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MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESIDENTS CAN NOW ANONYMOUSLY TEXT CRIME TIPS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Aug. 6, 2018) — Montgomery County today became the first county in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to launch an anonymous crime tips app for residents, called "MontcoCrimeTips." The crime tips app is a joint venture undertaken by the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety and the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office in an effort to make every citizen a partner in crime fighting.

 "In Montgomery County, we are fortunate that residents take the safety of their community seriously and realize that they are part of that effort, coming forward as witnesses to crimes and standing up for victims," said District Attorney Kevin R. Steele. "People's cell phones are never far from their fingertips, and this app makes cell phones a powerful tool in fighting crime by

allowing residents to anonymously share what they know and see, especially about drug dealing and homicides right in their own neighborhood or whenever they go about their business."

The free app, called STOPit, is simple to use on any cell phone. Press the "Report" button, type the crime information, add a photo or video (if desired) and hit the "Send" button. All texted tips—whether texts about breaking crime or non-urgent information about criminal activity—will be received by the county's 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center, run by the Department of Public Safety. Texted tips that require an immediate response by law enforcement or firefighters will be dispatched. Non-urgent crime tip texts will be sent to the Montgomery County on-call detective, who will vet them and distribute to detectives or the appropriate police department for follow-up and investigation.

Dr. Val Arkoosh, Chair, Montgomery County Commissioners, also praised the effort. "This innovative app is a 21st century version of the old-fashioned tip line that provides a safe way for victims, bystanders and concerned citizens to help combat the crimes and hazards in their community," said Arkoosh. "Every Montgomery County residents now holds the ability to help create a safer neighborhood in the palm of their hand. This app is another example of how Montgomery County is using technology to help make the county a great place to live, work and visit."

To become partners in crime fighting, residents need to download the free STOPit app from the App Store or Google Play, then input access code MONTCOPA in order to get the correct version of STOPit. Once the app is on the phone, residents are ready to anonymously share whatever they see, hear and know about criminal activity.

Montgomery County is just the second jurisdiction in the country to employ the STOPit app for law enforcement, although it's been in active use by schools, businesses and governments for different types of anonymous reporting for some time. The first was Somerset, N.J. Since the launch of its crime reporting app, called SomersetStrong, in October 2017, more than 1,000 residents have downloaded the STOPit app. More than 200 crime tip texts and messages have been received by their county dispatch in the nine-months, with the downloads and text tips increasing each month as awareness of the program continues to grow with the public. The tips have led to 41 arrests and convictions.

"This app and MontcoCrimeTips program has the potential to be a game-changer," said Steele. "Montgomery County is filled with a lot of good people who want to do the right thing and be good citizens. This STOPit app makes doing the right thing easy to do."