

For Immediate Release



Media Contact:

Jonathan Jaffe

908-789-0700

press@njsacop.org

New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police Announces Goal Zero Mid-Summer Saturation Enforcement Initiative on August 15, Remembering Patti Smith Barrett

High-Visibility Traffic Enforcement Operations Focused on Pedestrian Safety Will Happen this Saturday

TRENTON – August 12, 2026 – The New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police (NJSACOP) today announced a Goal Zero mid-summer saturation enforcement initiative scheduled for Saturday, August 15, 2026, dedicated to the memory of Chatham resident Patti Smith Barrett.

The all-day and evening initiative will bring together law enforcement agencies for coordinated high-visibility traffic enforcement focused on pedestrian safety during peak summer weekend community activity. Saturdays are statistically among the deadliest days for pedestrian crashes, and this deployment targets high-volume summer traffic while highlighting the dangers of distracted, inattentive, aggressive, and unsafe driving—including excessive window tinting.

On January 2, 2026, shortly after noon, 54-year-old Chatham resident Patti Smith Barrett was walking along Fairmount Avenue in Chatham Borough—an area without sidewalks—when she was struck by a Ford F-150. She sustained critical injuries and died five days later, on January 7, 2026, at Morristown Medical Center.

The driver, Matthew Vining of Chatham Township, later pleaded guilty to third-degree vehicular homicide and failure to maintain a lane. He was sentenced to 364 days in county jail, three years of probation, 80 hours of community service, and a six-month driver's license suspension. Window tinting on the windshield and both the front and rear passenger-side windows was identified as a contributing factor.

Patti was a married mother of four, a former broadcast journalist, and an active community volunteer deeply devoted to her family and the Chatham community. Following her death, she donated organs that provided life-saving assistance to two people.

“Patti Smith Barrett’s death is a tragic reminder of why Goal Zero matters. When a preventable crash takes a mother, a neighbor, and a valued member of the community, the loss is felt far beyond one town. This mid-summer saturation detail honors her memory by putting officers on the road to protect

pedestrians and hold drivers accountable for unsafe behavior,” said Collingswood Police Chief Kevin J. Carey, NJSACOP president.

“Goal: Zero is ultimately about preventing another family and another community from experiencing a loss like this. Patti’s death affected all of Chatham. By dedicating this detail to her memory, we hope motorists will understand that distracted, inattentive, aggressive, and unsafe driving are not abstract traffic violations—they can have irreversible consequences.”said Chatham Borough Police Chief Brian K. Gibbons.

The initiative is part of the broader Goal Zero movement, which seeks to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries through coordinated enforcement and education. Agencies participating in the August 15 detail will conduct high-visibility enforcement operations throughout the day and evening, with officers focusing on violations that endanger pedestrians and other roadway users.

NJSACOP urges all motorists to remain alert, avoid distractions, reduce speed, yield to pedestrians, and ensure their vehicles comply with New Jersey’s window-tint regulations. Drivers who fail to do so put pedestrians, families, and entire communities at unnecessary risk.

“On August 15, law enforcement will be visible and focused on the behaviors that put lives at risk. Goal Zero is not just a slogan—it is a commitment to making sure no other family suffers a loss like the one the Barrett family and the Chatham community have endured,” Chief Carey said.

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