

## MC27 BUDGET TESTIMOMIAL

April 2, 2026

Karen Parker

X52

I appreciate being able to share my experience as an M-NCPP volunteer and about the volunteer program overall.

My journey began in 2012 when I met two M-NCPP mounted volunteers at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair. They told me about their work with the mounted volunteer group and encouraged me to join, believing I'd be a great fit. As someone who enjoys trail riding and appreciates both nature and serving the community, it seemed ideal.

After completing the M-NCPP volunteer academy in 2013, I started patrolling Montgomery County parks on horseback. While out on the trails, I keep an eye out for downed trees, trash, safety hazards, and rule violations. Interacting with park visitors has been very rewarding, and many have expressed their gratitude for our presence.

With time, I realized there's much more to do beyond mounted patrols. Participating in non-mounted events has been fulfilling and helps ease the workload of officers who serve every day.

Events like the Keith Joseph Tournament, Annual Turkey Bowl, Colors & Kites, National Night Out, Brookside Gardens events and numerous

other activities provide excellent opportunities to connect with county residents, answer questions, and help people feel safe within their parks. Smaller gatherings, such as Community Days and local park events, are equally important and foster a true sense of belonging.

The volunteer program has felt like a family to me, and my experience became even better when my husband joined in 2015. Serving together as a team is wonderful. Our move from PG County to Montgomery County in 2018 brought us closer to the areas where we already spent much of our time. Being a member of the volunteer group was a big part of our decision to move.

Thirteen years have passed since I started volunteering. We've participated in many events and forged strong bonds with leadership and fellow members. I see numerous ways to strengthen community outreach. Offering community center classes or educational activities could be an asset to our county residents from little ones to our seniors. Supporting the volunteer program is essential; if Community Service funding decreases, the community will certainly notice its absence. Volunteers' presence at parks and during sponsored events plays a vital role.

I sincerely hope your 2027 budget decisions will take into consideration the strong impact the Community Services Section and the volunteer program bring to our Montgomery Park system and its many community events. Thank you.