



OPERATION HALLOWEEN

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On a wet and chilly Halloween night in downtown Albany, I found myself in a bullet proof vest and riding in the back of a parole vehicle, with two local Parole Officers, to conduct home visits for registered sex offenders under their supervision. Two Albany SVU detectives followed behind. We did not blend in. My name is Taylor and I have been in the DOCCS Public Information Office for a couple of months and felt observing this annual initiative was vital to my understanding of our Department.

This is the 8th year that Operation Halloween has taken place, but understand home visits on Halloween would still take place even without the official title. As the streets were beginning to fill up with children dressed in costumes ranging from superheroes to zombies, we were starting our patrol.

During our first two stops both parolees were home, compliant and understanding of the restrictions. A Parole Officer noted, in the seven years he has worked for DOCCS, he has only had one sex offender return for a new sex crime.

Some of the residences we stopped at had signs on their door making it clear that there is no candy and Halloween is not celebrated there. Curious as to how the parolees felt about the restrictions and the home visits, one responded by explaining that it was unfair and embarrassing. He conceded that he understood why we do it and that the restrictions are the consequences for his actions.

Halfway through the evening, after visiting a parolee who has a wife and a young son, I saw some emotion from both the parolee and the law enforcement in the room. The parolee was upset and stressed that he could not go trick or treating with his own son. One Parole Officer responded by pointing out that since he had been on the job he hasn't been trick or treating with his own son. This evening the Parole Officers will be working till midnight or later. Law enforcement, Correction Officers and Parole Officers make sacrifices every day to be out on the streets and in our facilities protecting the community. Parole Officers are doing more than protecting us, they are establishing relationships with their assigned parolees, they are checking in because they want to see them succeed and stay out of prison. Parole Officers wear many hats and are extremely dedicated.

This was evident at our last visit of the night. Unfortunately, the last parolee was taken into custody on a drug violation. The minute the Parole Officer opened the door, you could see his look of disappointment and frustration. It was clear that he was saddened because, not only did the parolee fail at complying with his conditions, but he also had to send the individual to county jail where he would await a violation hearing.

At the end of the night I had a deeper appreciation for all law enforcement agencies and the work they do each and every day. The sacrifices they make to protect our communities. Their commitment impacts all of us.