

# St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department



# Update

Phase 1, #4

Spring 2000

[www.stcharlessheriff.org](http://www.stcharlessheriff.org)

A BIENNIAL PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO REPORTING THE NEWEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ST. CHARLES SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

## Postal Patron

This is a free publication mailed to St. Charles Parish residents, law enforcement professionals, community organization representatives, civic leaders and government officials. If you are not on the mailing list and would like to receive future issues, please direct your request to the Special Services Division at (504) 783-1355 or fax us at (504) 783-1195.

## 1999 was a good year for the SCPSD



SHERIFF GREG  
CHAMPAGNE

Welcome to the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department's fourth issue of *Update*. In it we strive to keep local residents aware of the many advancements within the department. At the same time, we want to bridge the distance between the community and law enforcement providers, facilitating the exchange of information and giving a voice to all involved in the community policing process.

This issue explores advances we've made over the last three years in four major areas — policing strategies, initiatives, trends, and community partnerships — aimed at keeping St. Charles Parish residents safe and maintaining our quality of life.

1.

1999 was a startling year of transition for the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department. We have embarked on a course that will forever change how we will function in the future.

A new jail, new radio system, and a new data systems network are prodigious projects in their own right. It was suggested that we only tackle one of these projects at a time, because to attempt all three was not possible for a law enforcement agency our size. But, with the support of local officials, dedicated staff and our community, we were able to rise to the task.

Last year, parish and state officials joined us in breaking ground for the new 590-bed jail. Construction at the Killona site is under way and the state-of-the-art prison is expected to open in mid-2001.

A creative partnership with the state's Department of Corrections will allow us to operate the \$15.1 million facility without increasing taxes locally. This deal fulfills a vow I made four years ago to address once and for all the prison crowding problem.

Likewise, the implementation of a new 800 radio system marks a major milestone for St. Charles Parish. This cooperative effort will make it possible for deputies, volunteer fire stations, hospital workers, schools, and the local government to communicate during disasters. The system is days away from being fully operational.

As the nation feared the worst, the Sheriff's Department proactively used the period leading up to Y2K to update our communications systems. Our agency has embraced the use of technology, implementing computer-based reporting, crime mapping, and providing laptop computers to field officers.

Additionally, we will soon connect our computer system to that of the District Attorney, Clerk of Court, and Courts, thus making criminal records readily available to all law enforcement entities.

I can assure you that we are well on the road to completing all of these projects suc-



cessfully. With continued hard work, dedication and patience, the department will continue to set the standards for others to follow.

I'm also proud to report this department continues to make an impact in keeping our parish safe.

The influx of people into St. Charles continues, yet the parish's overall crime rate fell for the third consecutive year. This is a testament to the hard work and long hours spent fighting crime on our streets. We recognize the combination of specialized "task forces" and stepped up neighborhood patrols has effectively deterred crime. We plan to continue these efforts in the future.

Likewise, we know the value of reaching today's young people with an anti-crime/violence message. With programs such as DARE, Safe Schools and the upcoming Sheriff's Summer Camp, we're challenging our youths to become tomorrow's leaders today. In exchange, we promise to strive to provide a safe community they can call home.

Deputies continue to chip away at the local drug trade. We've shut down local drug operations in record numbers with

ongoing stings and early-morning raids.

The department also made headlines in the aftermath of Operation Heartbreak, a sting resulting in the arrest of 38 alleged cocaine dealers. All 38 were charged with the state's racketeering statute, which can mean stiffer jail penalties.

Our aim is simple: to stop drug trafficking in St. Charles Parish. With the support of the Drug Enforcement Administration and area law enforcement agencies, we've made a big dent in the local drug business.

Within the department, we continue to make great strides in enhancing employee benefits. Attracting and retaining the best people to make the Sheriff's Department more efficient and professional remains a top priority.

Simultaneously, deputies underwent extensive training ranging from conducting DWI stops to answering domestic violence calls during 1999. Our force has earned an excellent reputation statewide for providing our officers with vital, in-depth training, a trend we intend to continue annually.

Finally, as a symbol of this new century and the promise it brings, I have commissioned a new badge/pin to be struck for the year 2000. This millennium badge/pin (pictured above) will be worn only for one year before being retired.

On a personal note, the confidence the people of St. Charles Parish have demonstrated in the parish's Sheriff's Department has led to my successful re-election without opposition. This is the first time in over 65 years that this has happened.

While I am pleased that the citizens feel I am doing a good job as sheriff, I know this mandate reflects the public's recognition of the job that the entire Sheriff's Department has done. Every day, deputies solidly, competently perform the job — on the front line and behind the scenes — of serving and protecting the people of St. Charles Parish. I want to thank each of you for your confidence in the staff and in me.

*Greg Champagne*



# Departmental Strategies

## Crime rate dropped slightly in 1999

Overall crime in St. Charles Parish continued to drop slightly in 1999 compared to the two previous years. Crimes in seven major areas – murder, rape, assault, robbery, burglary, theft and auto theft – are tracked by the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), the parish had 2,777 crimes in 1997. In 1998, the figure dropped by 24 crimes. Last year, this number fell by an additional 16 crimes.

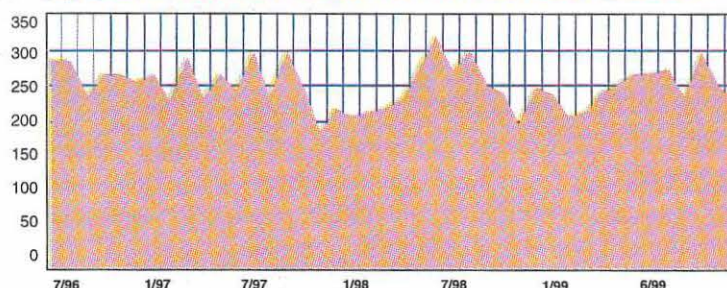
"It's a small drop, but we'll take that any day," Sheriff Greg Champagne said. "Considering the continuing growth in population and influx of traffic from outlying parishes into our community, we've done a good job of maintaining a steady drop in total crimes. Once construction on our new prison is complete, we anticipate a dramatic drop in the total crimes locally."

Traditionally, crimes involving property are the most common in St. Charles Parish. "There's a slim chance you'll be a victim of a violent crime here. What I worry about is property crime," he said. "We ask residents not to leave temptations – especially personal belongings in unlocked cars – hanging about."

In recent months, the Sheriff's Department has stepped up neighborhood patrols and assigned special task forces throughout the parish.

"We identify pockets where the numbers are higher, and increase law enforcement visibility. The slight drop in crimes tells us this process is working," Sheriff Champagne said.

### 3 1/2-YEAR COMPARISON SHOWS ST. CHARLES PARISH'S OVERALL UCR NUMBERS HOVER BETWEEN 250-300.



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, May 1996 – December 1999

### BREAKOUT OF 7 FBI UCR CRIMES BY CATEGORY

OFFENSE	1997	1998	1999
Murder	4	2	2
Rape	9	22	13
Robbery	56	40	51
Assault	813	908	1,010
Burglary	482	427	427
Theft	1,232	1,194	1,121
Auto Theft	170	160	113
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,777</b>	<b>2,753</b>	<b>2,737</b>

## Benefit perks keep SCPSD competitive

The St. Charles Sheriff's Department is keeping its competitive edge. In 1999, Sheriff Greg Champagne announced a number of enhancements to employees' benefits.

The department remains one of Louisiana's highest paying for deputies beginning their careers. Starting patrol deputies earn \$28,412.16 annually.

Among the perks, employees' sick and injury benefits were improved. Now, employees can choose to donate time to a fellow worker who is away from the job for an extended period of time.

In addition, the Sheriff's Department instituted a deferred compensation program, which offers a cash match to maximize employees' savings.

With staff input, the department also made adjustments in the salary scale for new employees, departmental guidelines regarding the handling of certain calls for services, and adjustments to make the Sheriff's Department more efficient and professional.

"It's essential that we compensate deputies fairly for putting their lives on the line," said Sheriff Greg Champagne. "As long as we are able to maintain fiscal responsibility and our long-term goals are not jeopardized, we'll continue to review our pay levels and employee benefits."

Attention has also been given to continually upgrading equipment and vehicles to keep them working efficiently.

"Four years ago, I made a promise to the people that this department would employ the best and the brightest on St. Charles' force," Champagne said. "Our employment package is among the state's most attractive for deputies."



### Michael Folse: 1999 Deputy of the Year

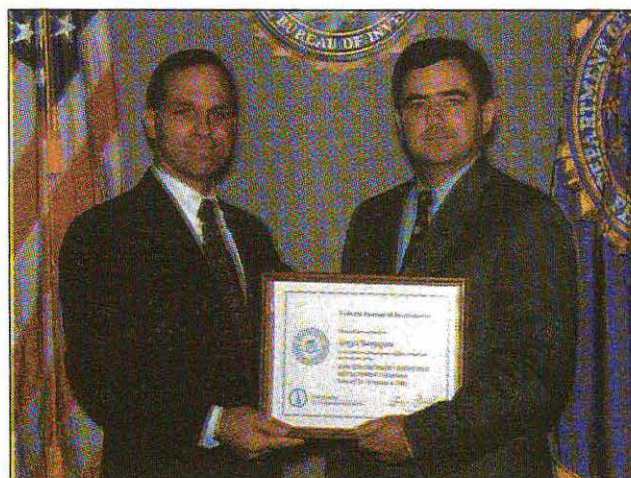
Sgt. Michael Folse, of the Patrol Division, was given the Sheriff Dept.'s highest honor, the 1999 Deputy of the Year.

On Jan. 27, 1999, Sgt. Folse pulled an elderly man from a blazing house on Megan Street in Luling. Afterward, he drove the man's dog, which also suffered from smoke inhalation, to a nearby animal clinic for treatment.

2.

## Sheriff completes FBI training

Sheriff Greg Champagne was among 35 sheriffs and chiefs from mid-sized agencies around the country to attend the FBI's Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar. Held at the Quantico (Va.) headquarters, the week-long training included sessions on management, ethics, legal issues, and leadership skills. Sheriff Champagne was presented a certificate by FBI Director Louis Freeh. "This was one of the most enjoyable, rewarding training opportunities I have ever participated in," the Sheriff said.



## Dept. honors over 100 deputies

The St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department held its annual Awards Night in April. Over 100 deputies were awarded with Letters of Commendation, Distinguished Service Awards, Awards for Valor, and the Purple Heart.

"These individuals have gone above and beyond the call of duty serving our citizens, many times risking their own lives and safety to accomplish our mission," Sheriff Greg Champagne said. "This is law enforcement's big picture,

made up of dedication, determination, and outright bravery."

Brian LeBlanc, of Covington, was given the department's Citizen Award for rescuing a St. Charles Parish resident whose lawn mower exploded, setting him aflame.

Purple Hearts were presented to the survivors of Deputies James Alan Arterbury and Nelson Coleman. Arterbury was killed in July 1973, and Coleman in November 1982.

Both Arterbury and Coleman

are listed on the Police Officer's Memorial in Washington, D.C., and are honored at the Parish Courthouse, but had never been given the department's Purple Heart.

In a turnabout, St. Charles Parish resident Diana Hail presented the Sheriff's Department with a plaque. It read: "On behalf of the citizens of St. Charles Parish, I would like to thank the entire staff for making our parish a safe and peaceable place to live."



# Departmental Technology

## Upgraded radio system will go online soon

**T**esting has begun on the parish's new 800-megahertz radio system. The simulcast communications system will be fully installed at the local 911 Communications Center by June.

With a main tower in Hahnville and a secondary tower in Bayou Gauche, the \$1.7 million system will provide blanket coverage of St. Charles Parish. Direct radio communications will be possible between the Sheriff's Department and other public entities.

The parish will retain use of the St. John the Baptist Parish system, which it currently employs, as a backup.

"For deputies, instant radio contact is vital. It's a matter of life and death," Sheriff Greg Champagne said. "This upgrade ensures the safety of our officers and ties in other users, replacing the patch-work systems we've been using."

The 800-radio system is being purchased by the Sheriff's Department (\$600,000), Parish Council (\$500,000), 911 Communications District (\$250,000), Public School Board (\$200,000), St. Charles Parish Hospital (\$40,000), and the parish's nine volunteer fire departments (\$20,000 each). Another \$167,500 from the Shell civil action is also being applied to the total cost.

Eventually, the system will be programmed to work with law enforcement agencies from the tri-parish region.

"After the Shell explosion, that was one of the biggest problems we had," said

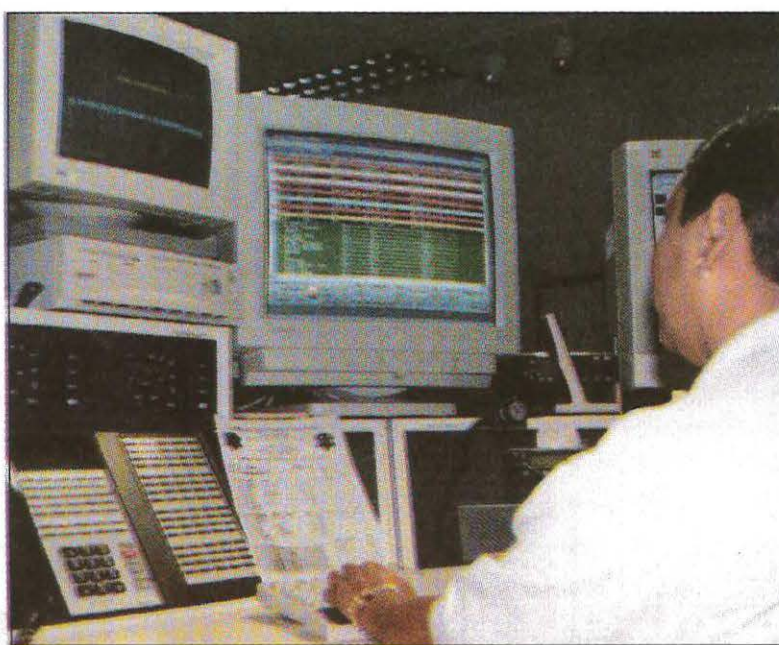
Major Sam Zinna, president of the 911

Communications District. "Deputies from all across the region showed up to help and couldn't talk to us because of the radios. The change will allow us to manage crises much more effectively than in the past because we will all be able to talk to each other."

While prepping for the installation of the 800-radio system, the 911 Communications Center also upgraded its wiring and equipment for the 2000 rollover and several other completed projects.

The upgrades will enable the 911 center to capture information on cellular phone users, in compliance with a FCC mandate. 911 operators will be able to identify the cell phone number and service provider, which will help in tracking the name and possible location of the caller. This phase is funded, in part, by an 85-cent surcharge on cell phone users' bills.

The second phase, which should be in place by 2001, will let operators know at a



glance the phone number of the subscriber and his whereabouts within about 130 feet.

The 911 Communications Center has expanded its number of telecommunications devices for the deaf in compliance with a Dept. of Justice mandate. The center now has a TTD device at every console, in addition to a backup unit. 911 operators have undergone extensive training and testing over the past several months in preparation for this upgrade.

"These upgrades brought us into the 21st Century," Zinna said. "It was costly – running about \$78,000 – but in the end, it was worth it. It would have been a lot more if we'd waited."

## Computers provide 'real time' reporting

The Information Technology Services Division has been busily upgrading the Sheriff Department's computer system.

The integrated justice management system, which replaces the stand-alone AS400, will allow the Sheriff's Department, District Attorney's Office and the Courts to get "real time" information on criminal offenders.

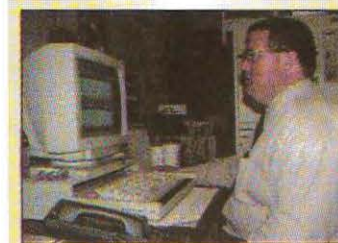
"Technologically, this is a tremendous step forward for the department," Sheriff Greg Champagne said.

"Now, Judges, the DA and deputies can access data – 911 calls, incident reports, booking information, investigator's findings, criminal charges, and Court orders – as they become available."

By streamlining information, the Sheriff said law enforcement officers readily receive more accurate data.

ITS continues to provide training to the various users. In its final phase, the software program will be expanded to allow deputies access from the field.

"The upgrades to our computer system will significantly improve the way the department, Courts and DA's Office operate," Sheriff Champagne said.



## Construction of 590-bed prison under way in Killona

**R**oy Anderson Corp., of Gulfport, Miss., has officially begun construction of the parish's 590-bed jail on LA Hwy. 3127 in Killona. Work is expected to be done by February 2001.

By housing minimum- to maximum-security state inmates, the Sheriff's Department will be able to cover prison construction costs and offset annual operating costs.

Sheriff Greg Champagne, representing the St. Charles Parish law enforcement district, accepted Anderson Corp.'s \$13.1 million construction bid in March.

Acadian Builders of Gonzales performed the first phase of the project, clearing 38 acres of sugar cane field, performing site work and installing water lines at the construction site. The work cost \$442,000.

"Everything went according to plan and within the allotted expense," said Major Sam Zinna, who was appointed to oversee the construction project. "Before we even bought the land, the property was tested for hazardous materials and DEQ signed off on the deal."

The Sheriff's Department received more good news when the security package contract for the new prison was opened in February. The winning bid submitted by

R&S Corp. of Baton Rouge came in well under budget at \$2.23 million.

Estimates for the security package were based on a similar package at Terrebonne Parish's correctional facility. "Our price was \$1 million less than what we were expecting," Major Zinna said. "Because of technological advancements, we were able to purchase a more advanced system significantly less than what we'd allocated."

"This construction project is vital to the fight against crime and the safety of our citizens," Sheriff Champagne said. "We've been at capacity for so long, it's a relief to know there is an end in sight. I'm elated the project's finally under way."

In the meantime, a three-member committee – Major Cornwell, Lt. Bobby Dale and Capt. Roland Ladreyt – continues to explore the feasibility of converting the current jail on the third floor of the Parish Courthouse in Hahnville into a juvenile detention center.

The committee is interfacing with the Parish President and Parish Council on the juvenile detention center project.



Workers at the site of the parish's new correctional facility began construction in early April.





# Departmental Partnerships

## New program keeps victims/witnesses informed

### What DOES happen after a crime?

1. When deputies arrive, a criminal report is taken. A pamphlet detailing the Victim/Witness Notification procedures will be issued.

2. Victims/witnesses register with the Sheriff's Department to be notified when the defendant posts bond and is released. Also, victims may file for reparations for injuries or damages.

3. Detectives may next be assigned to work the case. Should an arrest be made, a case file will be referred to the District Attorney.

4. Criminal charges are filed and the case is forwarded to the Court for a preliminary hearing. The Judge or a Grand Jury will determine whether enough evidence exists for the case to go to trial.

6. The defendant will next appear at a Court arraignment to plead guilty or not guilty. A sentencing or trial date and bond amount for release will be set.

7. If, at the trial, the defendant is found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, a sentencing date will be set. If the Judge or Jury acquits the defendant — finds him not guilty — the defendant is allowed to go free.

In the blink of an eye, lives can be forever changed by crime. Whether you are a victim or a witness, the investigative and Court proceedings that follow a criminal's arrest can be foreign and troubling for law-abiding citizens.

Anxieties are compounded by a common complaint shared too often by victims and witnesses alike — that they are left out of the information loop during the criminal prosecutorial phase.

Sheriff Greg Champagne instituted the Crime Victim/Witness Notification Program to ensure those on the receiving end of a crime are made aware of the progress of their case, as well as informed of the many services available to them.

Lt. Pamela Schmitt, a 17-year veteran of the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department, serves as the victim assistance officer.

"Every day, we get calls from people who were victims of crime or who witnessed a crime," Sheriff Champagne said. "They've just had their world jarred by this experience and are trying to understand what will happen next."

Enter Lt. Schmitt.

Her role, the Sheriff explained, will be as liaison between the Sheriff's Department and the victims/witnesses.

"She'll explain the criminal process, assist in obtaining reparations for victim's damages or losses, and keep them informed of the suspect's status," Sheriff Champagne said.

Victims may qualify for reimburse-



Lt. Pamela Schmitt, victim assistance officer, explains the Sheriff Department's Crime Victim/Witness Notification Program.

ment in cases involving personal injury, death or catastrophic property loss.

Lt. Schmitt will assist with preparing necessary forms and filing the case with the state's Victims Reparations Board.

Also, she will alert registered victims/witnesses when the defendant appears in court, posts bond, or is released from jail.

Deputies who file the initial criminal report will provide victims of crimes with a 16-page pamphlet, which details the Victim/Witness Notification

Program. It offers information on criminal and civil actions, protective orders, reparations, "do's and don'ts" in the wake of an attack, and important telephone numbers. Victims and witnesses will also find helpful pointers if they are called upon to testify in court.

"Our goal is to help those impacted by crime recover as quickly as possible," Sheriff Champagne said. "The Victim/Witness Notification Program is designed to help them return their lives back to normal."

## DV program targets violence in the home

Every 15 seconds, a woman is beaten in the United States. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women ages 15-44. Sadly, nearly half of all domestic violence cases go unreported. The women often blame themselves for their partners' explosions and live cloaked in shame.

Sheriff Greg Champagne has a simple message for victims: You can take steps to increase your safety and that of your children. But the first step is to decide to end the abuse.

The Domestic Violence Unit, which was implemented in 1998, continues to offer assistance to victims and the Court. The program is led by Lt. Pamela Negrotto, who is assigned to the Special Services Division.

To date, the program has received two

Violence Against Women Act grants totaling \$79,658.

With that, the department launched an extensive training program, reaching over 120 deputies last year. Plans to expand this year's domestic violence course to include stalking cases are now under way.

In addition, assistance has been given to 183 domestic violence victims in St. Charles Parish. Help can range from emergency funds for housing to reparations for medical expenses and therapy for the victim and her children.

Presentations can also be made at community events or meetings.

"Domestic violence is not a 'family matter.' It is a criminal act and is treated as such by the Sheriff's Department," Sheriff Champagne said. "If you are a

victim of abuse or know someone who is being battered, do not ignore the problem in hopes that it will get better. It won't. Over time, it will only get worse."

After reporting the crime to the Sheriff's Department, victims have the right to obtain a protection order, which instructs the abuser to stay away from the victim or the victim's children. This protection order is filed with the Clerk of Court and must be signed by a judge.

Victims can get a protection order by seeing a Victim's Assistance Coordinator at the St. Charles Parish District Attorney's Office.

For details on the Domestic Violence Unit, contact Lt. Negrotto at 783-1355. To report incidents of domestic violence, call 911 or (504) 783-6807.



4.



# TV special spotlights Safe Schools Program

**S**t. Charles Parish's Safe Schools Program is the subject of a TV special airing locally on Cox Channel 6. Considered a model approach with its "zero tolerance" policy, the programs at Destrehan High and Hahnville High schools are featured on the video.

"School Violence: Zero Tolerance in Louisiana," a 27-minute film produced by the Louisiana Sheriff Association's Educational Foundation, focuses on proactive measures being taken to prevent violence in the state's schools. The video includes interviews with Sheriff Greg Champagne, school Supt. Rodney Lafon and several resource officers, as well as footage at the two high schools.

"We're proud to be featured in this video and pleased others across the state will have the chance to see firsthand what we've been able to accomplish in St. Charles Parish," Sheriff Champagne said. "The bottom line is that the Safe Schools Program works. We've seen a decrease in violence and an increase in trust and respect for law enforcement from the students."

1999 closes the book on a turbulent period in American schools. The number of violent incidents, including school shootings, steadily increased in number and ferocity. More and more school systems are being forced to reconsider policies ensuring safety in the schools.

Sheriff Champagne was filmed outlining the parish public school system's Safe Schools Program. The program has resulted in a 69 percent reduction in vio-



The state Sheriff Association's film crew tapes "School Violence: Zero Tolerance in Louisiana." The program, which continues to air on Cox Channel 6, features St. Charles Parish's Safe Schools program.

lent incidents at the two area high schools since its inception six years ago. The Safe Schools Program seeks to create a safe haven in which students can learn and teachers can teach.

The video also features state Attorney General Richard Ieyoub and Dept. of Education Supt. Cecil Picard. The two lead the Louisiana Task Force on School Discipline and Safety, which was created to tackle the increasing violence problem.

While focusing on the school shootings in Colorado and Oregon, the film seeks positive measures to prevent vio-

lent incidents and warning signs of trouble. The video also includes information on other school system's efforts to tip officials of incidents before they escalate.

In addition to state officials, several teachers and students voice their views on the subject. Clearly, violence grossly disrupts schools and has become a grave concern to local, state and national officials and policy makers. The School System and Sheriff's Department share the belief that an environment free of violence and fear is essential to learning.

## Countdown to Summer

### Sheriff's Camp applications being accepted

The annual "First Class Sheriff's Camp" is set to begin July 16-22 at Camp Salmen in Kiln, Miss. Boys between the ages of 12 and 16 are eligible to apply for one of 50 slots.

The seven-day camp promotes trust

and interaction between the parish's youth and the Sheriff's Department. To date, 130 St. Charles youths have attended the camp over three years.

"Campers and deputies have raved about this experience," said Sheriff

Greg Champagne. "The camp provides boys the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, make new friends, and develop new skills. Along the way, they gain self-confidence and better communication skills. For many of the boys, it's the first time they've ever been camping."

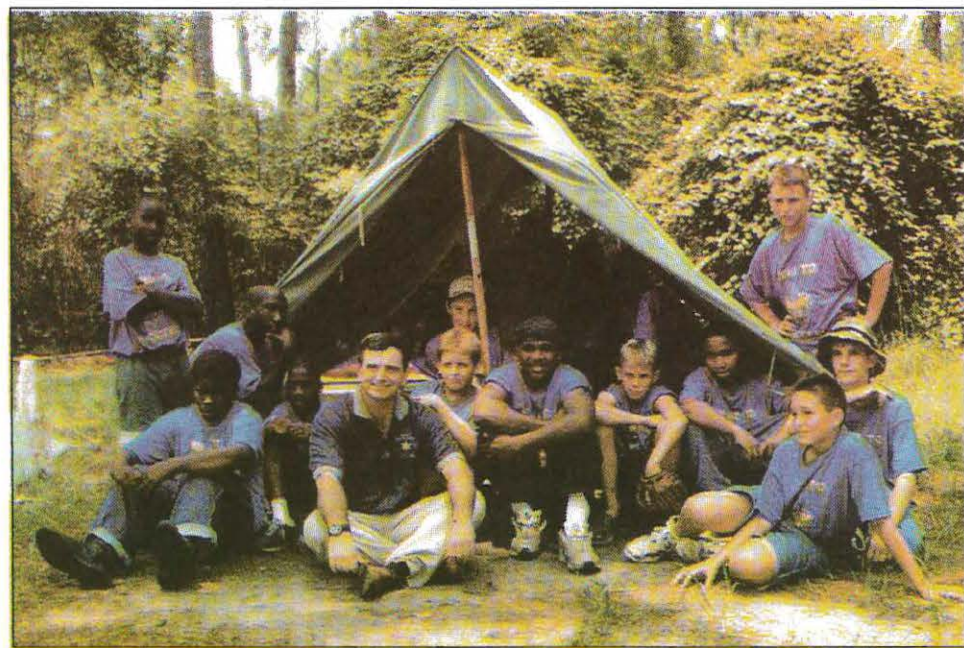
The event is made possible through a partnership between nine sheriffs from Southeast Louisiana and the New Orleans Council Boy Scouts of America.

In addition to the usual outdoor camping fare, boys will be exposed to instructional and educational skills, career education, values and ethics building, and leadership development to help combat violence and crime.

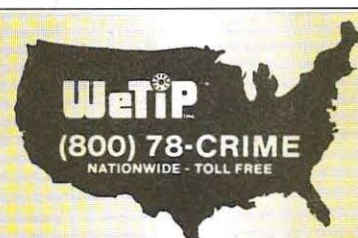
The Sheriff's Department pays the expenses for boys who attend.

Applications for the Sheriff's Camp are available at the Special Services Division, located at the Parish Courthouse in Hahnville. For more information, contact Lt. Dwayne LaGrange or Cpl. Burley McCarter at 783-1355.

Space is limited, so perspective campers are encouraged to call today.



Last year's campers pose near a tent with Sheriff Greg Champagne. This year, about 50 slots are open for boys ages 12-16 to attend the Sheriff's Camp.



### WeTip: Added tool on crime in schools

**S**t. Charles Parish has a new weapon in its arsenal against crime: a 24-hour hotline for students, parents and community members to report crime.

Officially titled "WeTip," the program provides anonymity for those who fear retaliation. WeTip operators collect information about the crime, but no one asks the caller who he is or where he is calling from. Information that leads to the successful capture and prosecution of an offender can reap the caller - identified by a case number - cash rewards.

A cooperative effort between the St. Charles School System and the Sheriff's Department, the hotline is available to those wishing to report a wide range of crimes including weapons on campus; school arson; child molestation; drug sales or trafficking; gang violence; graffiti; violent crimes; vandalism; and vehicle theft.

Sheriff Greg Champagne and School Superintendent Rodney Lafon are featured in a video detailing the WeTip program, which is currently airing on the school's local cable access channel, Cox Channel 8. Also, posters bearing the hotline number - (800) 78-CRIME - are posted at several local businesses and in the parish's public schools.

WeTip is a national non-profit organization, and was initially developed in 1972 by citizens to rid communities of drug dealers and criminal activity. The program has expanded since then, and now information of all types of crime is taken.

WeTip routes local tips to the parish Sheriff's Department. Information that leads to a conviction may result in a reward up to \$1,000 to the caller.

To report a crime, call (900) 78-CRIME, or visit WeTip's web site at [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com).

5.



# Departmental Training

## Ground Zero

### Scenario combines nation's worst school shootings; deputies respond to call

**A**t approximately 1:15 p.m. one Thursday in February, multiple shots were fired. Within seconds, Harry Hurst Middle School had become a war zone.

A curtain of thick, black smoke from a trash can fire in the boy's bathroom shielded the shooters' escape. Three minutes after spraying the school with bullets, the two gunmen shed their black clothes and shotguns and, as planned, sought refuge among the panicked student population. It would be several hours before law enforcement officials would learn the teens' true identity.

A precursor to the shooting at Columbine High School, this incident is modeled after an actual event in Medford, Ore.

One shooter escaped. A teacher pulled the other to safety in a classroom where two students lay bleeding. Later, his buddy was taken into custody and, shortly after, identified his accomplice.

While no one was killed at Medford High School, several students and teachers were seriously injured.

At Harry Hurst on this fictional day, deputies meticulously pieced together witness accounts, diagrams of the building, and possible escape routes. CERT (Certified Emergency Response Training) instructor Don Abbott and his wife Bev role-played shaken students, distraught parents, passersby, and the media as deputies and school officials

relayed orders via hand-held radios.

Just as the mayhem reached a fervor pitch, Don Abbott – dubbed the “Master of Disaster” – added another hitch to the scenario: hovering news cameras, a passing train, and onlookers within the perimeter of the crime scene.

Within minutes of the first shots, the school's resource officer was on the shooters' trail. An hour later, the ATF, FBI and outlying law enforcement agencies had joined the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department in securing the school and leading its occupants to safety.

School officials evacuated 320 students to Destrehan's Jerusalem Temple and the East Bank Bridge Park where parents and counselors met them. Forty students and two teachers – several of whom were injured – were rescued after spending hours trapped in the building.

Set in the make believe town of Abbottville, the nightmare scenario afforded St. Charles Parish deputies, school officials, EMTs and fire officials the opportunity to respond to a school

shooting. It served as one of several tabletop exercises the Abbots conducted.

The three-day, hands-on training was made possible by a hazardous material grant, which was awarded to the parish's Dept. of Emergency Preparedness. In addition to the Sheriff's Department, exercise participants included local volunteer fire fighters, school officials, industry workers, and emergency medical staff.

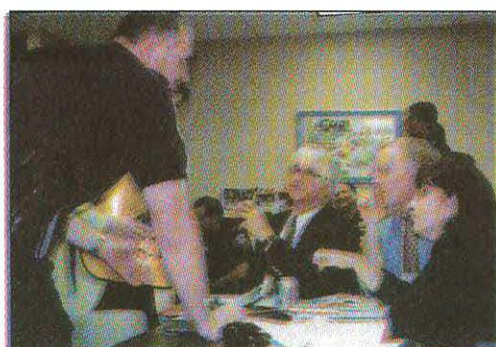
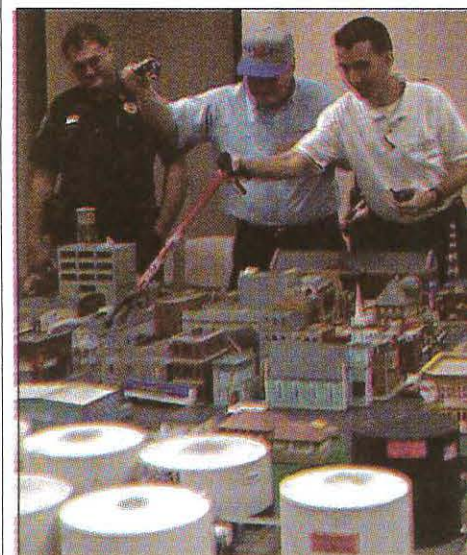
The sprawling community of Abbottville was put to the test. Besides bank robberies, missing children and the school scenario, the town suffered monumental fires and chemical disasters over the three days. The situations – taken from real life – provide emergency responders the chance to test systems and develop protocols in worst case scenarios.

“You hope and pray something like this never happens in our parish,” Sheriff Greg Champagne said, “but we

can't turn our backs on the possibility. It's essential we plan now, along with the parish's School System, to determine how we would respond if we were put in that situation. That's where tabletop exercises and the discussions that will surely follow help the process.”



Certified Emergency Response Training Instructor Don Abbott helps St. Charles Parish deputies sort information following reports of gunfire at a school. The table-top exercise allowed deputies, school, hospital and parish officials to test systems for handling worst-case scenarios.



Above, school administrators and PIO Capt. Patrick Yoes coordinate logistics for reuniting parents and children, while Cpl. James Hebert oversees the rescue effort at the shooting site. Meanwhile, EMS workers update the status of the injured. Media helicopters hover overhead as the scene unfolds.



# Departmental Initiatives

## 'Last chance' program helping area juveniles

### □ Courts, Sheriff's Dept., Center for Family and Youth Services team up to fight juvenile crime

**J**uvenile offenders facing detention are getting a "last chance" courtesy of a newly established probation project.

The brainstorm of the 29th Judicial District Court, the program is designed to level accountability-based sanctions against the parish's growing number of young people ages 10 to 16 that commit misdemeanor crimes. It addresses a number of social ills common to juvenile offenders – school truancy and absenteeism, drug abuse, vandalism, theft, violence, ungovernable behavior, curfew violations, and runaways.

The Juvenile Probation Program teams the Courts, Sheriff's Department, and the Center for Family and Youth Services, Inc., in combating these problems. To fund the effort, the Court was awarded a \$78,176 Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant through the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Criminal Justice. The Parish Government is providing a cash match of \$8,698.

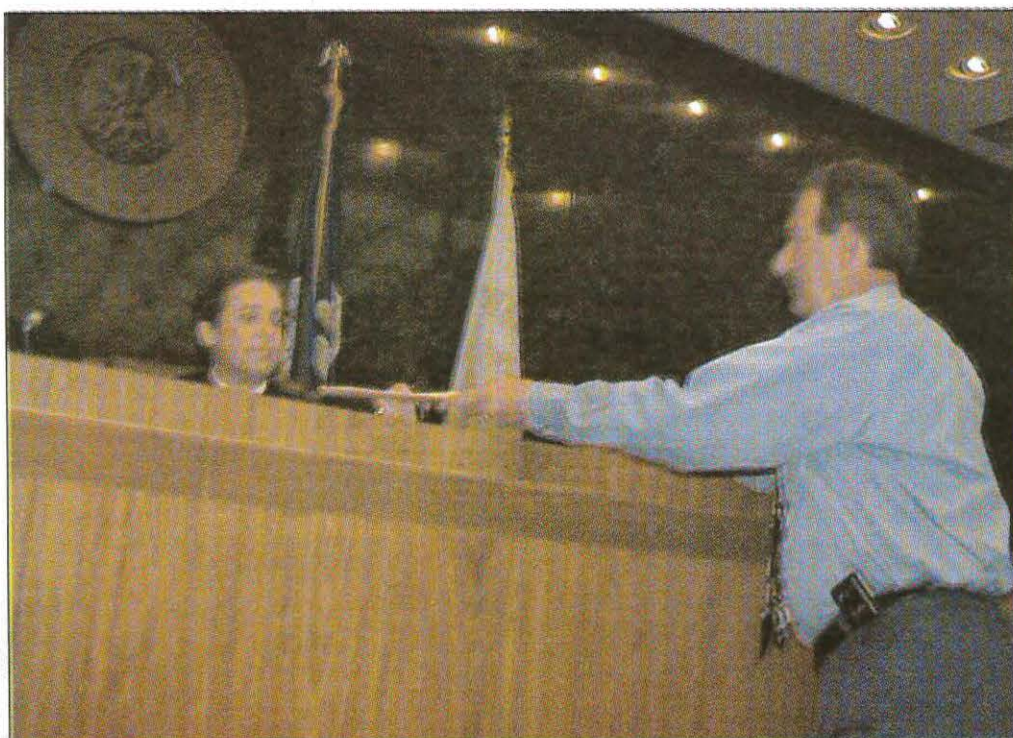
In addition to individual and group counseling, the monies pay the salary of a juvenile probation officer.

Cpl. Kenny Gagliano, a 6-year veteran of the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department, was named to the juvenile probation officer's post last September. His responsibilities include monitoring the attendance of juvenile offenders at required programs, conducting periodic site visits, organizing and implementing community education/service projects, and ensuring offenders comply with the Court-ordered conditions of probation.

At the outset of the program, only two juveniles were assigned probation. Today, nearly 50 offenders are on probation and 30 have been ordered to perform community service work.

Community service work ranges from washing police units to cleaning stalls at the parish's Animal Shelter or assisting local churches. The Court must first approve all community service projects.

Besides mandating daily attendance at school – Gagliano regularly visits the school to check probationers' attendance, grades and behavior – youngsters are ordered to observe a 6 p.m. curfew, submit to a monthly drug screening, stay away from firearms, obey their parents, and



**Cpl. Kenny Gagliano, juvenile probation officer, hands a file to 29th Judicial District Judge Emile St. Pierre. Faced with a growing number of young offenders, Judge St. Pierre and Judges Robert Chaisson and Kirk Granier teamed with the Sheriff's Department and the parish's Center for Family and Youth Services, Inc., in seeking a state grant to fund the Juvenile Probation Program.**

adhere to all local, state and federal laws. Additionally, they must attend substance abuse/mental health counseling.

"They have to get clearance before they can go to a concert or party or anything that is going to keep them out after 6 p.m.," Gagliano said. "We encourage them to get involved in school or church activities whenever possible. But things that potentially could put them back with the wrong group of people, we say no."

Anger management and parenting classes are provided. Also, CHILL (Communicating Helpful Issues in Living Life), a group therapy session led by a licensed therapist, seeks to offer acceptable alternatives to violence. The counseling aspects of the program are overseen by the Center for Family Services.

Juvenile offenders who fail to comply with Court mandates must reappear before the Judge. Since the program's inception, the Courts have revoked two violators' probation.

Whether the juvenile has been assigned probation or community service, it is certain that Gagliano will be carefully watching him or her.

"My job is to monitor (juvenile offenders') every movement," he said. "I'm there to keep them off the street corner, urge them to get involved in school and earn their way off curfew. I'm there to give them a pat on the back when they're doing good and get after them when they're not," he said.

For the past seven years, Gagliano has focused his energies on helping the parish's youth. He's coached sports, served as a Cub Scout leader, and was assigned to the Court School program. "I'm a police officer, not a counselor. But I do have a wealth of life experiences and want to do everything in my power to get them back on the right track."

Response from parents and teachers to the program has been very positive, Gagliano said. "The parents generally welcome the help. They're at the end of their rope and want help setting guidelines."

Parents and law enforcement officers are faced with more severe crimes these days. The most common probationary crime is battery, Gagliano said. "In my day, the worst thing we could do was go joyriding or shoplift. Today, it's drive-bys and drug dealing."

Together, the Courts, social service organizations and schools hope to impact the probationers' lives. "If I can save one kid out of 10, that's something," Gagliano said. "The real test is going to be what these kids do after they leave the program, six months or a year from now."

*For more information on the Juvenile Probation Program or to reach Cpl. Gagliano, call the Center for Family and Youth Services at 331-1999.*

### Deputy safety a major issue for SCPSD



### □ Officers given trauma shooting kits, bulletproof vests

Two major additions – trauma shooting kits and bulletproof vests – to deputies' arsenal will help ensure their future safety.

The law enforcement trauma kits include medical care items required immediately after a shooting. They are specifically designed to treat gunshot wounds until paramedics arrive.

The kits and a how-to video were purchased with monies donated by Motiva, Shell Chemical and Motorola.

Sheriff Greg Champagne also issued 160 ballistic vests to deputies in April. Prior to the latest purchase, 112 vests had been issued since the sheriff was sworn into office in 1996.

Contributions from area businesses, organizations and individuals were teamed with a \$10,888 federal grant to purchase the vests.

"Nationwide, the assaults on officers have grown more violent," Sheriff Champagne said. "While I hope neither are put to the test, it is assuring to know the kits and vests are available to deputies."



## Parish Prison Project



Former Parish President Chris Tregre presented Sheriff Greg Champagne with a \$4 million check in December 1999 to be spent toward the construction of the parish's new state-of-the-art correctional facility. The payment satisfies the parish's initial commitment. A creative partnership with the state Department of Corrections calls for Louisiana to pay \$3.1 million of the jail's almost \$6.1 million annual operating cost for housing minimum-risk state inmates. The remaining costs will be split between the parish and the Sheriff's Department budgets for jail operation.

## Reservists join the SCPSD

Fifteen reserve officers recently joined the Sheriff Department's ranks.

The reserve officers underwent six months of intensive training prior to being certified. The 120 hours of classroom study included an introduction to the criminal justice system and law enforcement, physical fitness, legal aspects, PR-24 baton training, first aid/CPR, traffic stops, hand-to-hand defense tactics, firearm training, and ethics training.

"Reserve officers provide a

vital service to our department," Sheriff Champagne said. "These men and women take seriously their role in volunteering their time to protect the residents of St. Charles Parish. They all put 110 percent effort in this vigorous training program. We are proud to welcome them to the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department."

To maintain the reserve officer status, the officers must contribute 24 hours of service monthly.

## Latest Academy graduates name



Sheriff Greg Champagne recently announced the latest recruits to graduate from Law Enforcement Academy. The deputies attended two separate academies: Lafourche Parish and the Harbor Police training programs. Classes taught included report writing, accident report writing, juvenile and Louisiana law, community policing, felony procedures, and other law enforcement issues. The graduates are David Beck, Roger Adams, Marlon Shuff, Deic Weber, RoAnn Sampson, Kenny Schmill, George Cunningham, Alvin Robinson, and Rufus Fisher. These new recruits will be assigned either to the Patrol or Corrections Divisions.



Sheriff Greg Champagne is pictured with Reserve Officers Matthew Koontz, Roy Gautreaux, David Ulicsni, Patrick Ban, Dallas Kinler, Lance Naquin, Kenneth Bourg, Troy Blanchard, C. Bourgeois, Dennis Buschbam, John Delvisco, Amore' Neck, Farron Matherne, Bruce Houston, and Randy Robert.

## Community outreach a hit for TRIAD

TRIAD is taking its anti-crime message on the road. The next stop: Destrehan and St. Rose on Tuesday, June 13, at the FOP Hall, on River Road in Destrehan.

Set to begin at 10 a.m., the event will feature home safety tips and crime prevention techniques.

Lunch will be served. Residents from the east bank region are welcome.

For more info, contact Judy Fielder at 783-1355.

St. Charles Parish TRIAD is a cooperative effort between the Sheriff's Department, the Council on Aging, and local service providers. Its aim is to promote safety among the parish's senior population.



Senior citizens from the Des Allemands/Paradis recently gathered for a Triad Community Luncheon at the Father Mac Center in Des Allemands.

## Send your gift home

Sheriff's Department employees enthusiastically gave to the United Way of St. Charles, increasing contributions for the third consecutive year.

By designating the parish's United Way agency as the recipient of your pledge, you can ensure that neighbors like you will receive crucial services in their time of need.

Unless you designate St. Charles Parish, your gift will go to the parish in which your office campaign is held.

Please, send your gift home to the United Way of St. Charles.



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Contact the St. Charles Parish Sheriff Department at its Web site. Whether you're seeking a listing of divisions, services, a brief history of the department, or wish to register your bicycle, you can find it on the World Wide Web. Visit us today at: [www.stcharlessheriff.org](http://www.stcharlessheriff.org).

