



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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We are more than halfway through 2019. In fact, the new school year has just begun, and our community is adjusting to new routines. While I would hardly categorize the role of Sheriff as routine, I have become accustomed to my new position and its responsibilities. In order to ensure the job is being done properly, I have taken a moment to examine what we have done thus far into my first year as your Sheriff.

One of my primary goals was to provide a seamless transition of leadership within the Wayne County Sheriff's Office. We have had stability within the office in order to maintain the same level of service they were providing. This translated to an uninterrupted service to the community during the transition. A review of the crime and traffic crash statistics of incidents investigated by the Wayne County Sheriff's Office shows a downward trend as compared to the previous year. These numbers continue to remain at some of their lowest levels in recent history despite some of the challenges we face in Wayne County. In addition, during a recent community survey the majority of the respondents stated they had a very high level of satisfaction with the WCSO and likewise most indicated that they felt very safe.

The community survey not only was a way for me to gauge how well the Sheriff's Office is responding to the community needs, but it is also a way to engage the people of our county and increase our level of communication with them. A large part of my initiative was to expand our community outreach. My interest is to make sure our agency is well connected to the community we serve. It is vital to know what the folks in our county truly need in order to provide the right kind of services for them. In addition to the survey, we have increased the use of social media and added a few features to the department webpage to increase accessibility. We are currently working toward renovating both to provide a welcoming appearance and ensure we are interacting with our community utilizing modern communication techniques.

To continue this interaction, officers are engaging the public through directed community outreach patrols. Using data driven analysis, population centers within our county have been identified for these directed patrols. During these patrols, officers connect with citizens and can learn more about the problems they are facing in the neighborhood. Armed with that

information, we are then able to link area needs with local services. To provide the correct resources for the needs at hand, we had to know what resources were available. Because of this, we built a local resource database that can provide us the available services and contact information for them at the click of the mouse. Outreach Officers also have a resource portfolio with brochures and other materials that can be provided to any individual.

The objective for officers participating in the outreach patrols is to engage the public. They are using a variety of manners to move about such as foot patrol, bicycles and on horseback. The intention is for them to be approachable. When you see them in your neighborhood, you should not be alarmed but take a moment to stop and chat with them. In a similar fashion, members of the Jail and Patrol staff, department K9 team, Uniform Volunteer Services Unit and Explorer Post 89 have all been participating in a variety of public events engaging community members in conversation and providing informational sessions on a wide range of subjects. I recognize the folks in our county hold many of the answers to the issues we face, and it is important to keep lines of communication open. Together we can accomplish great things.

One issue that is continually on our minds is the security of our schools. This is a topic that I have taken very seriously for several years. I have been an active member of the Wayne County School Safety Commission since 2012 and currently am the board Co-Chair. Also, earlier this summer I served as a representative of the Indiana Sheriff board of the National Sheriff I believe a collaborative effort of the schools, first responders, courts and community resources is necessary for its success. Since the passing of Indiana HB 1225, which provides grant funding to schools to set up an active event alert system, I have been working with local schools to make this opportunity available to them and get systems in place. We are also proud to have supported the expansion of the School Resource Officer program at Northeastern Wayne School Corporation with the addition of an SRO in their elementary building.

A few weeks ago we participated in an active shooter/hostile event response (ASHER) drill at Northeastern. Our School Resource Officers, patrol officers and command staff joined together with other law enforcement, Emergency Management, fire personnel, EMS, school staff and students to test the capabilities of our planning, equipment and personnel. This comprehensive evaluation assessed every segment of our response to an incident from the security systems and initial response through the reunification of the students. Assessments like this are essential to ensure we are prepared to react quickly and correctly to any active threat. Similarly, we have provided active threats training and planning to the local government and offer comparable training to other organizations in our community. Unfortunately, this is a nationwide problem and one we are continually training for.

Another one of the biggest problems we continue to face are drugs in our society. While we have been able to hold down property crimes that are commonly associated with drug use, drug proliferation has remained somewhat constant. Prior to the onset of my administration I redirected the K9 units to allow for proactive interdiction patrols. This was continued after taking over leadership of the agency and continues to prove to be successful. I have also adjusted staff assignments to allow the patrol officers more time for proactive policing. The

organization and exploration of expanding educational opportunities and investigative methods continues to be a priority.

All of this has been a challenge due to staffing shortages related to employee turnover. Early on I identified that recruitment and retention of staff within the agency was vital to our effectiveness. Knowing it was one element within our control, our team evaluated the recruitment, hiring and retention systems and strategies. Based on the updated strategies, changes were made within the systems to increase their efficiencies and effectiveness designed to appeal to the modern workforce. In one example, earlier this year we took steps to streamline our hiring process for Correctional Officers. The procedure was shortened from taking a few months to complete down to a few weeks, all the while maintaining the reliability of the screening process. We found that these changes not only sped up our hiring process, but also were more cost effective.

Despite the challenges we faced with staffing in our Jail, the corrections staff stepped up and met them head-on. I could not be any prouder of them. In fact, through their hard work and dedication the Wayne County Sheriff National Institute of Jail Operations (NIJO). This title is an advancement from the Level 2 accreditation originally accomplished three years ago. On August 8th we received the award from NIJO during their annual conference in New Orleans, LA. The Wayne County Sheriff Office was the first Jail in the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals to have received accreditation through NIJO and are the only Jail in Indiana to have achieve a Level 1 accreditation.

As you can see this has been a busy year so far and my plans for the Wayne County Sheriff Office are well underway. Providing the best service possible for the citizens of Wayne County is my primary goal. And, in order to succeed the strategies within my plan must be constantly evaluated and adjusted as needed. But this success could only be achieved through the teamwork of the men and women of the Wayne County Sheriff fortunate to work with so many great people who help make this all happen and I am honored to serve as their leader. Likewise, I am blessed to work in such a great community and serve as your Sheriff.

Sheriff Randy Retter