

# Inside the Monument Police Citizens' Academy

By Nancy Wilkins

Monument police are conducting an eight-week Citizens' Academy course through June 2 that offers an "insiders" view of the Police Department. The course began April 14. The first class, taught by Chief Jake Shirk, covered the organization of the department and included the fundamental objectives of policing.

These objectives include:

- To prevent and control conduct threatening to life and property
- To aid crime victims and protect people in danger of physical harm
- To protect constitutional guarantees such as the right to free speech and assembly
- To facilitate the movement of people and vehicles
- To assist those who cannot care for themselves
- To resolve conflict between individuals, groups or between citizens and the government
- To identify problems that have the potential to become more serious
- To create and maintain feelings of security in the

community

Under Chief Shirk and Lt. Steve Burk, Monument's Police Department is divided into three divisions: patrol, special operations, and support services.

The patrol division currently has the most officers and is considered "the face of the department." As noted in the Citizens Police Academy Manual, on-scene responsibilities include arriving rapidly but safely, caring for injured persons, apprehending suspects, securing the area, conducting preliminary investigations, and requesting additional resources. The purpose of enforcing traffic laws, according to the manual, is to educate and modify the driver's future behavior, and to stop a violation of the law for public safety reasons.

When investigating traffic collisions, methods of determining the first harmful event of the accident, and subsequent events, can be obtained by witness accounts, involved party statements, damage to vehicles, and other roadway evidence.

Shirk has experience in

Aurora, and has now trained Monument's officers in SWAT procedures. These officers are now able to assist and support other officers from El Paso County during a SWAT emergency. According to Shirk, Sheriff Bill Elder deputized Monument's officers, expanding the officers' jurisdiction throughout the county.

Shirk takes a proactive approach in solving crime, and this includes a problem-solving approach. He gave an example of a large entertainment organization not in Monument, where at "ladies night" there were a frequent number of vehicles being broken into. Apparently, there was a habit of leaving purses in the vehicles. Shirk said the owner of the facility was reluctant to add more lighting and surveillance. A proactive approach to reducing the number of vehicles being broken into was starting a "coat and purse check-in" where ladies could bring their purses into the building, removing the incentive for vehicle break-ins.

Another proactive approach to reducing crime is to engage another existing

organization to help address problems, such as enforcing building codes for apartment buildings. This may include having adequate lighting, replacing broken windows, and removing graffiti. Shirk said Monument is fortunate to not have this problem.

Shirk encourages all Monument homeowners to be sure their garage doors are closed at night, reducing the lure of theft.

Monuments police officers' code of ethics includes the following statement: "My fundamental duty is to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property, to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or

intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder, and to respect the Constitutional rights of all men [and women] to liberty, equality and justice."

Maintaining positive relations with the community is a very important goal for Shirk, who said that educating the public is just one way to do this. Subsequent topics include computer forensics, internal affairs, patrol procedures, use of force, laws of arrest, search and seizure, and criminal investigation. A criminal background check is performed on all citizens who attend the academy.

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