INSIDE LOOK

Meet the sheriffs from Douglas, Platte, Pemiscot and Pettis counties

VICTIMS’ RIGHTS
MSA hires additional CVU advocate to meet ever-increasing need

SECOND CHANCE
Lincoln County work brigade, choir opens eyes, changes hearts

BRANSON SALUTES
Law enforcement to be honored at weeklong celebration
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**Contributors**

- Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
  - Editor
- Rich AuBuchon
  - Attorney with Polsinelli PC
- Kim Case
  - Missouri Sheriffs’ Association Crime Victims Unit Advocate
- Pieter Van Waarde
  - Senior Pastor Woodcrest Chapel
- Bill Sullivan
  - Law Enforcement Liaison for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Region 7

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The Missouri Sheriff magazine is the official publication for the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association.

The Missouri Sheriff magazine is dedicated to providing informative and timely information to enrich the lives of the dedicated men and women providing county law enforcement, jail, court security and judicial services throughout the state of Missouri, and the public they serve.
Progress Made on Many Fronts

Spring is here! I’m sure everyone in the state is very happy winter is behind us. In the Bootheel, it has been the worst winter I can remember. Let’s hope for a wonderful and safe spring and summer.

Since becoming your president, it has been a busy seven months. Thanks to the hard work of our association and Sheriff Oberkrom, we have the beginning phases of the RMS/JMS system operating in several counties. As the system is rolled out I am sure many other sheriffs will utilize it.

The CCW system is up and running, and computers and printers have been installed in our sheriffs’ offices throughout the state. This was an important change for our citizens and sheriffs alike. Our citizens now have a one-stop shop for their CCW permits and our sheriffs will have more personal contact with their citizens — and more time to visit on other matters of concern while those citizens are in the sheriffs’ offices. Kevin Merritt, David Schwendemann, Mick Covington and our office staff have done a great job in getting this project operational in the short time allotted.

Sheriff Kevin Bond and his wife have started the History of Missouri Sheriffs project which is well on its way to being a great success. Sheriff Bond presented the idea last year and as usual our great staff jumped in with both feet and brought to life a much needed part of Missouri history. Thanks to Jeanne Merritt and her staff.

The capitol walk by our sheriffs has again been a topic of discussion. Sheriffs have done a great job interacting with the legislators, assisting them in understanding the operations and needs of sheriffs across the state and in many cases informing them on how the proposed laws will affect citizens in the counties we are elected to serve.

Every sheriff in this state takes an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America and the State of Missouri. Our voice is a very important one in Jefferson City by giving our opinions and help to our lawmakers.

I am very proud to have served my county for the past 17 years as sheriff. The office of sheriff has a proud history in our nation. We are elected by the people and in my opinion there is no greater privilege.

I also am honored to have served as president of the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association. I wish the incoming president, Sheriff Kevin Bond, the best of luck and success during his term.

May God bless all of us,

Tommy Greenwell
Pemiscot County Sheriff
Around the State

Fight Against Meth Continues

ADAIR COUNTY — As of May 1, cold medication containing Pseudoephedrine can no longer be purchased in the city of Kirksville without a prescription. Adair County Sheriff Robert Hardwick, who met with community leaders, presidents of Truman State University and Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, doctors and civic clubs over the past year to promote the program, said he was happy that Kirksville joined the list of 70-some other communities across the state who are “fed up with Meth” and decided to take steps to improve the quality of life for residents. Sheriff Hardwick said more than 16,000 packages of medication containing the key drug Pseudoephedrine were sold in 2012. The number was substantially higher in 2013.

Sheriff Issues Challenge

CLAY COUNTY — Clay County Sheriff Paul Vescovo accepted the challenge and took the “Plunge for Landon.” Landon Shaw, a 5-month-old baby from Tarkio, Missouri, is battling a rare childhood cancer. The Tarkio community came up with the “Plunge Challenge” as a way to show support and raise funds to help the family. They started a “Plunge for Landon” Facebook page March 30 and since that time, thousands have been videotaped as they jumped into frigid ponds, lakes, rivers and even swimming pools and then challenged at least three others to do the same, promising to donate money for each person who jumps. Sheriff Vescovo challenged other sheriffs across the state. To date, more than $65,000 has been raised.

Team Sees Success

DOUGLAS COUNTY — In January of 2014, Douglas County Sheriff Chris Degase, Ozark County Sheriff Darrin Reed and Wright County Sheriff Glenn Adler assembled a Tri-County Special Response Team to address the illegal drug and stealing problems in their counties. The team pooled resources to safely and efficiently serve high risk and narcotic warrants and assist with major crimes within the counties. Since its inception, the team has served 12 search warrants that resulted in 25 arrests including multiple charges of manufacturing, possession and distribution of controlled substances; receiving stolen property; burglary; property damage; stealing; endangering the welfare of a child; unlawful use of a weapon; and multiple traffic violations. Several items stolen from recent burglaries were recovered in Wright County.

All three sheriffs have placed stopping the illegal use, possession and distribution of controlled substances as their top priorities and pledged to continue to aggressively pursue those committing these types of crimes.

“We work for the citizens of our counties and the feedback we are receiving indicates they are tired of the stealing and the drug problems. We don’t know what it is going to take to resolve the problems. However we want it understood that illegal drug activity will not be ignored in these three counties,” said Sheriff Degase.

State Awards Grant to Cyber Task Force

DENT COUNTY — Dent County Sheriff Rick Stallings recently announced the award of additional grant funds to support the South Central Missouri Computer Crime Task Force (SCMCTF). The task force provides investigations, technical support, computer forensic examinations, officer training in identifying and seizing electronic evidence and internet safety presentations to schools in the region. The sheriff’s office was awarded an additional $4,500 from the State Cyber Crime Grant (SCCG) program through the Missouri Department of Public Safety. This award is an addition to the $39,749.12, which was previously awarded for the 2014 grant period, June 1, 2013 through May 31, 2014. This additional award is for the upgrade of the equipment and software used to examine cell phones. There is no local match requirement for this award. The SCMCTF is comprised of investigators from various agencies and provides investigative and technology expertise to assist law enforcement in Dent, Pulaski, Phelps, Crawford, Iron, Reynolds, Shannon, Texas, and Washington Counties in the investigation and prosecution of cases where digital evidence may be involved, particularly crimes against children.

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Thank You to all the MSA Members & Supporters!

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Protecting The Future

A History of Missouri's Sheriffs

Publishing in October 2014, “Preserving the Past — Protecting the Future: A History of Missouri’s Sheriffs” will explore the roots of the office of sheriff — the only law enforcement office in the state directly accountable to the people it serves. This 11” x 8.5” hardback coffee table book will explore the origin of the office of sheriff, which dates back to the 1800s; it will detail the history of the office in each of Missouri’s 114 counties and the city of St. Louis; it will highlight events and notorious criminals that made history in our state; it will remember former sheriffs who served; and its well thought-out combination of photos and writing will truly provide readers a unique glimpse into this historical office.
was just off the cruise ship in sunny Cozumel, Mexico, attempting to get my seat belt to work in the Jeep I was about to drive to the beach, when the friendly guide said in perfect English, “Do not worry Señor, there is no seat belt law in Mexico.”

“Well amigo,” I said, “Are there no laws of physics in Mexico?”

Suddenly he had trouble understanding English. This guided Jeep tour into the offbeat areas of Cozumel had been booked (and paid for) months in advance. You get to drive your own Jeep, just following the guide to places away from the crowds of tourists. The seat belt would not budge out of its ratchet.

“We are ready to leave now,” the guide said. So I had a decision to make. Do I drive off with no seat belt in a Mexican Jeep with 190,000 miles on it, traveling at 50-plus MPH on Mexican highways, driving on unpaved Mexican back roads and making a stop at a Tequila Factory with free samples — all on an island loaded with drunken tourists? What could go wrong? Or do I refuse to go without a seat belt, try to get my money back and miss the secluded beach?

I looked to my wife and asked, “What do you think?”

“My seat belt works fine, she answered. “Besides, your life insurance is paid up.” Ever the supporting spouse.

The decision was up to me — Mr. Seat belt, NHTSA Law Enforcement Liaison, retired traffic cop, trainer of officers to never drive without using your seat belt. Before I finish the story, here is some background information:

When I was with my training officer many years ago, before there were seat belt laws, he made a comment that I will always remember. He said “Lad,” (he always called rookies “lad”), “I’ve worked a lot of traffic accidents in my day, and I’ve never unbuckled a dead man.”

A keen observation from a wise officer. Throughout my career I also never personally worked a traffic crash where anyone died that was wearing a seat belt. While fatal crashes do occur with restrained occupants, the best chance of surviving a crash is by wearing a seat belt.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2012, seat belts saved 12,174 lives. The NHTSA also reported the daytime seat belt rate for the United States in 2013 was 87 percent. This rate has been trending up since 1995. Not surprisingly, the percentage of unrestrained passenger vehicle occupant fatalities has been decreasing at the same time. Traffic deaths are historically low.

Studies also show that the more seat belt citations that are issued, the higher the seat belt use rate. Enforcing occupant protection laws makes your community safer, with fewer traffic deaths and fewer serious injuries.

May 19 through June 1, 2014 is the National “Click it or Ticket” Campaign. Law enforcement officers all over the country will be participating in this high visibility enforcement campaign. The media message will be to wear a seat belt or get a ticket. I encourage all law enforcement agencies and officers to participate in “Click it or Ticket” and aggressively enforce occupant protection laws throughout the year. Be sure that some of your seat belt enforcement is at night. Seat belt rates drop at night, and the percentage of unbelted fatal crash occupants is higher at night. For more information on how law enforcement can participate, go to www.nhtsa.gov.

So what happened in Cozumel — to drive or not to drive? I did drive off without the seat belt (bad idea), skipped the free tequila, and snorkeled on a great coral reef. However, I was a nervous wreck the whole time I was driving. Luckily, nothing bad happened. Don’t depend on luck, wear your seat belt.

Lesson learned. I will never book an excursion where driving is involved without checking to make sure there are working seat belts. Secondly, I wrote a trip review where I warned of the seat belt issue with the tour. That will warn future customers of the issue and perhaps get the tour provider to fix the seat belts.

Seat belts save lives. The laws of physics apply even while on vacation!

By Bill Sullivan, Law Enforcement Liaison, NHTSA Region 7
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2014 TRAFFIC RECORDS FORUM
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The Association of Transportation Safety Information Professionals (ATSIP) Program Committee invites attendees, exhibitors and speakers to participate in the 2014 Traffic Records Forum. This year’s Forum will spotlight the use of data integration across the six components of a traffic records system. The use of integrated data can assist law enforcement, engineers, health care providers, emergency response teams, and other highway safety professionals with accurate problem identification and more complete program evaluation. If you are involved in the improvement, collection, and analysis of transportation information, the 2014 Forum is the place to showcase your work and network with others from across the country.

For more information, visit
www.trafficrecordsforum.org

We look forward to seeing you in St. Louis!
Pay Question Settled

Salary Increases for County Officials Established by Missouri Legislature Do Not Violate the Hancock Amendment

The debate forges on in the Missouri legislature over efforts by the Missouri sheriffs to increase salaries. One of the concerns recently raised was that any change to the salary statutes would violate the Missouri Constitution. The clear answer to the question is that the legislature has broad authority and can indeed authorize increases to any elected official's salary.

The argument started in 1982 when the Supreme Court of Missouri addressed a salary increase granted by the legislature to collectors in second class counties. The Boone County Court held that the salary increase violated Article X, Section 21 of the Missouri Constitution, which now reads:

“Except in counties which frame, adopt and amend a charter for their own government, the compensation of all county officers shall either be prescribed by law or be established by each county pursuant to law adopted by the general assembly. A law which would authorize an increase in the compensation of county officers shall not be construed as requiring a new activity or service or an increase in the level of any activity or service within the meaning of this constitution. Every such officer shall file a sworn statement in detail, of fees collected and salaries paid to his necessary deputies or assistants, as provided by law.”

The dissent’s reasoning was not lost and strong, common sense dissent in the case which pointed out that there was no new activity imposed upon the counties.

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History in the Making
Book chronicles sheriffs’ pasts

Did you know that in 1846, the Lawrence County sheriff held his prisoners in a log cabin with access provided only by ladder lowered through a trap door in the ceiling? Were you aware that during the mid-1880s, many minor and major crimes were going unpunished in Christian County so vigilante groups began forming “law enforcement groups” of their own? Or that the best known group was the Bald Knobbers?

Did you know that in the mid-1920s, gallows were constructed near the Audrain County Jail, but soon after, the death sentence on the county level was outlawed so those gallows were never used?

If you find those facts fascinating, you’ll want to order a copy of “Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future: A History of Missouri’s Sheriffs.”

The 11-inch-by-8.5-inch hardbound coffee-table-style book will provide a unique glimpse into this historical office. It will explore the origin of the office of sheriff, which dates back to the 1800s, and will include a history of the MSA, a non-profit organization formed in 1945 to support the office of sheriff through legislative efforts, training and technical assistance. The book also will include a two-page spread from each of Missouri’s 114 counties and the city of St. Louis that will highlight interesting events and tell the stories of notorious criminals that made history in the state. The book will also honor former sheriffs who served over the years.

The history book is being published in conjunction with the 70th anniversary of the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association, but was actually the brainchild of Sherri Bond, the wife of Pettis County Sheriff Kevin Bond, and Jeanne Merritt, marketing and advertising coordinator for the MSA.

“I was looking for a Christmas present for Kevin. I always try to get him something that pertains to his job because that’s what he enjoys and thought a book on the history of the office of sheriff would be interesting,” Sherri explained. “However, I couldn’t find one anywhere. Then I saw Jeanne at a Christmas party and asked if she knew of a book like that. She said she didn’t but thought it was a great idea and a great project for the sheriffs’ association to take on.”

After Christmas, she and Jeanne discussed it with Sheriff Bond, who will be taking over as president of the MSA in July, and he fully supported the project.

“I am a history buff so I thought it was a great idea but decided to informally discuss it with a few of my fellow sheriffs and the response was great — they all thought we should do it. I started looking into some history of sheriffs and found it was pretty interesting material. We had our production person put together a template to present at an executive meeting and got a good response so we decided to move ahead,” Sheriff Bond said.

After production costs were calculated and details were finalized, the idea for the book was presented to the MSA Board of Directors, who voted unanimously to go forward with the project.

The book, which will be published in October, will be sold for $69.95. However, a $10 discount will be offered for any books pre-ordered through September 30, 2014.

The book can be ordered in sheriffs’ offices throughout the state; by calling Jeanne Merritt at 573-529-6900 or online at www.missourisheriffshistorybook.com.

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
Nothing But the Truth
Sheriff affects community in more ways than one

Studies have shown that today, a large portion of society — and especially its youth — form opinions of law enforcement and the criminal justice system by watching cop shows on television or at the movie theater. While instantaneous lab results, sexily dressed detectives, shoot-outs with bullets flying everywhere and high-speed chases on downtow city streets all make for a good story line they're far from the reality of everyday police work.

Pettis County Sheriff Kevin Bond said as an adjunct professor with State Fair Community College’s Criminal Justice program he makes sure his students know that, while based in truth, the shows skew reality. And he can say that with confidence because, starting as a jailer, then getting transferred to dispatch and working the road as a patrol officer before being promoted to a leadership position and then elected as sheriff, he’s seen it all and worked it all.

“I teach one class per semester and love it because, in part, it allows me to tell potential future law enforcement officers what the job is really like. Academics research their whole lives and share what they’ve read with their students. But I’ve lived it and I share what I’ve experienced, both good and bad, so my students end up with a real taste of the profession. Sometimes they hear the truth and they’re like, ‘Uh — this isn’t what I thought it would be,’” he laughed. “That’s ok because it allows them to move into another field without wasting years on training. But then there’s the other side of the coin when a student will take my class as an elective, thinking it might be an easy A, and gets bit by the ‘bug.’”

Teaching has also affected how Sheriff Bond runs his office.

“Instructioning the students keeps me grounded and helps me think ‘outside the box.’ I’ve been working in law enforcement since 1986 — actually earlier because I did an internship here as a criminal justice student with CMSU. Sometimes after doing this job for so many years, you can get locked into a certain mindset. But by instructing others who also are interested in criminal justice, I am constantly getting a fresh viewpoint — seeing things through their eyes. While I’m attempting to change their perspective, they’re also changing mine,” he said.

Sheriff Bond recently had the opportunity to change the perception of law enforcement for a psychology major who had grown up in the inner city and whose only view of police was them coming to arrest friends and family members. At the end of class the young man said the sheriff had changed his attitude towards law enforcement by providing a viewpoint the young man had never considered.

“Who knows how that will affect his life,” the sheriff said.

In addition to changing perspectives, Sheriff Bond, who is married with two teenage children, also strives to change his community for the better by serving in his church and on the boards of several civic organizations. He is currently the chairman of the Pastor — Parish Relations Committee for the Eldorado United Methodist Church; he serves on the board of directors for Child Safe of Central Missouri, the local child advocacy center; and he is a member of the Pettis County Pachyderm Club, the Sedalia Lions Club and the Sedalia Rotary Club. He is getting ready to step down as Rotary Club president just in time to step up as president of the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association (MSA).

“If I’m going to be part of something I want to be actively involved,” he explained, adding that he’s looking forward to taking on more responsibility with the MSA. “It’s a great organization that’s worked very, very hard over past years, tackling several legislative issues that have improved and strengthened the office of sheriff.”

Although he said he won’t be able to establish too many goals until this legislative session wraps up, he has set one — to produce a quality “coffee-table-style” book that will explore the roots of the office of sheriff as well as detail the history of the office of sheriff in each of Missouri’s 114 counties and the city of St. Louis. (Read more about the book, “Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future” on page 13.)

“I’m really excited about this project and I think the other sheriffs are too. It’s something that’s never been done and although it will be a massive endeavor, it will provide us all with the unique opportunity to tell the history of the positions we fill and to leave our mark on history,” he said.

— By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
Living Out His Dream
Sheriff fulfills lifelong ambition

From the time he was a little boy, Platte County Sheriff Mark Owen knew that he wanted to be a law enforcement officer. Although, at the age of 4, he couldn’t yet tell time, he knew that when the big hand pointed to 12 and the little hand pointed to 4 it was time for his favorite TV show — *Highway Patrol with Broderick Crawford* — to air.

As narrator Art Gilmore opened the 30-minute program by saying, “Whenever the laws of any state are broken, a duly authorized organization swings into action. It may be called the state police, state troopers, militia, the rangers, or the highway patrol. These are the stories of the men whose training, skill and courage have enforced and preserved our state law,” young Mark Owen dreamed of the day when he would be doing battle with bank robbers, kidnappers and other nefarious thugs.

His hope was put on hold for a short time when, after finishing school, he enlisted in the Marine Corps. An injury brought an early honorable discharge, but recovery was swift and Sheriff Owen once again found himself on the brink of fulfilling his life’s ambition. However, no paid law enforcement positions were available. He did the next best thing — he went to work for the Kansas City Fire Department and volunteered as a reserve officer with the Weatherby Lake Police Department.

Then in 1979, when a deputy’s slot opened at Platte County, he grabbed it. However, when he and his wife were blessed with a set of twin girls a year or so later, Sheriff Owen quickly found that he could no longer afford to follow the desires of his heart. He stayed on with the county as a reserve deputy, putting in 1,500 to 1,600 hours per year, but, with a friend, in 1981 started what turned into a very lucrative air freight company.

Over the next eight years, the business grew to the point that, when he had an opportunity to sell it to a large conglomerate, he couldn’t afford to say “No.”

“In July of 1989 I called Sheriff (Tom) Thomas and asked if I could come back to work fulltime. He agreed but put me on in a temporary fulltime position. The agreement was that after working for six months, I had to decide if I could afford to stay on because the pay was only something like $12,000 to $14,000 per year,” he said, adding that shortly after the stroke of midnight on January 1, 1990, he called his sheriff to say “Yes. I can afford to stay.”

Through the years, he moved up through the ranks, from patrol to patrol administrative sergeant. Soon after Sheriff Thomas retired and Sheriff Richard Anderson was elected, Sheriff Owen was promoted to lieutenant, taking over command of the Emergency Services Unit. The next promotion meant captain’s bars and additional responsibility as commander over all road patrol operations. However, the biggest step in his career was taken in November 2011 when Sheriff Anderson announced his retirement and Sheriff Owen announced he’d like to replace him. He ran unopposed and was sworn in January 2013.

“I’ve been with the Platte County Sheriff’s Office for 34 years now and I’m so thankful that I have gotten to be a part of building it to what it is today. I can honestly say one of the biggest blessings is the employees of the department. They are professional, they work hard and they truly care about their quality of work and the citizens. While many are in different divisions everyone does what they can to help and assist each other. It’s a joy to come to work each day,” he said, adding that he also appreciates the public he has sworn to protect and serve. “We’re very involved in our community. We offer a junior police academy for our youth and we’re always providing opportunities to participate in a wide variety of educational programs.”

In March the sheriff’s office went live with Project Lifesaver, which provides electronic bracelets for those who suffer from Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, autism or Down syndrome. The bracelet is worn on the ankle or wrist and transmits a radio frequency that can be detected from one to up to three miles away by specially trained deputies using a handheld tracking device.

“It’s just another tool to help serve the people,” Sheriff Owen said. “Our philosophy is when we partner with our community, we all win — we all get the opportunity to live out our dreams.”

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
A Man of His Word
Sheriff keeps promise to improve quality of life for community

When Chris Degase ran for sheriff of Douglas County in 2008, he vowed to focus on the unsolved homicides, effectively fight the drug problem, and address the burglaries and thefts that were taking place throughout the county — all while cutting inmate costs to the jail. And he promised to do it all in a transparent manner that allowed the citizens to stay informed of his office’s progress.

Step by step, he is accomplishing what he set out to do.

“In my first three years, all homicides were solved including one cold case from March 2007. The number of drug arrests has tripled. We’ve recovered thousands of dollars of stolen property and arrested several suspects who were charged and ultimately prosecuted. And in my first year I saved the county $44,000 by simply changing the menu in the jail,” he said, explaining that when he first took office, the county was paying a local restaurant to provide three meals per day to inmates — a practice he cut out right away.

He brought meal preparation in-house and started serving inmates cereal for breakfast, bologna sandwiches and chips for lunch and TV dinners for dinner. When inmates said that they were tired of eating the same thing every day, Sheriff Degase said they’d add a piece of cheese to the sandwiches.

Then last year he saw what Sheriff Brad Delay was doing in Lawrence County and decided to follow his lead. The inmates now have oatmeal for breakfast every morning, sandwiches for lunch and beans and rice for dinner. When sticking with that menu and buying in bulk, he saved another $21,000 per year — a feat in itself since the number of inmates has doubled in the years since Sheriff Degase took office. The savings allowed him to put two more deputies on the street.

Although inmates haven’t been happy, everyone else has heartily supported the move.

“For a while it was the talk of the town! Most of our residents can’t afford to eat out all the time so why should their taxes provide inmates with three meals a day from a buffet? The moral of the story here is ‘Don’t go to jail!’ When the inmates complain, that’s what I tell them,” he quipped, adding that he’s kept the citizens informed of his progress by attending as many community functions as possible, regularly sending press releases to local media and participating in a radio talk show at 11 a.m. every Thursday.

“People like to know what’s going on.”

The community was also pleased to hear that he decided to put inmates to work cleaning up along a creek that runs through Douglas County; adopting and maintaining a section of highway; scraping snow and ice from sidewalks and steps at the courthouse; and helping with painting and other remodeling in the jail.

The changes are having a positive effect on at least one of those incarcerated. Last year, an inmate identified only as “J.D.” asked for and received permission to share his story with others. The nationally ranked bull rider spoke to students at the local school district and at a community meeting about how meth use ruined his life. Sheriff Degase credited his testimony with passage of an ordinance in Ava requiring prescriptions for any medication containing Pseudoephedrine.

Sheriff Degase said because drug use had become an epidemic, he worked with Sheriff Darrin Reed in Ozark County and Sheriff Glenn Adler in Wright County to organize the Tri-County Narcotic Team. Since January of this year, the group has served more than a dozen search warrants in the three counties, resulting in the arrest of 25 individuals with charges ranging from possession of a controlled substance to endangering the welfare of a child to credit card theft.

He also worked with the Ava R-1 School District to develop an emergency response program to be used if an intruder poses an immediate threat. Authorized personnel simply hit a single button that is programmed to send both texts and calls with pre-recorded messages about the threat to the cell phones of every law enforcement officer — whether on or off duty — who is registered in the system.

“It’s been a busy five years since I was elected and my work days average 14 hours but I knew it would be that way when I ran,” Sheriff Degase said. “I decided then that I made a commitment to the people and I’d do this job right or I wouldn’t do it at all.”

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
Called to Duty

Sheriff is compelled by desire to make a difference in his community

When Pemiscot Sheriff Tommy Greenwell says he’s been in law enforcement all his adult life, he means it.

When he was just 15, he went to work as a weekend radio operator, handling dispatch for all law enforcement agencies, fire departments and ambulance services in the county.

“I’d been around police all my life. I didn’t have family members who were in law enforcement but I was friends with the police chief — we used to go fishing together all the time — and I was good friends with the chief dispatcher. I’d always been interested in law enforcement and dispatching just came natural to me,” he said, adding that although life was different back then, hiring teenagers was probably more common than not in rural areas. “I handled it all from a two-channel radio — everything from murders to armed robberies — and I was always treated with respect because I took my job very seriously. Nobody ever talked down to me.”

When a full-time position came open two years later, Sheriff Greenwell grabbed it, dispatching overnight and attending high school classes in the afternoons. After graduation, he stayed on, working with Pemiscot County until he was 22. Then in 1979, anxious to work on the other side of the radio, he took a job as a patrol officer with the Hayti Missouri Police Department. He stayed there until 1985 when he went to work with the Missouri State Highway Patrol as a commercial vehicle inspector.

In 1991 he decided he needed a break in the action, quit his job with the Highway Patrol and opened Chubby’s BBQ restaurant, a feat that, according to many, was responsible for putting Hayti on the map.

However, it wasn’t long before people of his town were coming to him, asking him to consider running for sheriff. Compelled by the desire to help his community, he agreed and in 1996 won the election by 62 votes.

As part of his campaign, Sheriff Greenwell said he set several goals for his time in office: catch and lock up the “bad guys,” obtain a new jail, update technology in his office and do it all without controversy.

To date, he’s managed to accomplish every one.

“When I was first elected, we had quite a few homicides open but we were able to solve them all, including a 13-year-old cold case,” he said. “When I took over as sheriff, there was only one computer in the entire sheriff’s office. I’m happy to say that our technology has increased greatly. Today, the office is completely computerized, down to mobile data terminals in our cars, which makes this job much easier for all of us!”

The new Pemiscot County Criminal Justice Center and 124-bed jail opened in 2002.

Situated near the New Madrid seismic zone, Sheriff Greenwell and his staff also have diligently trained with the State Emergency Management Agency and other law enforcement and emergency responders to better prepare for all types of emergencies, including earthquakes.

In between it all, he’s been just as diligent to find time to spend with his wife Stephanie and his seven children, five of whom, ranging from 12 to 2, still live at home.

“I love my children and have lots of fun with them. My 10-year-old son is a hunter and crappie fisherman and I take him as often as possible. I’m fortunate that I get to be home most nights but when I can’t because of something going on at work, my kids and wife, who is a great mom and sheriff’s wife, understand. They’re proud of me and what I do,” he said, adding that his faith has helped him keep his priorities straight both at home and on the job.

In fact, he credited his longevity to a decision he made long ago to run his office in an honest, straight-forward manner that leaves no room for politics. He’s been assisted in that task by a core group of dependable, hardworking employees who share his mission.

“When I took over, there wasn’t much respect for the office of sheriff but I think that’s changed,” said Sheriff Greenwell, who for the past year also served as president of the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association. “I believe people see that I still take this responsibility very seriously, as do the men and women who work here. I’m in my fifth term of office, which makes me the longest running sheriff in Pemiscot County’s history and believe I’ve kept the community’s confidence because I run the sheriff’s office the way people want it run.”

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
Living His Passion with Purpose

From the moment he took the helm of the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association (MSA), Mick Covington’s goal has been to improve the office of sheriff. To accomplish that task, he has spent untold hours walking the halls of Missouri’s capitol and meeting with legislators in order to better educate them on the duties of sheriffs and their deputies.

“When I was selected for the executive director’s position in 2001, I felt that the MSA was a strong organization but was under-represented. At that time, the perception of sheriffs was that portrayed on Andy of Mayberry when in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. My objective was to change the perception of the office and of the professional men and women holding that office. I wanted our elected representatives to understand the importance of the office. I wanted to let them know just how proposed legislation could positively — or negatively — affect the way the office of sheriff served its citizens and delivered services,” Covington said, admitting that mission often times made for long days that stretched into longer weeks, leaving little time for the outdoor sports he loved.

However, his passion soon paid off. Senators and representatives started seeking the sheriff’s counsel when law enforcement bills were introduced so Covington encouraged the sheriffs to become more engaged in the legislative process. Soon, a contingent started making trips to Jefferson City to lobby for the things they needed. Recently, Covington got behind an effort that resulted in sheriffs maintaining a daily presence at the state capitol while lawmakers are in session.

Although he’s been involved in numerous pieces of legislation over the years, few drew as much attention as Senate Bill 75, which last August transferred the responsibility for issuing concealed carry endorsements from the Missouri Department of Revenue (DOR) to the state’s 115 sheriffs. Controversial or not — Covington said it was the right move to make. “The sheriffs’ offices already handled most of the permit work and they have knowledge of the program. This is just another way for them to serve their communities and make their citizens safe,” he said, adding that he’s also been heavily involved in the prisoner per diem issue.

Currently, the state pays counties $19.58 per day until prisoners are transported to the Missouri Department of Corrections. However, the cost to house those prisoners is close to $50 per day, not including medical expenses. And, if inmates who stay in the facilities are later sentenced to probation; discharged with time served; sentenced to time in the county jail; or judged innocent and released the county receives no reimbursement at all.

“In the past, they’ve been considered ‘county prisoners,’ but the fact is, they were arrested for violation of state crimes and they’ve been charged with state offenses. They are state prisoners who are merely being housed in county jails — and they’re costing counties — and the local taxpayers — money they don’t have,” Covington said, adding that they are starting to see some pieces of legislation that will allow better reimbursement. “We’re very hopeful they will make it through the process.”

With 30 years law enforcement experience, working every position from patrol to commander of a SWAT team, Covington understands not only the importance — but the necessity of utilizing all possible training and technical assistance so he’s also supported efforts to obtain grants to fund technology; develop record management and jail management systems; and establish a training program for jail administrators — something that had never been done in the state of Missouri.

Although his accomplishments are many, Covington said he feels one of his greatest was seeing the passage of the Deputy Sheriff Salary Supplementation Fund. Under House Bill 2224, Missouri sheriffs were authorized to collect an extra $10 to serve court documents. Fees had been locked in at $20 since 1983. The additional revenue was earmarked to boost salaries of those deputies making less than $28,000 per year.

Covington said when he started pushing for the bill, 37 counties had full-time deputies receiving some sort of federal assistance — food stamps, HUD housing or Medicaid—because their annual salaries were so low.

“It affected 102 of 115 sheriffs’ offices across the state. That was a disgrace to Missouri and to the office of sheriff. It’s bad for morale — it’s bad for your office because when you can’t provide a living wage to your deputies, you will lose them to other agencies. However, by coming up with a revenue stream that allowed those salaries to be supplemented, our deputies could start making a decent wage and get off food stamps. I’m very pleased to have been a part of that move,” he said. “The real emphasis of the MSA is to improve the office of sheriff through legislative efforts, training and technical assistance so the office can continue to be responsive and committed to providing unparalleled service to their citizens. I believe that step by step, we are accomplishing that.”

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
Crime Victims Update

Each April, the United States honors the strength of crime victims and the allied professionals who work alongside them. This year April 6-12 was designated National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.

This year’s theme — 30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice — presented a perfect opportunity to salute honorees and their long-term commitment to aiding crime victims. As we celebrate three decades of defending victims’ rights, we are reminded of how far we have come — and how much work is yet to be done.

Only 30 years ago, crime victims had virtually no rights and no assistance. The criminal justice system often seemed indifferent to their needs. Victims were commonly excluded from courtrooms and denied the chance to speak at sentencing. They had no access to victim compensation or services to help rebuild their lives. There were few avenues to deal with their emotional and physical wounds. Victims were on their own to recover their health, security, and dignity.

Today, the nation has made dramatic progress in securing rights, protections, and services for victims. Every state has enacted victims’ rights laws. The Missouri Sheriffs’ Association’s (MSA) commitment to preserving the rights of crime victims holds a place of honor among service providers in the state. Never before has there been such a dedicated effort by law enforcement communities to serve victims in the immediate hours and days after victimization occurred. Since October 2013, the Crime Victims Unit has worked with more than 190 victims. Many of our cases have multiple victims.

We were excited to be able to expand our program this year by hiring Emily Russell, bringing the staff total to two with an additional five volunteers. Emily, who is married and has two children, has a bachelor’s degree in Communications from the University of Central Missouri. She brings a wealth of knowledge to the job and has a long history of community involvement/services to those in need. From 2012 to 2013 she served as chair of Moms Like Me of Warrensburg; she is a founding member and past vice president of New Vision Youth Services Organization and she is a founding board member and past committee chair of the non-profit Nathan’s Quest Childhood Cancer Fund. She’s also actively involved in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program and she works in partnership with the Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition.

“I’ve always had a passion to help those in need and have spent the majority of my spare time advocating for others through needs assessments, fundraising, organizing community events and sharing gratitude for law enforcement and other first responders. I specialize in understanding the crime of human trafficking and have spent much of the past year collaborating with other anti-trafficking organizations, creating public awareness, teaching at-risk populations, and educating community professionals on the role they play in identifying human trafficking victims. Understanding this crime has prepared me for response to a variety of high-trauma crimes and circumstances that often fall under the umbrella of human trafficking, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, drug addiction and homelessness. In 2000, my closest cousin was killed by a drunk driver at the age of 17 and shortly thereafter, I was also (albeit unofficially) a victim of stalking, so I understand the heartache and vulnerabilities that many of our families are experiencing,” she said. “I also seem to have a natural ability to empathize and connect with others, which helps me comfortably develop rapport with survivors of crime and sit by their side in friendship as their cases pass through the justice system.”

Since joining the CVU as a volunteer in September of 2013, Emily has attended court and parole hearings to help victims through their experiences in the justice system.

Every year, millions of people have their lives changed forever by crime. They are our family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. Many will have life-changing injuries or need ongoing care and support. We can all reach out to victims, listen to what they need, and help them rebuild their lives.

It was Benjamin Franklin that said, “Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.”

Please support the Crime Victims Unit by volunteering or donating to help meet the needs of crime victims in the state.

By Kim Case, Missouri Sheriffs’ Association Crime Victims Unit Advocate
I have had the good fortune of leading in the same organization for nearly 20 years. I’ve also been blessed that my senior staff has remained with me for that entire run. We haven’t done everything perfectly. But, we’ve figured out how to see the best in each other and collaborate in a way that is not only good for the organization, it also makes the work relationally energizing. After 20 years I think each of us would say, through good times and bad, we genuinely love and respect each other and actually love coming to work!

People tell me this is not typical. Thinking about my approach to leading people and keeping them inspired and motivated, I was struck by the simplicity of the practices. I suspect everything I share will be things already known. But, perhaps because of their relative simplicity, their significance might be underestimated.

**BEING POSITIVE**

I have come to believe that positivity is one of the most important qualities. Leaders set the tone for the group; having a positive disposition about the mission and the future is absolutely critical. Life is full of bad news. It’s easy to be negative. And our work is often very demanding in and of itself. So, for a leader to express what is possible... for a leader to smile while in the office... for a leader to celebrate the good that is being done... makes an immeasurable difference! It’s a little thing that makes an enormous impact on the environment.

**BEING APPRECIATIVE**

There is a prevailing presumption that we ought not express gratitude for people doing what they are “supposed” to do. Kudos should be reserved for something extraordinary. You don’t want to be “too” grateful because people will get a big head and think they deserve more. I don’t think the problem is that people are thanked too much. Instead, they may be thanked insincerely or generally — neither of which are very effective. A well-timed, well-conceived, personalized expression of gratitude — even for the most ordinary of tasks accomplished with excellence — can be extremely motivating and help create a positive work climate.

**BEING SUPPORTIVE**

The work place is increasingly a place where people experience community. With the break-down of the family in so many sectors of society, people increasingly look to the work place to provide a sense of connectedness. Leaders can resist that shift and require their people to leave personal problems at home, but the fact is that we are whole people and we bring all of ourselves to the work place. Leaving our personal problems at home is impossible. Creating an environment for people to be supportive of one another on a personal and professional level not only facilitates the sense of community, it ensures that your best people will stick with you. For them it’s not just a job; it’s family!

**BEING UNDERSTANDING**

Many leaders believe one of the most important components of an inspiring work place is a compelling vision. I agree! People need to know the vision and be motivated to fulfill it. However, there is a piece of a leader’s communication process that is typically overlooked and can make the difference between vision acceptance or rejection. Stephen Covey coined the phrase, “Seek first to understand then be understood.” This principle is critical to vision-casting. Instead of simply talking about what can/ought to be, truly inspiring leaders take the time to anticipate the difficulties associated with achievement and address those barriers with as much understanding and deliberateness as the vision itself.

**BEING AUTHENTIC**

All too many leaders believe those who are following them need their leaders to be strong and invincible. There may be times where that is true. However, in day-to-day operations, personal authenticity can be extremely magnetic and inspiring. Contrary to popular belief, a leader’s credibility is not at risk when doubt, uncertainty, or personal ambivalence is expressed. Rather, they are seen as human. People identify with brokenness and vulnerability and respect leaders who have the humility to embrace their own humanity.

It can be intimidating and overwhelming to lead an organization in the midst of shifting cultural norms, pressing economic challenges, and complicated government bureaucracy. We can become cynical and skeptical about the discovery and implementation of workable long-term solutions. But, I have found that when leaders have the right people around them AND those people are motivated and inspired, solutions can be found, problems can be solved, and organizational effectiveness can be sustained. The real question is: Will a leader do the simple things necessary to make the seemingly impossible, possible?

*By Pieter Van Waarde, Senior Pastor
Woodcrest Chapel*
As Linda Owen spent her free time making clothes for her daughters and custom bedding for new grandchildren, she never imagined that one day she’d be getting paid for her creativity. But that’s exactly what has happened. And just as surprising, only a few weeks after purchasing her first professional machine, she was swamped with orders.

“I retired a year ago after 32 years of management with McDonald’s Restaurants. I’ve always loved to sew so when I was talking to my husband (Mark Owen, sheriff of Platte County) about what I was going to do now that I was home full time, he asked something like, ‘What about doing embroidery?’ I said that it sounded good and we bought a machine. It was just that simple,” she said.

Shortly after making the purchase, someone told the Owens that the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association (MSA) was looking for a company to provide them with shirts bearing the organization’s official logo. A call was made and the next thing she knew, Linda was asked if she could provide embroidered shirts for staff and put a display together in time for the sheriffs’ conference in March. Since that debut she has been working with several law enforcement agencies on their custom embroidered products.

“It was like ‘Oh my gosh! Did I just do this?’ But we found product that we liked, ordered a sampling of shirts and I got busy learning how to use my new machine. It was a lot of work but it was also a huge blessing — we purchased the machine to make money, I just didn’t expect to be working at it so quickly,” she laughed.

In the meantime, the Owens also began working out the details of business ownership. In the past, Linda had been pulling her sewing machine out of its storage place and setting it up on the kitchen table whenever she had a new project underway. However, with orders beginning to stack up, she found that she needed a permanent space to work and house the larger machines so a sewing room was set up in the basement — a place previously set aside as Mark’s “man cave.” A company name was chosen, a Limited Liability Corporation was established, email accounts were acquired, business cards were ordered and the couple started spending evenings creating a website for the venture, to be known as Sweet Stitchers kc.

In addition to learning the ins and outs of computer-designed embroidery, Linda has shopped around in order to expand her product line of jackets, button-front and polo shirts and hats to also include T-shirts and sweatshirts. She plans to take orders and bring some of the MSA logo items to future MSA conferences.

“It’s been like a heavenly whirlwind. I almost have to keep pinching myself to see if this is real. I just can’t believe that I get to spend my time doing what I love, providing items for an organization that is near and dear to our hearts,” she said.

For more information or to place an order while the website is being designed, email Linda at sweetstitcherskc@gmail.com or call her at 816-714-4246.

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland

Turning a hobby into a career has paid off for Linda Owen, who provides custom embroidered products for the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association. The MSA logo consists of 16,000 stitches and has a 32 to 33 minute runtime.
Branson Rolls Out Red Carpet for Law Enforcement

Probably few would believe that a roller coaster offering a 1:27-minute ride would serve as the impetus for Branson Salutes Law Enforcement, a nine-day event honoring America’s hometown heroes. But that’s exactly what happened.

Laurie Hayes, executive director for the Branson Lakes Area Lodging Association, explained.

“When Silver Dollar City started putting together plans for the grand opening of Outlaw Run, their new roller coaster, the park’s owners wanted to make sure no one got the impression that law-breakers were being glamorized, so opening ceremonies also included dedication of a monument to law enforcement. Word got back to Chip Mason, a former law enforcement officer who now heads up security for the park, about how appreciative the public was and it kind of grew from there,” she said. “Don Phillips, state representative from Stone County and a retired Missouri State Highway Patrol officer, talked about how successful Veteran’s Week has been so he and a few other people reached out to the community to see how they felt about a similar event to honor law enforcement. Everyone jumped on it!”

Jimmie Russell, sheriff of Taney County; Doug Rader, sheriff of Stone County; Col. Ron Replogle, superintendent of the Missouri State Highway Patrol; and Kent Crutcher, chief of the Branson Police Department; were asked to sit on a committee to organize the event. It wasn’t long before the group came up with a long list of family-friendly activities that promise to provide a week full of fun — as well as a few educational opportunities — for active and retired law enforcement personnel and their families.

The event will kick off at 5 p.m. Friday, June 13 with an opening ceremony at the Branson Landing. All week long, officers with valid identification get free admission to Silver Dollar City, White Water and Showboat Branson Belle and greatly reduced ticket prices for their family members. Hayes said America’s Hometown Heroes also teamed up with the Branson Tourism Center for reduced rates on lodging and attractions.

Organized events include a barbecue and Billy Dean concert at 5 p.m. Saturday; a church service and ice cream social Sunday; a products expo Monday; a golf tournament Tuesday; POST certified training opportunities Wednesday; a keynote banquet featuring Gordon Graham, an expert on organizational and operational risk management issues, Wednesday evening; a motorcycle rodeo, rally and patch/coin exchange and blue grass concert Thursday; another motorcycle rally and shooting competition Friday; a Mark Chapman concert Friday evening; and a third motorcycle rally and Five-O 5K Walk/Run Saturday.

More events will be added to the calendar as details are finalized.

In the meantime, Hayes is reaching out to schools across the state and across America to ask students to write letters of appreciation for the law enforcement officers that will be visiting Branson throughout the week. The letters, which can be sent to info@bransonsalutes.com, will be posted in the hospitality room at Chateau on the Lake, which will serve as a gathering place for those who just want to swap stories.

For more information, visit the Branson Salutes Law Enforcement Facebook page or visit www.bransonsalutes.com. The website includes a multiple-event registration form for activities.

Hayes said although registration is not required for all events, she hopes everyone that plans to attend will fill out the form or email info@bransonsalutes.com to help them better plan.

“I don’t want count on only 500 for the barbecue and then have 5,000 show up,” she laughed.

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
Few realize how much sheriffs do to provide safety and protection not only for the public, but also for the individuals incarcerated in their county jails. As long as that inmate is confined, sheriffs are responsible for providing them with safe housing, food, clothing — and medical care. Sheriffs and their counties can be sued if they don’t get it right.

Established in April 2002 by Dr. Norman R. Johnson and his wife Brenda, Advanced Correctional Healthcare (ACH) can help reduce a portion of that burden and liability risk by providing medical care for the inmates in jail facilities.

“I was a practicing physician when a friend, who was working as a physician in a prison, asked me to look into prison medicine. He thought I might enjoy it,” Dr. Johnson explained. “I did find it interesting but also found that it wasn’t very well organized. While there were correctional healthcare organizations providing nationally recognized best practices, I found that few facilities were organized to those standards. I also saw there were deficits when providing long-term healthcare to inmates so I started designing a system that would help correctional facilities handle chronic care over an extended period of time.”

What he found delighted him. Patients in the jail system actually could be healthier than those on the outside. Dr. Johnson also found a way to make that happen in a cost-effective manner. His company was born.

By December 31, 2002, ACH already had signed nine contracts. By 2007, and then again in 2012 and 2013, ACH was listed as one of INC. 5000’s fastest growing health care companies. Through reputation and referral, ACH’s clientele has currently grown to 244 clients in 17 states, providing more than 30,000 inmates with daily access to medical care. Thirty-nine of those clients — 37 county jails, one city jail and one juvenile detention center — are in Missouri.

The size of facilities served range from 10 beds to more than 1,200. ACH is experienced in handling all types of inmate populations — adult, juvenile, Department of Corrections, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, US Marshal and Indian Nation — operating by the jail standards of that particular state and National Commission on Correctional Health Care recommendations.

ACH also actively supports sheriff’s associations in a variety of ways in the states where they operate. In Missouri, ACH also supports the County Commissioner’s Association. Continuing that partnership, Dr. Johnson, well-recognized in correctional medicine, continues to conduct medical training conferences in many states and to speak at state and national law enforcement conferences.

Art Rose, a member of ACH’s marketing staff, said their approach to detainee medical services is to identify the needs of each client and then develop a customized program using the strengths of both the facility and ACH to provide the highest quality of detainee health care possible. They do this by:

- Ensuring the inmates’ medical needs are addressed as required by law so their health is not allowed to decline. This means they get what they need — but not whatever they want.
- Providing efficient healthcare so the county’s and city’s tax dollars are used as judiciously as possible.
- Greatly reducing the facility’s, the county’s and city’s risk of lawsuit by employing the doctors, keeping three doctors on call 24/7, and employing nurses that are on-site and conducting ongoing training.

ACH can also provide excellent discounts on medical and non-medical items for all contracted entities. Because the company belongs to large group purchasing organizations that do billions of dollars of business, they are able to bring discounted prices to jails, large or small.

As part of the medical services they provide, they offer a series of additional tools including medical training DVDs for officers that are approved for credit hours through POS and drug identification cards. ACH also offers an electronic medical records product tailored specifically for county jails.

“We believe strong client partnerships are the key to a successful program and solid working relationships with community-based service providers, such as the local hospital, are critical to working together as a partner in the delivery of health care,” Rose said. “Our diverse knowledge of health care, management, training, sales, and business relations with an emphasis on communication and client satisfaction provides the experience required to attain the highest standard of medical care for the detainees.”

By Art Rose, Advanced Correctional Healthcare
After reading some of the newspaper accounts about criminals being held in the Douglas County Jail, one might decide they deserve exactly what they’re getting — long days and nights in cramped, dimly lit cells with no hope of seeing daylight until they’re transferred to a state facility or released.

And that sentiment might be correct. Few would agree that thieves who steal from churches; child molesters; drug dealers; and murderers deserve to live lives of luxury while behind bars.

However, those who tour the facility might also wonder if those behaviors warrant time behind bars in this jail.

“A sales tax increase was on the 2010 ballot to fund construction of a new jail and as part of our campaign, we held two or three open houses for the public to come in and tour the facility — get a look at the conditions,” explained Douglas County Sheriff Chris Degase. “About 50 or 60 people actually showed up and left in shock, absolutely appalled at the conditions. However, what started out as a jail ended up as a push for a whole new judicial system. Even though we were being very modest and weren’t building anything overly fancy or bigger than what we needed, that raised the price tag substantially. Since we were in the middle of the economic downturn, people felt they couldn’t afford another tax and the measure failed 60-40.”

With such a wide margin of disapproval, Sheriff Degase said he knew any attempts to take the issue back to the people in the near future would be futile, so he went to Plan B. He made thousands of dollars of improvements in the jail’s electrical system and he used inmates with backgrounds in construction to paint, build walls to surround dispatch, which previously sat “right out in the open,” and close off space in the office area with doors.

A tour of the jail revealed that even with the improvements, it remains severely outdated.

The first cell, painted a bright Pepto Bismol pink, was formerly used as the “drunk tank.” In 2010, it was converted to include a shower and four bunks and is now used to house trustees — those inmates who, through good behavior, earned the op-
portunity to work in the jail, cooking and serving meals and helping with laundry and other projects as needed. Inadequate and potentially hazardous wiring and lack of storage continue to pose problems. At the opposite end of the hallway is an approximately 10-foot-by-20-foot cell with four bunks, a toilet and shower that is used to house female inmates. It serves as sleeping quarters and eating and recreational area for the women. A television sits on a molded plastic chair outside the cell with power cords and cable lines running across the floor.

An antiquated locking system and two sets of reinforced steel doors keep the rest of the facility, which is often filled to the max, secure.

A stark padded cell, used for inmates on suicide watch, waits behind the first door. That small room, lined with what resembles dated gymnasium mats, holds a 3-foot-by-5-foot pad that's seen better days and has a hole in the floor that serves as a bathroom.

Behind the second door is a long, low-ceilinged hallway leading to a 16-foot-by-24-foot multi-purpose room and several barred cells. That area is also windowless. Although artificial light filters through holes in the thick bolted steel walls, the cells, outfitted only with stainless steel toilets and bunks, remain somewhat dim. In the corner of the rec room, used for conversation, exercise and meals, sits one tiny stainless steel shower that serves the entire male general population. A small TV is mounted in another corner. The steel walls bear inmates' penciled sketches and the bars that separate the room from the hallway are stuffed with paperback books and draped with whites that the men hand-washed themselves.

At times, the cells are also “stuffed.” In 2008, before Sheriff Degase was elected, the inmate census for the year sat at 337. In 2013, 563 inmates were confined in Douglas County. In many months, the 2013 population was more than double the numbers in 2008. However, the staff has remained the same — the sheriff, who also acts as jail administrator; five deputies; five dispatchers; one dispatcher who doubles as a jailer; and two additional jailers.

Even with the overcrowding and lack of exposure to sunlight, Sheriff Degase said few suffer with depression. He credits that to their open-door policy, which allows male inmates who pose no disciplinary problems to move about freely in the “community” area and socialize. In addition, jailers spend time talking to the inmates and family visitation is held every Sunday.

“I’ve tried to work on getting a little fenced-in area outside in the alleyway but a couple things stand in the way. One is money, two is security. It’s been a real issue for us because, while we have a large population for the size of our jail, we have a small staff,” he said, adding that he adopted a section of roadway so inmates, who will be shackled together, will get to work outside occasionally. “I wish we had a patch of ground close by where we could put in a garden, but unfortunately, nothing is available.”

In the meantime, Sheriff Degase also brings in another form of “Light” into the jail.

Inmates are allowed bibles and when churches request it and when time and staffing allows, parishioners are allowed to bring in meals and pastoral visits are allowed.

“Crosspoint Church in Ava, whose pastor is a former deputy, records their services and they provide us with DVDs. Once we figure out a way to do it, we’ll actually pipe it in so the inmates can watch it, if they choose to. Unfortunately, this is the school of hard knocks. They messed up. And nobody knows that like they do,” he said. “And although God can forgive them, the judge hasn’t so they’re simply reaping the consequences of the seeds they sowed. We do the best we can with what we have to work with.”

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
Second Chance

Jail administrator’s innovative thinking turns lives around

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found. Was blind, but now I see.

Those lyrics have special meaning for the members of Lincoln County Jail’s Second Chance Choir, who, clad in leg irons and orange or black-and-white striped uniforms, have been sharing their testimonies and singing about God’s amazing grace in local churches nearly every Sunday morning for the past several months.

According to inmate Scott Pratt, one of the choir leaders, in 40-some performances, the results have always been the same — there’s not a dry eye in the house by the time they hit the last note.

“And I’m talking about us. The emotions overwhelm us,” he said in a video produced by the Archdiocese of St. Louis. “It’s proof that the Spirit exists — proof that the Spirit is there amongst us. I’m 47 and just now understanding I can be a different person — I can change.”

Lincoln County Jail Administrator Capt. David Curtis said that’s exactly the outcome he hoped for when he formed the choir.

“After 200-plus years of rehabilitation, we’ve found that many of the old ways don’t work. I wanted to try something different because, although I’ve spent the last 30 years locking up ‘bad guys,’ I’ve come to realize that not everyone in jail is inherently bad. Some have just made mistakes — made bad choices — and now they need a chance to prove they can live right,” he said.

Capt. Curtis has a long career in law enforcement. He got started in 1983 as a Nixa police officer. Then over the next several years he worked as a deputy for both the St. Charles and Jefferson county sheriffs’ offices before signing on with the Department of Defense as a battlefield investigator in Iraq and Afghanistan. He returned from Afghanistan in 2012 just as long-time friend John Cottle began running for sheriff of Lincoln County.

“We’ve been buddies since we were young men and then worked together — me as a deputy and him as a water patrol officer — in the flood of ’93, spending 12 to 15 hours a day in his boat. Over the years, we stayed in touch so when he asked me to come on board as jail administrator, I said ‘Yes.’ I knew nothing about corrections, but I knew a lot about leading men, both on the job and in the battlefield; I’m good with people and I’m good at teambuilding,” he said.

Soon after taking the job, he started putting those skills to work.

Capt. Curtis, who hated seeing the inmates just sitting in their cells, got them started picking up cigarette butts from the grounds. When a water heater broke, he asked one of the inmates who had worked as a pipefitter to replace the broken unit, not only saving the jail money, but also giving the inmate a sense of worth. Little by little, more and more inmates were asked to share their talents.

Capt. Curtis said when he asked for and received permission to plant a garden he had an entire crew that was eager to get their hands dirty. The Second Chance Work Brigade was officially formed.
“I’ve come to realize that not everyone in jail is inherently bad. Some have just made mistakes — made bad choices — and now they need a chance to prove they can live right.”

“We average 120 inmates and usually have about 20 in the program. Of course, not everyone wants to get involved — and not everyone qualifies. Before they’re allowed to join the work brigade, they have to be extensively screened and they have to exhibit exemplary behavior,” he said, adding that because most inmates are there only for a few weeks or months, screening is ongoing. “I’m happy to say that to date, we’ve had no problems.”

In fact, the garden project was so successful that Sheriff Cottle gave the work brigade permission to “leave the wire” to tackle projects for churches and not-for-profit organizations in the community. To date, they’ve trimmed trees and shrubs and planted flowers at a church in Elsberry; they’ve constructed a fence at a little league ball park in Moscow Mills; they’ve transformed a 130-year-old building into office space for Sts. Joachim and Ann Care Service, the largest comprehensive social support agency in St. Charles, Lincoln and Warren counties; and they recently were asked by the mayor to restore a 120-year-old house for the Troy Historical Society. “This has really been a win-win situation all the way around. The community is benefitting by the free labor and the men, while tired and sunburned at the end of the day, feel good about themselves because they know they’re making a difference.”

The choir, comprised of many of the work brigade members, is having similar results. Capt. Curtis said it’s not only building a sense of belonging in the men, who are housed together in the same pod, it’s also building a sense of pride in the other inmates, as evidenced when several volunteered to hand wash uniforms after the washing machine broke down the day before one of the choir’s singing dates.

“I’m so proud of my guys. They’re disciplined, they’re focused and they want a chance to prove they can do something right. Best of all, they’re carrying that attitude with them when they leave here. Of all the men that have gone through the program in the past year, only one has returned to jail. The rest have all turned their lives around. A side benefit is that the choir and brigade have also led to job offers and other offers of assistance for the men when they are released,” he said.

Capt. Curtis was also quick to give credit for the success to Sheriff Cottle and to staff members who are extremely supportive of the program.

“Many of them volunteer on their days off because they know we have to have guards with us when we travel. They see how important this is to the men and to the community,” he said. “I started the Second Chance Work Brigade and Choir as a way to open the inmates’ eyes and change their hearts but I’m very thankful that it’s done so much more.”

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
**MSA Spring Conference**

Although a severe ice storm forced a three-week delay, the majority of sheriffs and vendors were able to make the 2014 Missouri Sheriffs' Association (MSA) Spring Conference held March 24-26 at Lake of the Ozark's Lodge of Four Seasons.

Sheriffs listen attentively as Missouri Sheriffs' Association Executive Director Mick Covington provides updates on the Conceal Carry permitting process.

Attorney General Chris Koster discusses proposed legislation that could affect how sheriffs carry out their responsibilities.

Pettis County Sheriff Kevin Bond, who takes over as president of the MSA in July, tells sheriffs what they need to submit for the history book project.

A lonely table for one sits unoccupied in honor of fallen law enforcement officers. This is the first year for the observance, carried out by the sergeant at arms.

Jerry Lee, director of Missouri's Department of Public Safety, offers opening remarks to kick off this year's training conference.

Nearly 90 percent of Missouri's 115 sheriffs received training on everything from leadership ethics to racial profiling at the training.

Scott County Chief Deputy Kenneth Kinder (right) and his colleague present a session on human trafficking.

Wanda Holtmeyer, accounts manager; Karen Logan, administrative assistant; and Jeanne Merritt, marketing coordinator; greet this year's attendees.

Kim Case, crime victim advocate case manager (left), introduces her new assistant, Emily Russell, to Cass County Sheriff Dwight Diehl.
MSA Jail Administrators’ Conference

One hundred three jail administrators, staff members and sheriffs attended the third annual Jail Administrators’ Conference, presented by the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association. The conference, held May 6-8 at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City, covered such topics as dealing with combative inmates, transporting inmates and motivating staff.

Cathy Jones with IHS Pharmacy is one of more than 35 exhibitors in attendance at this year’s conference.

Jail Captain Jenny Atwell and Chief Jail Officer Warren Brewer (right) talk to Joe Hellney with Court Money.

Platte County Captain Joe King listens to a question during his presentation on inmate discipline.

More than 100 attend the session on inmate mail procedures.

Adair County Sheriff Robert Hardwick presents Officer Latara Lusher with the 2014 MSA Corrections Officer of the Year award.

Lawrence County Sheriff Brad Delay (right) presents Lt. Doug Bounous with the 2014 MSA Jail Administrator of the Year award.

After slaving over a hot grill, Moniteau County Sheriff Jeptha Gump enjoys crawfish fresh from Louisiana.

CTC Communications, Platte County Sheriff Mark Owen, and Moniteau County Sheriff Jeptha Gump put on a crawfish boil and BBQ for this year’s attendees.

Platte County Sheriff Mark Owen (center) and his wife Linda talk with Steve Zalken from Alamar Uniforms.
Google search for “Law enforcement inspirational quotes/mottos” will net hundreds of thousands of results. Some sayings are crude, some are touching, some are even funny — but they nearly all focus on one thought — those with a call on their lives need to answer.

Individuals who have long desired to truly make a difference in their communities, but who have procrastinated about taking the steps needed to accomplish that goal, now have another opportunity.

This August, the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association Training Academy (MSATA) will begin another round of law enforcement training courses — and they’ve added another training site to their roster to make it easier for those in the northern portion of the state to attend.

The newest academy will be held in Chillicothe at the Livingston County Sheriff’s Office. It’s one of the eight 700-hour basic law enforcement courses that are scheduled to begin at the end of this summer. The other locations are in Camdenton, Poplar Bluff, Kirksville, Clinton, West Plains, Mt. Vernon and Waynesville.

“We felt like we needed to offer another program north of I-70. And because North Central Missouri College in Trenton, which is just about 22 miles away, offers a criminal justice program, we thought it would be a good opportunity to serve those students that wanted to pursue a career in law enforcement after they graduate,” explained Mike Stubbs, training coordinator for the MSA.

In order to be a licensed peace officer in the state of Missouri, whether with a municipal department or a sheriff’s office, candidates must complete a minimum of 600 hours of training with a state-licensed training academy. That training is separate from a criminal justice degree required by some agencies, but not by the state.

According to the Missouri Department of Public Safety, in addition to graduating from a state licensed law enforcement basic training course, each applicant must also:

✓ Be a United States citizen
✓ Be 21 years of age
✓ Have a high school diploma or its equivalent
✓ Have no criminal record
✓ Successfully pass the Missouri Peace Officer License Exam

To attend the MSATA, potential students also must submit a two-page autobiography at least three weeks prior to the start of class and attend a 30-minute, in-person interview.

Classes typically are held from 6 to 10 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, all day on Saturday and sometimes on Sunday. Stubbs said it takes approximately 10 ½ months to complete the program. Financial aid — either grants, which don’t have to be paid back, or student loans, which do — can be arranged through the Missouri State University in West Plains to help with tuition costs at any of the academy locations. College credits can also be obtained through the university.

The academy classes are taught by a variety of professionals including working or retired deputies, police officers, highway patrol troopers, federal law enforcement officers, juvenile officers, judges, firefighters and attorneys who live in the communities where classes are held. They are licensed and regulated by the Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Program, a Division of the Missouri Department of Public Safety.

“We have no way of tracking graduates because we don’t offer placement services but we do know that since beginning the training academy in 1997, we’ve held more than 160 classes and graduated more than 3,000 students,” Stubbs said. “In this session alone, we currently have 185 students enrolled.”

In fact, this year, for the fourth year in a row, MSATA ranked number one in the state for total numbers of basic academy graduates.

Stubbs said anyone interested in enrolling in the MSATA should visit the Missouri Sheriffs’ Association website at www.mosheriff.com and then click on the “Training Academy” link at the top of the page.

“It will walk you through the process and then you can even fill out the application online,” he said.

For more information, call Gina Kauffman or Donna Arney at 573-635-9644. For more information on the financial aid process, contact Rachel Peterson at 417-255-7978.

By Nancy Zoellner-Hogland
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