



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Morristown Safe Place program officially implemented

Mayor, Chief of Police, MPD and more gather to celebrate the program's launch

MORRISTOWN -- On Thursday, April 20, Mayor Tim Dougherty, Chief Peter Demnitz and members of the Morristown Bureau of Police were joined by the Morris County Sheriff's office, Prosecutor's office and other supporters to commemorate the launch of the new Morristown Safe Place program. The program follows a similar model developed by the Seattle Police Department, which aims to reduce hate crimes involving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) individuals by fostering an active collaboration between local businesses, schools, social organizations and local police.

Officer Jim Ritter of the Seattle Police Department, who played a significant role in the development of the initiative in Seattle, was also in attendance at the launch in Morristown. The first official Morristown Safe Place decal was placed on the door of Starbucks located on Park Place. Starbucks was one of the first corporations to support the Safe Place program nationally when it was first implemented in Seattle.

Mayor Tim Dougherty said he was proud that Morristown is the first town in New Jersey to implement this program and he hopes that other cities will follow. "This program is designed to work with LGBTQ community residents and visitors in times of need," he stated. "It is important we understand that everyone must be feel welcome and safe when in Morristown and I hope this program will make us stand out." Chief Peter Demnitz later added, "This program will make it easier for members of the community to approach the police and feel comfortable doing so". The importance of communication between law enforcement and members of the LGBTQ community was one of the main reasons of why this original program was originally started.

The Morristown Bureau of Police will assist in educating employees on victim assistance and the program's details. By actively engaging the community in combating hate crimes, Mayor Tim Dougherty and the Bureau of Police hope to promote an inclusive and open environment for all residents to feel comfortable and safe.

Officer Ritter was thrilled that the program was being extended into New Jersey, stating, "We want to create a clear message that hate crimes will not be tolerated." When describing the program, he added, "The rainbow shield decal was created to provide a symbol that this is a safe

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place. It's more than a decal to businesses who choose to display it, it's a commitment."

Employees of participating businesses will be trained to recognize and accommodate individuals in distress and need of help by providing a safe location in the place of business while 911 is called for an immediate police response. While Starbucks is the first Morristown business to launch the program, additional businesses have already expressed an interest in participating.

For more information about 'MPD Safe Place' program, please contact Sgt. Brian LaBarre at 973-292-6692.