



Phase 1, #8

# St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office

# Update

2004 Annual Report

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DEDICATED TO REPORTING THE NEWEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ST. CHARLES PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

## Postal Patron

This is a free annual 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 Dept. at (985) 783-1355 or fax us at (985) 783-1195.



SHERIFF  
GREG CHAMPAGNE

Welcome to the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office's eighth issue of *Update*. In it we strive to keep local residents aware of the many advancements within the agency.

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 recent advances we've made — policing initiatives, community partnerships, and public initiatives — all of which are aimed at keeping St. Charles Parish residents safe and maintaining our unique quality of life.

1.

## SCSO continues to enhance services

The St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office continued to make great strides during 2003.

We continue to enhance deputy training, upgrade equipment and add public services. Over the past year, the department achieved another record-low crime rate, beefed up our patrol efforts parishwide, and continued to streamline our automated technology services, thus improving "real-time" information exchanges.

During each shift, our deputies seek feedback from the public identifying ways we can improve. The citizens' input has aided us tremendously.

Based on information gleaned from the surveys, we've targeted streets where speeding was commonly reported, areas where drug activity was suspected, and helped Neighborhood Watch programs get up and running.

We are constantly seeking ways to protect and serve the citizens on this community.

Most recently, when excessive rains flooded the homes of several Norco residents, corrections officers and trustees responded. Along with parish workers, they removed water-soaked carpet and other debris from the neighborhoods.

The St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office remains committed to meeting the public's needs, ensuring safety and our unique quality of life. We welcome your feedback.



SCSO deputies and trustees help parish workers clean up debris in Norco the day after torrential rains flooded homes in the area.

## Parish's 2003 crime rate reaches a 7-year low

❑ Overall UCR figures fell 2.4% compared to 2002; property crimes continue to be a concern

St. Charles Parish's overall crime rate reached a seven-year low in 2003, dropping 2.4% compared to the previous year.

"I'm very pleased that our overall numbers appear to have a downward trend," Sheriff Greg Champagne said.

The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) track seven Index Crimes — murder, assault, rape, robbery, burglary, theft and auto theft, which are compiled for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The numbers are used to monitor the crime level nationwide.

In all, 2,369 crimes were reported during 2003. The previous year, the crime rate totalled 2,427.

Decreases were reported in four of the seven categories. The largest drops were recorded in assaults — 866 in 2002 to 750 in 2003 — and auto thefts — 107 in 2002 to 101 last year.

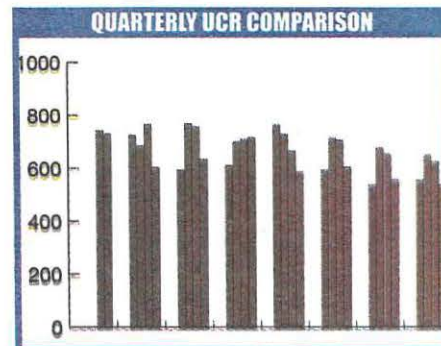
The parish experienced three murders and 13 rapes, the same in each category as the previous year.

Increases were reported in robberies — 26 in 2002 to 37 in 2003; burglaries — 395 to 435; and thefts — 1,017 to 1,030.

Property crimes continue to be a chief concern for this region. "There is still room for improvement," the Sheriff said. "I urge citizens to lock their cars and remove valuables from sight. These simple measures would cut down on our volume of auto burglaries."

Sheriff Champagne credits the entire agency for the crime drop. Citing the increased visibility of SCSO deputies on the parish's streets and the many community outreach programs, he said, "We continue to educate the public... to urge them to be vigilant and to report unusual activity. Effective crime-fighting involves a partnership with our community. The statistics indicate that, together, we are making a difference."

OVERALL UCR FIGURES BY CATEGORY							
OFFENSE	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Murder	4	2	2	4	2	3	3
Rape	9	22	13	11	17	13	13
Robbery	56	40	51	33	47	26	37
Assault	813	908	1,010	1,046	964	866	750
Burglary	482	427	427	475	452	395	435
Theft	1,232	1,194	1,121	1,046	1,014	1,017	1,030
Auto Theft	170	160	113	130	125	107	101
TOTAL	2,766	2,753	2,737	2,745	2,621	2,427	2,369



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, May 1996 – December 2003



# Departmental Strategies

## Jennings named top deputy for 2003

### □ Sheriff cites her heroics in house fire, canal car rescue

Gwen Jennings has been named the SCSO's 2003 Deputy of the Year and was



DEPUTY GWEN JENNINGS

given two awards for valor. Jennings, a five-year veteran of the SCSO, was honored for her actions during a house fire in Norco and an automobile accident along U.S. 61 in Destrehan. She is credited with saving at least three people's lives.

In January 2003, Jennings pulled a wheelchair-bound woman and her roommate, as well as their pet dogs, from an engulfed blaze. Afterward, she joined firefighters in battling the fire.

Jennings was treated for smoke inhalation following that incident and, upon release, returned to duty.

In June 2003, she jumped into the canal along U.S. 61 to save a man from drowning. His pickup careened into the canal and began to sink. Free from the wreckage, the man was unable to swim because of his injuries.

"If not for her quick thinking and deliberate actions, both of these life-and-death incidents would have ended tragically," Sheriff Greg Champagne said.

2.

## SCSO given OK for federal prisoners

### □ U.S. Marshal Service pays \$49.84 per prisoner daily for housing federal offenders

In September 2003, the Nelson Coleman St. Charles Parish Correctional Center began housing federal prisoners. The United States Marshal Service gave the final OK last summer following on-site inspections at the correctional center.

In exchange for housing federal inmates, the SCSO is paid \$49.84 per prisoner daily, more than twice the \$22.39 the parish and state's Department of Corrections pay.

"From a financial perspective, the clearance to house federal prisoners is a real asset for our agency," Sheriff Champagne said. "We are able to generate far more money to defray the day-to-day expenses associated with running the correctional center."

The 600-bed correctional center, which opened June 15, 2001, was built without generating any new taxes. Instead, an innovative agreement to house state DOC prisoners was made to construct the \$13.4 million facility.

"The additional monies we get from federal prisoners will help retire building costs and to operate the facility," the Sheriff said.

The majority of the federal prisoners are considered "white collar" offenders, and pose no threat to the community, he said.

Currently, the correctional center averages

about 25 federal prisoners monthly.

In addition to expanding the prisoner mix, the SCSO correctional staff has continued to develop the prisoner work release program.

Only state DOC prisoners are eligible for the program. The SCSO assists inmates in finding labor-oriented jobs; most work in construction or ship cleaning.

SCSO deputies transport the inmates to and from work daily. Transportation costs are deducted from the prisoner's salary.

All monies the inmate earns can either be saved to their account – they collect it when they are released from the correctional center – or sent home.

"This is a valuable part of transitioning these people back in to society," Sheriff Champagne said. "It's been proven that having the skills and experience to support yourself greatly reduces the likelihood that these men and women will become repeat offenders."

To be recommended, prisoners must meet



SCSO deputies watch over inmates in the women's pod of the Nelson Coleman St. Charles Parish Correctional Center.

all statutory and regulatory criteria. Inmates' criminal and disciplinary history also carefully reviewed.

The Warden recommends program participants to the state DOC, which has the final approval. The SCSO's program has been approved to have 60 work-release inmates; about 49 prisoners are currently employed through the program.

"We continue to explore ways we can ready inmates to become productive, law-abiding citizens upon their release," Sheriff Champagne said.

## Major Nowak named new SCSO warden

### □ Robert Dale promoted to Captain; assumes deputy warden post

Major John Nowak has been named Warden of the Nelson Coleman St. Charles Parish Correctional Center in Killona. He will oversee operations at the 600-bed, state-of-the-art facility.

A 26-year veteran of law enforcement, Major Nowak graduated from the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office POST Academy in 1978. He was assigned to several positions within the JPSO, including Patrol, Homicide, Crime Analysis and the Career Criminal Intercept Unit (CODE 6), prior to assuming command of the agency's Intake/Booking Department in the jail.

While with the JPSO, Major

Nowak earned a Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Award following an incident in 1989 in which a fellow officer was killed.

"I am confident Major Nowak will continue to advance our operations at the correctional facility," said Sheriff Greg Champagne. "We've made great strides with our GED, work release, and community service programs. Under Major Nowak's direction, these programs will continue to be expanded and improved upon."

Nowak and wife Mary have five children and two grandchildren. The couple currently resides in Metairie.

Sheriff Champagne also announced the promotion of Capt. Robert Dale to deputy warden. In addition to overseeing the work release and trustee programs and inmate issues, he

will ensure the facility is operating within DOC guidelines.

Dale has 27 years' experience in law enforcement, 20 of which were spent at the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office.

After graduating from the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office POST Academy in 1977, Dale served seven years with the JPSO. During that time, he was assigned to the agency's Patrol and Land, Air, Sea Emergency Rescue divisions.

In 1983, Dale joined the SCSO. His assignments with the department have included positions with Patrol, Criminal Investigations, Internal Affairs and, most recently, Juvenile



WARDEN NOWAK



CAPTAIN DALE

Investigations.

Dale holds an Associate of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Nicholls State University. He also completed the 175th Session of the FBI National Academy in 1993. A FBI/POST-certified instructor, Dale teaches investigations and ethics at the SCSO's POST Academy.

He and wife Pam are the parents of two children. The couple resides in St. Rose.



# Departmental Partnerships

## Reservists giving back to community

❑ Volunteer deputies provide invaluable service to parish; assigned throughout SCSO

Barry Matherne Sr. still cringes when he recalls his days as a rookie reservist.

"I signed my commission and, two days later, was assigned to the road. No training... nothing," the Destrehan resident said. On his first call – a burglary alarm in Charlestowne – the novice reserve deputy drew his weapon on his partner as the seasoned officer made his way to the front of the building.

"I was as green as they come," he said.

Twenty-four years later, expectations have changed dramatically for reservists.

Prior to being issued a commission, reserve deputies must successfully complete a 132-hour training academy. Hands-on training continues with field training officers from the Patrol Department before reserve officers are teamed with full-time deputies on the road.

Things have changed for Matherne, too. In May 2002, he retired from Dupont, graduated from the SCSO's POST Academy that winter, and accepted a part-time position commanding the department's Reserve Unit.

Law enforcement is in Matherne's family bloodline; his uncle is former Sheriff John St. Amant and several other relatives have also worn the badge. "For me, it was a comfortable fit."

Matherne had also dedicated several years to volunteering around the parish. A former East St. Charles volunteer fireman, he served as president of the organization for three years. He was also a volunteer emergency medical technician in the 1980s.

"The EMT gig was what eventually led me to law enforcement," Matherne said. While en route to East Jefferson Hospital, a patient began fighting EMTs.

"We were abused all the way to the hospital," he said.

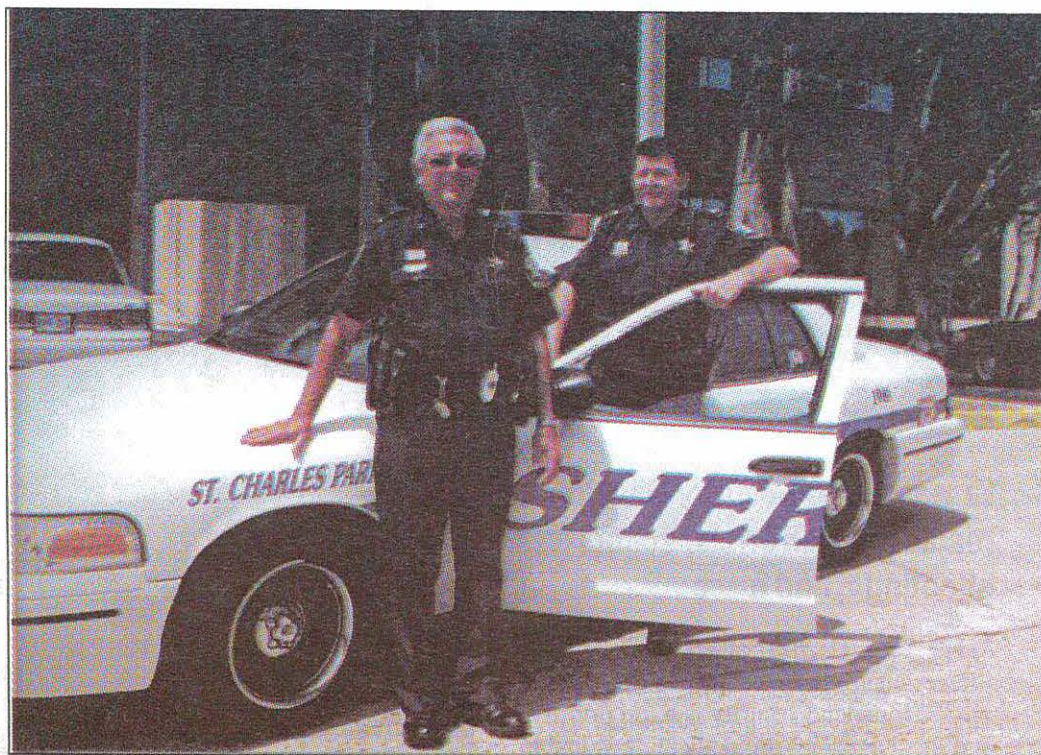
The next day, he approached former Sheriff Charles Wilson about commissioning EMTs to handle incidents like the one he'd endured the day before.

"Once I started working the streets, it became a natural progression to volunteering on a regular basis," Matherne said.

The transition from citizen to lawman comes natural, as well, for Sgt. Bobby Gorman, of Destrehan.

"I always wanted to be a police officer but I never had the time," he said. "Once you find the right balance between work, family and volunteering, it's well worth it."

As second-in-command of the Reserve Unit, Gorman donates over 120 hours monthly to the SCSO. Weekdays, he runs St. Charles Recycle, Inc.



SCSO Reserve Unit commander Lt. Barry Matherne and reservist Sgt. Bobby Gorman are among nearly 30 officers that assist full-time deputies patrolling the streets. In addition to volunteering at festivals and fairs, the reservists assist on basic complaint calls.

"The good thing about volunteering is I have the option of setting my work schedule," he said. "It's very gratifying to give something back to my community."

Shortly after completing the Reserve Academy in 1998, Gorman entered the department's Field Training Officer Program. Following another 480 hours of extensive training, he became the SCSO's only reserve deputy to hold an FTO instructor certification. As such, he is assigned a patrol unit and beat during his volunteer shift.

On his first call – at Destrehan High School – Gorman and his partner caught four teens burglarizing the school.

"I knew then I had made the right choice at the right time," he said. "I was hooked on law enforcement."

The Reserve Unit is a valued supplement to the SCSO's ranks, according to Capt. Fred Oubre, commander of the Patrol Department. "Our reserve deputies bring an amazing level of dedication and professionalism to the department."

Reserve deputies don't join for the money: they donate their hours of service. They don't do it for the commission: they're subject to obey the same laws they are asked to enforce.

"They love this community and enjoy the work... that's why they join," Oubre said. "The hours they serve, the attitude and commitment they bring to the job make them a very valued resource."

Reserve deputies are assigned to the SCSO's Patrol and Marine units. "Typically, we handle basic complaints – broken down

vehicles, house or car alarms going off, and the like," Matherne said. "That frees up full-time deputies to handle the more volatile calls. We're also there to back up the full-time guys if necessary."

The volunteers frequently assist Patrol and Traffic and work special unpaid functions, such as the annual fireworks display. Also, during the holiday season, reserve deputies guard shopping store parking lots on the parish's east and west banks.

"It's really gratifying to work a festival or a holiday parking lot patrol and hear that the public appreciates what you're doing," Gorman said. "That means a whole lot to me."

Because Gorman owns his business, making time for court appearances isn't an issue, but Matherne tells new recruits to consider the time constraints prior to joining the Reserve Unit.

"The reality is training requires time and you must donate 24 hours monthly on top of that," Matherne said. "If you don't have the support of your family, you are going to have a tough battle."

For those who have the time to volunteer, Gorman's message is simple: "If you are a civic-minded person who wants to give something back to the community and enjoys the gratification of helping others then give it a try," he said. "The payoff is getting to perform an incredible job alongside some terrific people according to your own schedule. I've enjoyed the opportunity... I'm getting to do something I've always wanted to do."

## Want to join the Reserves?

❑ Reserve deputies volunteer 24 hours monthly to SCSO

Are you interested in becoming a reserve deputy? To qualify for the SCSO's Reserve Unit, applicants must:

- ❖ Be in good physical and mental health;
- ❖ Be over 18 years old;
- ❖ Be a high school graduate;
- ❖ Have no criminal history;
- ❖ Have a good driving record.

Candidates must complete a 32-week Reserve Academy – 128 hours – which covers basic law enforcement practices, arrest procedures, and firearms qualifications. Topics include report writing, probable cause, vehicle stop and searches, police driving, properly handling a crime scene, use of force, PR-24 training, and more.

"By the end of the training academy, reserve deputies are as well prepared to handle any situation as our full-time officers," said Lt. Rocco Dominic, who heads the Training Division.

Reserve deputies are commissioned after successfully passing all course work and graduating from the Reserve Academy. To maintain the title, reserve deputies must donate a minimum of 24 hours service monthly.

To learn more about becoming a member of the SCSO's Reserve Unit, call 985-783-6237.





## Departmental Trends

# Homeland Security

## Protecting our homefront a priority

### Dialogue open after Sept. 11

#### □ Assessing terrorist threats to our parish

In post-9/11 America, law enforcement agencies have to rethink security.

St. Charles Parish is home to a number of terrorist threats: the Mississippi River, chemical plants and a nuclear plant, the Hale Boggs Bridge, seven major highways, five major railroads, a portion of the Armstrong International Airport, a hospital, and, despite its relatively small size, the Ama airport.

Lt. Rodney Madere, who commands the SCSO's Homeland Security Division, and Det. Roscoe Brewer attend at least one task force meeting every single week to share information, glean ideas, and seek grant monies to fund the effort.

"Sept. 11, 2001, was certainly one of our nation's darkest days," Madere said. Three years later, the communication lines have opened.

"It helps when you've got a lot of people coming up with solutions," he said. "Every day, we find a new potential threat... Preparing for the 'worst-case-scenario' has become a full-time effort for all of us."

### SCSO joins effort to ensure safety

#### □ Homeland Security Division readies for terrorists, school shootings, and more

The Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on U.S. soil forever changed the scope of law enforcement. Homeland security is a top priority, and local agencies are dedicating valuable resources to ensure our nation's communities are not the next targets of a terrorist attack.

Sheriff Greg Champagne officially formed a Homeland Security Division within the SCSO in July 2003. Headed by Lt. Rodney Madere, the division is responsible for identifying security issues, obtaining funding, conducting training and representing the department on various homeland security task forces.

The division's first duty?

"We had to immediately put together a threat assessment," Madere said. In addition to identifying potential targets, the SCSO's Homeland Security Division was given the formidable task of mapping the likely outcome if the parish came under attack.

"People automatically think of our industries, including Waterford 3, as major targets," Madere said. "In reality, long before 2001, our parish – the SCSO, the parish government, Dept. of Emergency Preparedness, and local industry – was focusing on those very safety issues."

When the country's Department of Homeland Security issued the order for regions to beef up preventive measures, Madere said St. Charles Parish found itself way ahead of the pack.

#### REGION 3 TAKES SHAPE

In the months following the Sept. 11th attacks, the federal government scrambled to form task forces to thwart future terrorist strikes.

"The Department of Justice united with other federal groups and, eventually, local law enforcement agencies were added to the mix," Madere said. The SCSO is a



SCSO DEPUTIES selected for the Crisis Management Unit train in entry tactics. Working in conjunction with the SCSO's Homeland Security Division, the special equipped, specially trained, 31-deputy unit responds to anything from a hostage situation to a school shooting.

member of 11 task forces in all, including the Joint Terrorism Task Force, Antiterrorism Task Force, National Joint Terrorism Task Force, FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, Anti-Terrorism Agency Council, and the Department of Homeland Security Task Force.

The River Parishes/Bayou Parishes Task Force, which comprises St. Charles, St. John, St. James, Assumption, Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes, the State Police and the Department of Homeland Security, requires the most input, Madere said.

Officially known as the state's Region 3, a 12-member voting body manages the task force – each parish has one Sheriff's Office and one EOC representative. The group meets monthly to formulate its homeland security activities.

Because the six-parish area is regionalized, the federal government pays an extra 8-10% for homeland security issues. "It's the governments' way of rewarding agen-

cies for cooperating with surrounding jurisdictions," Madere said.

Before states were regionalized, getting homeland security funding was virtually impossible for smaller jurisdictions. "It was confusing to determine where the money would come from and how to get it," he said.

Region 3 hired South Central Planning to aggressively pursue funding, help manage the money, order equipment and maintain an inventory for the six-parish area. "They take care of all the headaches," Madere said, leaving the task force to focus on what equipment, training and other resources are needed to combat terrorism on the local front.

Since the task force's inception, over a million has been awarded to Region 3.

Each region's task force has the job of determining how the money is to be spent. "Our group has used most of the funding to buy items that benefit the entire region."



# CMU training for SWAT-type situations

two large decontamination trailers, smaller equipment trailers for each parish, gas masks for first responders, weather stations, and camera systems for monitoring major highways," Madere said. The weather and camera systems are linked, allowing neighboring parishes to monitor conditions throughout the region in the event of an emergency.

In 2004, over \$2 million will be spent in the region. Plans are under way to buy a 700-mhz radio system to improve communications between emergency responders in the event of an attack.

"With all the group items purchased, the remaining 2003 money and most of the money we get in 2004 will be shared among Region 3's members," Madere said.

Based on its population, Terrebonne Parish will receive the most money. St. Charles Parish will get about 13%.

Recently, St. Charles Parish was awarded \$46,711 in homeland security funding. The parish stands to receive more in 2004.

## PRAT READIES FOR TERRORIST ASSAULTS

In January 2004, Region 3 formed a Parish Rapid Assessment Team (PRAT) that specializes in responding to chemical weapons of mass destruction attacks. Specially outfitted and trained for the task, PRAT includes 10 members from each parish. St. Charles Parish's representatives are all local fire department volunteers.

"PRAT has full decontamination suits, trailers and other equipment for the job," Madere said. "If, say, someone released a nerve agent at a local football game, the PRAT teams from all six parishes would immediately respond."

In the coming months, all of Region 3, including the PRAT teams, are required to conduct tabletop exercises and, within two years, must hold a full drill that includes all six jurisdictions' law enforcement agencies, fire departments, EOCs, hospitals, and other emergency responders.

"The work we're doing – the PRAT training, tabletop exercises, and drills – are intended to determine how prepared we are in our region to handle a homeland security incident," Madere said.

Because the various emergency responders throughout the River Parishes/Bayou Parishes area have trained for years on chemical hazards and handling potential disasters, Region 3 has found itself ahead of Louisiana's other areas when it comes to preparing for chemical disasters.

"We've always trained with the plants trouble-shooting potential problems," Madere said. "Our deputies already attend awareness classes; we know how to read placards for chemicals on trucks and train; we've been taught to consider the wind direction to identify safe areas for the public in the event of a chemical-related emergencies."

The train bombings in Madrid, Spain, served as a reminder everyone – even parishes without major industry – of the value of such training. "They may have never thought they had a homeland securi-



CRISIS MANAGEMENT UNIT members debrief a witness during a hostage scenario at a local plant. The team is being trained and equipped to handle all high-risk entries in St. Charles Parish.

ty issue, but because the railroad line runs through town they're finding out they do. Almost every chemical known to man is transported via train... if an incident were to happen, it would become a homeland security issue," Madere said.

"St. Charles, St. John, and our neighboring parishes have been conducting this type of chemical-related training for as long as I can remember," he said. "We're jumping ahead into more complicated, more detailed training."

## SCSO DEVELOPS A CRISIS MANAGEMENT UNIT

Among the more detailed projects the SCSO is pursuing is the Crisis Management Unit. This team is being trained and equipped to handle all high-risk entries in the parish.

Beginning in June 2003, POST-certified deputies with at least two years of law enforcement experience were invited to undergo an extensive selection process.

In addition to a rigorous physical fitness/agility obstacle course, deputies were required to pass a written and oral psychological exam, a marksman course, and an oral interview. The deputies selected for the team – 31 in all – were also required to complete a six-month probation period.

"The members of this team were hand-selected because of their outstanding skills," Madere said. "All of them do it because they love police work and are dedicated to protecting this community."

Training in SWAT-type situations is ongoing.

"We're training our hostage negotiators as a first option and our snipers as a last option," Madere said. "In between, our CMU is trained to go in and handle any situation."

Currently, the SCSO relies on the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office SWAT to handle barricaded suspects or hostage situations. "In the future, we want to be able to

handle it all ourselves," Madere said.

The team will also be called upon to respond to weapons of mass destruction or homeland security incidents. "If something goes wrong at one of the plants, or if a foreign nationaler jumps ship at one of the local docks, this team will be called out," he said.

The CMU will also be expected to respond to school incidents. "If we have an active shooter, a hostage situation, or a bomb in one of our parish schools, this team will act," Madere said.

In cooperation with the parish's School Board, training has been conducted at Hahnville High and Destrehan High Schools. During the coming months the CMU will train at each of the local public schools.

Plans are also in the works to share training with the SCSO's Patrol Department. "If there's a 'Columbine-type' shooting at one of our schools, we want everyone to know what to do and how to ensure the safety of our children," he said.

Similar scenario training is being conducted inside local plants.

"If an ex-employee shows up with a vest of dynamite strapped to his chest and is threatening to kill the boss who fired him, the team will respond," Madere said. "This isn't just a workplace shooting; it's a homeland security issue because of the chemicals that could potentially be released."

In addition to the work of the task force, local industries have beefed up security making it more difficult for their plants to be breached.

"Homeland security after Sept. 11th has opened the door for local agencies to prepare for worst-case scenarios," he said. "We're doing all of these things because it better serves our community and our officers to be prepared."

## Grants fund specialized equipment

### SCSO outfitting, training 'SWAT' unit

Homeland security is an expensive venture, especially when you're not sure how the enemy will attack.

Since joining Louisiana's Region 3, the SCSO has received much-needed grants as well as invaluable training.

Last year, the department spent its funding on tactical equipment for the SCSO's Crisis Management Unit, a specially trained entry team.

In addition to outfitting team members with tactical entry vests, Kevlar helmets, goggles, communication headsets, Nomax hoods and entry tools, the funding has been spent on training.

In 2004, the SCSO plans to use additional monies to buy ballistic shields, special lights, extra generators and high-powered binoculars for the CMU.

Federal guidelines preclude funding from being used to buy weapons or explosives. To augment the team's equipment, the SCSO purchased 20 M-4 rifles.

"We've been able to obtain a lot of free training from the federal government on weapons of mass destruction and bomb and chemical recognition," said Lt. Rodney Madere, who heads the SCSO Homeland Security Division. The CMU is also training with less lethal alternatives, such as beanbags and pepper spray.



SCSO CMU members discuss entry techniques during a training exercise at Hahnville High School.



# Departmental Initiatives

## DON'T FALL PREY TO 'WOULD-BE' THIEVES

### Make Doors Crime-Resistant

- ☐ Install deadbolt locks, solid doors and sturdy hinges and strike plates.
- ☐ Use strong, sturdy doors such as solid wood or reinforced steel. Consider installing a peephole.

### Prevent Window Entry

- ☐ Use window key locks. Keep keys in locks to allow for a quick exit in case of emergency.
- ☐ Drill downward holes where inside and outside sashes meet on double-hung windows and insert nails or bolts.
- ☐ Consider installing grates for first-floor windows.
- ☐ Make sure window air conditioners are firmly secured to the window.

### Secure Sliding Doors

- ☐ Install locks to prevent sliding or lifting.
- ☐ Drill a hole through the inside frame and insert a nail to prevent sliding.
- ☐ Place wood or a rod in the track.

### Secure Valuables

- ☐ Engrave TVs and other household valuables with some identifiable number.
- ☐ Rent a safe-deposit box for small valuables.
- ☐ Consider installing an alarm system – in your home or auto. Be certain a reputable alarm company installs the system.

### Crime-Proof Outside Areas

- ☐ Keep your yard, porch and entrances well lit. Consider motion-detection or photoelectric lights.
- ☐ Store tools, toys and valuables.
- ☐ Never hide keys outside your home.
- ☐ Keep bushes trimmed. This will give intruders fewer places to hide.
- ☐ Place gravel or rock beds below windows. It will be hard for burglars to sneak across without being heard.



## Stop Thief!



## Protect yourself from property theft

### ☐ Sheriff urges citizens to lock valuables out of sight, help slow the volume of property crimes

Burglaries and thefts – at home or in your vehicle – are frustrating, inconvenient and, most times, preventable.

In St. Charles Parish, property crimes account for nearly two-thirds of the parish's total crimes. Last year, 435 burglaries, 1,030 thefts, and 101 auto thefts occurred.

"Until you are a victim, it's something you rarely consider," said Sheriff Champagne. "But when you return home to find your property stolen or your vehicle broken into the statistics suddenly become very real."

In addition to the financial and property loss, victims often suffer emotional turmoil. "Having your privacy invaded can cause as much trauma as the loss of your prized possessions," the Sheriff said.

With a little extra care, most break-ins can be prevented.

"Most burglars and thieves are looking for easy targets... They want to get in quickly and get away undetected," Sheriff Champagne said. "The harder you make it for them, the lower your risk of becoming a victim."

In many cases, just storing your valuables out of sight can be a huge deterrent.

"Burglaries and thefts are generally crimes of opportunity," the Sheriff said. "Someone walking by sees something they want – an unattended bicycle, CDs and audio or video equipment in an unlocked vehicle, for instance – and they break in to get it."

Too often, these stolen items can easily be parlayed into cash. "Unfortunately, the crimes (burglaries and thefts) are usually linked to drug abuse and other illicit activity," Sheriff Champagne said. "We also see an increase in break-ins during the summer when more young people are roaming parish streets."

Although the Sheriff's Office cannot guarantee your home or vehicle won't ever be burglarized, taking the simplest precautions can decrease your odds of being burglarized. Sheriff Champagne urges residents to be vigilant and report unusual activity in your neighborhood.

"Citizens of St. Charles Parish are law enforcement's 'eyes and ears' on the street," the Sheriff said. "You travel your



Unlocked, unattended valuables are quick, easy targets for thieves. Taking simple precautions, such as locking your goods out of sight, can serve as a huge deterrent.

area daily and know when something or someone looks out of place. Call us and report it."

Neighborhood Watch groups throughout the parish have also proven to be effective deterrents. The program emphasizes neighbors watching out for neighbors, and asks residents to take an active part in monitoring their community.

"Effective security doesn't need to cost a fortune," he said. "A little common sense teamed with a few simple measures can make a world of difference."

By locking your home and automobile, storing valuables out of sight, and reporting unusual or suspicious activity, you can aid the Sheriff's Office in keeping your area safe.

In case your property is stolen, residents are urged to engrave valuables and log identification numbers – model numbers, serial numbers, etc. – to aid in the recovery. Be sure to include a personalized identifier other than your Social Security or driver's license number in your engraving.

### LOCK YOUR VEHICLE DOORS & STORE VALUABLES

#### Lock Your Vehicle

- ☐ Shut windows tightly whenever you park. Even a small gap will allow a thief room to insert a wire to pry up the lock button.
- ☐ Lock all doors and the trunk or hatchback every time you leave your car. Lock the garage door too.
- ☐ Never leave a car running unattended.
- ☐ Avoid leaving keys with a garage or lot attendant by choosing a place where you park your own car when possible.

#### Don't Tempt a Thief

- ☐ Carry as few valuables in your vehicle as possible. Cell phones, money, mobile audio or video equipment, etc., are lures for thieves looking to make a quick grab.
- ☐ Lock packages in the trunk or put them under the front seats.
- ☐ Engrave your car's VIN on radar detectors, CD players, mobile audio or video equipment, etc., in your vehicle. If the equipment is found later, it will make it easier to identify as yours.
- ☐ Don't use the glove compartment as a "traveling safe." Take your valuables, including personal papers, with you.



# Identity Theft:

## Protecting your good name

### ❑ High-tech advancements have eased thieves' ability to wreak havoc on your financial identity

Our couple, call them Bill and Mary, are money-savvy people. They pay their bills on time, have a "rainy day" savings, and enjoy an excellent credit rating.

When the "past due" notices begin to appear and collection agencies start calling, our couple is confused.

A quick survey of their financial landscape reveals the worst. Someone has stolen their identity and has mounted up astonishing debts.

"Sadly, identity theft has become a by-product of our technologically advanced age," Sheriff Greg Champagne said. "In the hands of a thief, your personal information is money in the bank."

According to a recent Federal Trade Commission survey, over the past four years, one in four households fell victim to identity thieves. Last year alone, over 10 million people were victimized, costing over \$5 billion in out-of-pocket expenses and nearly \$48 billion in business losses.

"Thieves use your personal information – anything from an address, Social Security or credit card number, or banking information – as tools of the trade," Sheriff Champagne said. "With so much of your personal info so readily available today, citizens have to be vigilant in protecting themselves from falling prey."

Identity thieves find their victims in a number of ways. They steal wallets and purses – with ID and credit card or banking information inside – or they may steal mail instead. "Dumpster divers" rummage through trash in search of personal data – disposed credit card offers, pay stubs or cancelled checks.

Your Internet transactions may also be vulnerable to stealth computer wizards. Some "cookies" are able to record your keystrokes and transmit information you share online back to a thief.

"With even a little information, they're able to divert your mail to another location, open new credit card accounts, and then rack up the charges," Sheriff Champagne said. "When they don't pay the bills, the delinquent account is reported on your credit report."

The havoc thieves can wreak in your name is frightening. They can establish phone or wireless service; open bank accounts and write bad checks on the account; file bankruptcy to avoid paying debts they've incurred; counterfeit checks or debit cards and drain your bank account; or take out loans ALL in your name.

There are precautions you can take to protect yourself from becoming a victim of identity theft. Sheriff Champagne urges:

❖ Before you reveal any personal information – whether by phone, in print, or on the Internet – find out how it will be used or if it will be shared with others. If you



Your personal information – your name, address, Social Security number or banking information – is as good as money in the bank for identity thieves. According to the Federal Trade Commission, over 10 million people were victimized last year alone. Identity thieves can wreak havoc on your personal finances without you being aware... until the bills come due.

are given a choice, choose to keep it confidential.

❖ Never give out personal information unless you know whom you are dealing with. Identity thieves can pose as representatives of virtually any institution. Legitimate organizations with which you do business have the information they need and will not ask you for it.

❖ If your purse or wallet is stolen, report it to the Sheriff's Office and the appropriate creditors as soon as possible. Nearly 25% of victims have had their personal information – such as credit cards, checkbooks and Social Security cards – lost or stolen.

❖ Give your Social Security number only when absolutely necessary. Ask to use other types of identifiers whenever possible. Also, don't carry your Social Security card; leave it in a secure place.

❖ Be cautious about where you store personal information in your home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help or are having workers in your home.

❖ Guard your mail from theft. Drop all outgoing mail directly at the post office or in a post office collection box. When mail is delivered, promptly remove it from your mailbox. If you're going to be away for an extended period of time, contact your Post Office and ask them to hold it until you return.

❖ Pay close attention to your billing cycles. If bills do not arrive on time, be sure to follow up with your creditors. Credit thieves can take over your account and change your billing address to cover their tracks.

❖ Password-protected accounts and credit cards are an excellent hurdle for would-be identity thieves. Avoid using easily obtainable information like your mother's maiden name, your birth date, the last four digits of our Social Security number, your phone number, or a series of consecutive numbers.

❖ Keep your personal information in a safe place. To deter "dumpster divers," tear or shred your charge receipts, copies of credit applications, insurance forms, bank checks and statements, and credit card offers you get in the mail.

❖ Order a copy of your credit report from each of the three major credit-reporting agencies yearly. Be sure it is accurate and includes only those activities that you have authorized.

"Unfortunately, identity theft isn't entirely preventable," Sheriff Champagne said. "Despite substantial criminal penalties, the number of incidents continues to climb. By managing your information wisely and cautiously, you can help guard against this growing problem."

If you do fall prey to an identity thief, contact the Sheriff's Office immediately.

*For more information on how you can avoid becoming a victim of identity theft, contact the Sheriff's Office's Special Services Department. Ask for a copy of the booklet "Identity Theft: When Bad Things Happen To Your Good Name." It includes a list of precautions, "how to's" for resolving credit problems caused by identity theft, as well as who to contact in the event you do become a victim. The booklet is also available at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).*

### BE SUSPICIOUS OF SWINDLERS

In our fast-paced, high-tech age we are often inundated with offers. Sheriff Champagne warns citizens to be skeptical, research before you invest, and to make sure you're dealing with a reputable company before you do business. Any deal that sounds "too good to be true" probably is... Before you buy or sign an agreement, read and understand everything.

#### Watch Out For Credit Card Scams

❑ Unless you've made the call to a business, never give your credit card number over the phone.

#### Beware of 'Get-Rich-Quick' Deals

❑ These misleading "opportunities" usually involve hidden purchases of some sort.

#### Credit Repair and Easy Credit

❑ For a fee, these companies often promise to put you back in the black. In fact, you can do the same thing by contacting a credit bureau or the appropriate banks.

#### Social Security Scams

❑ Know which services the Social Security Administration provides for free. Beware of peddlers selling the same services.

#### Shady Auto Repair Practices

❑ Use a trustworthy mechanic and get several estimates for any repairs.

#### Home Repair Swindles

❑ Check out home repair contractors with references and the Better Business Bureau before the work begins. Also, get everything in writing.

#### Watch Free Vacation Offers

❑ Vacation packages are often ploys to sell time-shares or memberships in costly travel clubs. Beware of free offers from contests you never entered.

#### Don't Be A Tele-Fraud Victim

❑ Use common sense. Never give money to anybody without checking his or her validity.

#### Beware of "900" Numbers

❑ Don't confuse "900" numbers, which often charge by the minute, with "800" free calls. Also, be wary if a company tries to charge for an "800" number.

#### Earn-Money-At-Home Scams

❑ Most work-at-home deals require you to buy something in order to earn. Very few of these companies ever actually pay off.

#### Choose Charities Carefully

❑ Make sure you know exactly who will get your money and how it will be used.

#### 'Bait-and-Switch' Ads

❑ Items are advertised at an unusually low price. Once you are in the store, the item is suddenly sold out but a more expensive model is well stocked.



## FTOs complete training



Deputies James Dufrene, Warren Deville, Joey Thibodeaux, Joseph Marocolli, George Cunningham, Derek Pertuis and Tate Rousell recently graduated from the SCSO's 12-week Field Training Officers (FTO) program. New recruits that successfully complete POST Academy must train an additional 12 weeks on the job with an FTO. "It's an extensive training program," said Sheriff Greg Champagne. "In fact, our agency has a reputation for having one of the region's most thorough, rigorous training programs around." All FTOs are hand-picked for the program by their immediate supervisor and Capt. Fred Oubre, commander of the Patrol Department. The SCSO currently has 28 FTOs on staff.

## Camp applications being accepted

☐ Sheriff's Summer Camp set for July 11-17 in Mississippi; open to boys ages 12 to 16

The annual "First Class Sheriff's Camp" is set to begin July 11-17 at Camp Salmen in Kiln, Miss. Boys between the ages of 12 and 16 are eligible to apply.

The seven-day camp promotes trust and interaction between the parish's youth and the SCSO. 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 SCSO pays the expenses for boys who attend.

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

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

## Dispatchers promoted

Sheriff Greg Champagne announced promotions among 911 Communications Center dispatchers Dec. 16, 2003. Bethany Whitney, Ursula Kelly and Scott Hargrove were promoted to senior operator supervisors. As such, they will assist with training and ensure that the 911 Center is operating properly. Carla Johnson, Jessica Neal and Dawn Farrell were promoted to junior operators. This position serves as an assistant shift supervisor, assisting in the senior operator's absence. SCSO dispatchers staff the 911 Communications Center on a 24-hour basis. They handle dispatches for the SCSO, local fire service and emergency medical services. Pictured above are Sheriff Champagne, Johnson, Whitney, Kelly, Neal, Hargrove, Farrell, and Capt. Craig Petit, commander of the Communications Division.



## SCSO P.O.S.T. Academy graduates 13

The SCSO's 2004-01 POST Academy graduation was held March 29. SCSO deputies completing the training were Dana Davis, Garrett Dugas, Jody Fahrig, Vyron Keller, Jessica Millet, Margaret Murray, Kelvin Ross and Rodrigo Solorzano. The class also included officers from the East Jefferson Levee District, Delgado Community College, Southern University and the state's Probation & Parole Dept.



## Send your gift home

SCSO employees enthusiastically gave to the United Way of St. Charles in 2003, increasing contributions for the seventh 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.



8.

Want more information on the services or programs offered by the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office? Whether you're seeking a listing of departments, services, or a brief history of the agency, you can find it on the World Wide Web. Visit us today at: [www.stcharlessheriff.org](http://www.stcharlessheriff.org).

