

Thank you very much *

It's not too often you get to hear a sworn officer sing.

But Sheriff Ron Bateman, known for sometimes goofy antics, took his show on the road Wednesday, appearing as an Elvis impersonator at a karaoke session at the South County Senior Center.

Joseph Cifala, the county Police Community Relations Council chairman, also got in on the act, impersonating the late, great Frank Sinatra.

Bateman said yesterday that he and Cifala have sung together before, and when Cifala asked him about it, he said he'd love to.

"I told all the seniors, I put down my handcuffs and used the microphones for the day," Bateman said.

The sheriff treated the seniors to "Suspicious Minds" by Elvis, "The Dance," by Garth Brooks, and The Blues Brothers' version of "Soul Man."

Cifala is the real singer, Bateman said of his crooner friend.

"But who had more fun? I think I might have to win that one," he said.

They were a hit with the seniors, and the pair plans to take the show on the road and visit the six other senior centers.

First, Tom Angelis of Davidsonville, a former candidate for county executive, said he has met gang members as a teacher in Baltimore City, where he has a Blood and a Crip in the same class.

"That's a challenge," he said. "It's a challenge because I know anything could happen at any moment. Fortunately, I've only had one fight between the two and it didn't involve any weapons."

(Having gang members in class is a "challenge"? We can forgive Angelis the understatement; in politics, "challenge" is the all-purpose euphemism for everything from a tight budget year to gang warfare. It is to politicians what "aloha" is to Hawaiians.)

Not to be outdone, Michael McNelly of Dunkirk, a retired county police officer and former school board member, told the council: "I was a 14-year-old gang member."

McNelly said he ran with a rough crowd as a teen and said he might be in prison if not for the intervention of police officers and other adults who cared.

Gripping stuff, but County Council members were evidently unimpressed.

Neither Angelis nor McNelly garnered a single vote as school board member Tricia Johnson won the appointment.

Oh, well. We hear the county Police Department is still hiring.