes paid) and the police department provides a product to our customers (law enforcement-related services). I conveyed to our members that it is not enough to simply provide the services; we are obligated to provide excellent customer service during our delivery. To accomplish this, our members are expected to know and practice the 3 Tenets of Customer Service. These tenets are as follows:

- *Your problem is important to us*
- *We will find a way to help you*
- *We will exceed your service expectations*

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I stressed to our members that this vision, mission, and mindset had to be more than just words on a paper, they had to become the culture of our agency. Creating a new culture in any organization is not easy, but it can be accomplished. We have a highly motivated work staff of sworn and non-sworn members. These men and women are educated, well-trained, and happy to be working here. We really do have a great organization and I'm not just saying that because I'm the Chief of Police. I receive laurels on our members almost daily from our citizens and even other law enforcement agencies in the area.

Although it is good to know our department is in a good position, it does not mean we will become complacent. I want you to know that we will always be looking for what is over the horizon. Our department will work to enhance our training, utilize fast-moving technology to our advantage, and be prepared for emerging crime trends. We will continue to be positive members of our community, professional, and respectful.

Finally, I want you all to know that as your Chief of Police, I maintain an open-door policy in which you, as a citizen, can always call, email, or even visit with me. Addressing your concerns is not a part of my job, it is the reason for it.

Chief E.J. Guzman #673
Green Cove Springs Police Department
Chief of Police



INTRODUCING



This is a web and mobile based community-wide security system that provides real-time two-way communication during emergency and non-emergency situations. It's online in Green Cove Springs and all of Clay County, and you can get the app for your phone for free.

Users can report crime as it's happening by sending in live information: photos, text, audio files, and even video. Your location and emergency details are instantly sent to 911 and First Responders. This helps emergency personnel understand and arrive at the incident faster and more prepared

"This app puts real-time information from their local law enforcement agencies directly in residents' hands. The information can be as simple as a traffic delay or as serious as an active crime. This app also empowers our citizens to become instant reporters, sending information and media directly to us" Green Cove Springs Chief of Police E.J. Guzman said.

Setting up the app, users are able to select alerts for Emergencies, i.e., active shooter, Police Activity, and/or Road Closures. Then, you can select 'Public Locations' to which you can send reports to receive alerts from. This is a comprehensive list, and includes all area schools, police departments, hospitals, public buildings, and expands out to include similar locations throughout the Jacksonville area.

I found the app to be slick and intuitive. From my main screen, selecting 'Tipster' or 'Non-Emergency', it's one click to report 'Crime Against Person', 'Crime in School', 'Drugs in the Community', or 'Other'. On each of those, you can either upload a media file (a pre-recorded video, for example), or 'Take Photo/Video' or 'Audio' from the scene. Or, one click to report 'Property Crimes', a 'School Threat', 'Suspicious Activity', 'Traffic Complaints', or 'Wanted Persons'.

Hopefully, you won't have to report any of these. On a daily basis, I found the traffic alerts to be the handiest feature. One day recently, before I left the house, I learned that part of my route was closed due to fog; another day, a traffic accident was looming as a wrinkle in my plans. Nice app. It's free, and is available for Android and Apple phones.

- Editor

