

COVER STORY

THESE NUMBERS DON'T LIE

This city needs a list just to keep track of all the lists it's on that say what a wonderful place this is to live

BY ROBIN BRINKLEY

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

We're No. 1...and 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 20, 24 and 26.

If there is a list extolling the virtues of suburban living, Virginia Beach is probably on it.

In the past five years, we've received the following national accolades:

- Best Place to Live by "USA Weekend," a magazine insert in 600 newspapers
- No. 1 City for Women by Ladies' Home Journal
- Most Livable Large City for Women by the National Policy Research Council
- Most Technically Advanced City of 250,000 or more by Digital Cities
- Safest City of 300,000 or more, according to data from the FBI and U.S. Census Bureau

■ Most Stroller Friendly City by Fit Pregnancy magazine

■ Best Overall Sister Cities Program for cities between 300,000 and 500,000 by Sister Cities International

■ Most Integrated City with 41.1 percent living on black-white integrated blocks by The Memphis Business Journal

So pat yourself on the back, but don't sit around waiting for a bonus check. Living in Virginia Beach is its own reward. Just ask Patricia Gonzalez.

Gonzalez, 29, hails from New Jersey and has lived at the Beach for seven years.

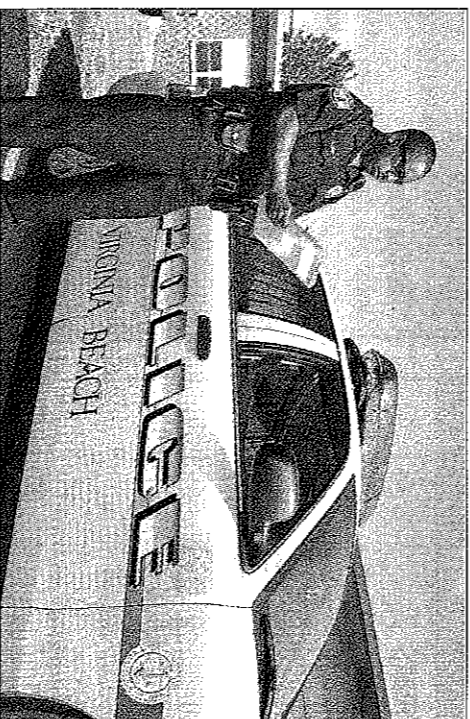
"When I go home, people ask me how I like living here," she said. "I tell them I love it."

We caught up with Gonzalez as she pushed a stroller carrying her two children, Gabby and Patrick, along the fifth-best Boardwalk



CHARLIE MEADS PHOTOS / THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

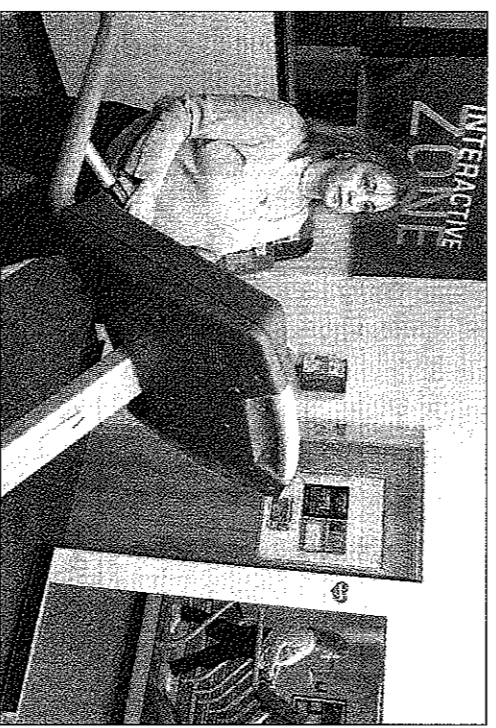
Women at the Indian River YMCA signal they agree that Virginia Beach is the Most Livable Large City for Women, according to the National Policy Research Council.



Virginia Beach Police Officer Corey D. Burton keeps things safe at Kemps Landing Magnet School. The FBI and U.S. Census Bureau found the city is the safest in the 300,000 citizen or more category.

in the nation, according to www.TravelChannel.com.

A fine patina of sweat coated her face. This was no ordinary seaside stroll, you see. Gonzalez turned it into a car-



Debra Potts has been working out at the Indian River YMCA for six years. According to Men's Fitness magazine, Virginia Beach is the third fittest city in the nation.

dio workout befitting a young mother in the third-fittest city in the nation, according to Men's Fitness magazine.

Gonzalez knew about the Boardwalk's lofty reputation,

times fewer than comparably sized Sacramento, according to Men's Fitness magazine.

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