



LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

2017 Annual Report



INDUSTRIAL SOLUTIONS		
5	6	7
12	13	14
19	20	21
26	27	28



Lake County Mission Statement

The Mission of the Lake County Sheriff's Office is to enhance the quality of life in our county by working in partnership with the community we serve. We strive to promote safety, enforce the laws, and safeguard the constitutional rights of all people.

Core Values

Honor: Though dedication to duty sometimes requires great personal costs and sacrifices of ourselves, it is our privilege to have bestowed upon us, the community's trust to maintain order and safety. This trust is sacred and it is through honor that we maintain it.

Pride: In ourselves, it allows us to excel in our personal pursuits. In our community, it inspires our dedication to help one another, to protect, and to serve. In our Country, it compels us to safeguard the Constitutional Rights of all people.

Integrity: Being the foundation of our relationship with the community, we must always act with sound moral and ethical principles, even when no one is watching.

Respect: For ourselves and for the dignity of all others.



Citizens of Lake County, I am happy to provide you with another annual update on the successes, challenges, and opportunities experienced by the Sheriff's Office for the year 2017!

Budget:

I'm proud to inform you that since becoming Sheriff, the team here at LCSO has managed to cut overtime by thousands of hours (up to 3500) per year (*Calculated prior to a contract negotiation between the county and the Deputies Union, which eliminated all scheduled overtime*). This has been done due to a great deal of teamwork as it relates to how shift-changes are managed, and the willingness of employees to adjust their schedules as it relates to receiving training outside of their normally scheduled work days, when those opportunities present themselves. This savings is significant, especially when you consider that I am still trying to build up the Sheriff's Office budget reserve. I was required to establish this reserve from \$335,000, at the start of my tenure in 2015. Through tight management of the budget, we are now at \$835k in reserve, with the end goal being around \$1 million dollars. This represents 1/3 of a budget year's amount which was recommended by the County Finance Officer. This has been made possible with considerable team effort by our officers. We have progressed in this endeavor more quickly than I thought we would have, all while maintaining the ability to provide appropriate equipment and training to our employees.

Administration:

The leadership and civilian positions remain largely the same except for one significant change. Pursuant to a recommendation from a consultant the County Commissioners hired, the Civil Deputy position was eliminated to provide for an additional Sworn Deputy position. All civil papers are now served by Sheriff's Deputies during the normal course of their shifts.

- LCSO Served 684 civil papers in 2017 (Compared to 786 in 2016, and 829 in 2015)
- LCSO Issued 411 Concealed Weapons Permits in 2017 (Compared to 483 in 2016)

The two additional administrative positions added since 2015 have proven to be great additions to LCSO. The additional administrative secretary, in addition to administrative support, performs tasks such as sexual and violent offender registry, jail billing, and other duties that were previously managed by sworn and detention personnel as additional duties. The part-time Property and Evidence Tech has been able to elevate our level of efficiency in the management of our storage to a completely new level, as well. This is another position that used to be staffed by officers in addition to their primary duties. With recent news of thefts within evidence rooms in other agencies in the State of Montana, I am even more assured this was an important position to create for the safety and integrity of the Sheriff's Office. Adding these 2, or really 1.5, positions has proven to increase the efficiency of our services and lessened the burden of additional duties on sworn and detention officers.

Detention:

Our Detention Facility currently employs 21 Detention Officers, including the Detention Captain, Joel Shearer. The makeup of the Detention Facility is the same as our previous Annual Report. Here's some approximate stats to show how busy our 46 bed facility was in the past year:

- Bookings: 1,349
- Book and Releases: 821
- Longest stay: 473 days, 2nd longest: 369, 3rd longest: 169

To aid in the widely reported overcrowding problem of the jail, we developed a new program called the Sheriff Labor Detail. Montana law allows for persons who owe jail time to be eligible to serve this time conducting community service in lieu of jail. They can get 2 days credit for just 8 hours of work. So far the program has been a success with over 100 days being served total throughout the year. Only non-violent offenders are eligible for the labor detail program which is only available on most Fridays and Saturdays.

Though this is a valuable program, it will not solve the problem with the jail, alone. For the past 3 years, we have continually focused on the jail, and what can be done to improve this problem. This has included meetings with the County Commissioners, discussions

with Construction Managers at Southbuild, a company who specializes in construction of county jails, and personal visits to detention facilities in Gallatin, Missoula, and Nez Perce (Idaho) Counties. Furthermore, the National Institute of Corrections conducted a 3 day Jail and Justice System Assessment in November.

The result of the NIC Assessment was no surprise to local stake holders, and a recommendation was made by NIC to move forward with a proper needs assessment. Though the county has already been awarded a Community Development Block Grant for the growth policy, it is hoped that when that project is finalized, we may be able to utilize a similar grant to at least partially fund a needs assessment. Flathead County was the recent recipient of a CDBG grant for the planning of their facility.

The most challenging balancing act this office is faced with is the risk to public safety vs. the liability of the facility. If a person is a genuine risk to the public and we have the necessary reason to do so, we have an obligation to lock them up. However, the more over-capacity we are, the greater we expose ourselves to liability. The need to put dangerous people behind bars, if even for a short time, is not going away any time soon. Our efforts to the end of providing Lake County with a suitable facility will continue.



Law Enforcement:

We currently employ 23 sworn deputies at LCSO. These numbers are still down from 25 sworn, 3 years ago, and for the 8 years preceding 2016. Those positions remain unfilled due to a lack of funding, but reorganization of the Sheriff's Office which started with my tenure as Sheriff has actually resulted in more uniformed personnel being available to the citizens who request our assistance.

The 23 sworn of the LCSO includes the Sheriff, Undersheriff, one Lieutenant, two Sergeants, two Detectives, a K9 Deputy, an agent assigned to the Northwest Drug Task Force, and three School Resource Officers, with the remaining 11 assigned to uniform patrol. The Lieutenant, Sergeants, and K9 Unit also work uniform patrol. Eight of our sworn personnel are also Deputy Coroners. Here's a breakdown of each division to explain how the year affected them:

Investigations (Detectives/Deputy Coroners):

We have 2 full-time detectives who primarily work sex cases and high-felonies. Additionally, we have 8 deputy coroners who work a rotating on-call schedule to investigate deaths in the county. They are comprised of sworn personnel from patrol and detectives.

- Our 2 detectives investigated over 80 cases last year. This included 1 homicide, 34 sex cases, and 3 arson investigations.
- Deputy Coroners conducted 179 death investigations (up from 170 in 2016), including 18 suicides (7 more than 2016) and 13 motor vehicle fatalities (8 more than 2016). Many of these investigations are completed in conjunction with the Montana State Crime Lab Medical Examiners in Missoula.

Narcotics Investigations:

The Sheriff's Office has had a detective working with the Northwest Drug Task force since May of 2016 after a brief gap of not having an agent in this position due to manpower. With the aid and assistance of all other area law enforcement agencies, neighboring counties, and state and federal agents, in the year of 2017, our detective:

- Conducted 45 narcotics investigations related to trafficking and distribution of narcotics in the Mission Valley and beyond
- Executed 25 search warrants specific to these investigations. In the course of these investigations, marijuana, methamphetamine and heroin were seized, along with stolen property and over 100 firearms (many of which were stolen).
- Very importantly: Interstate and international drug traffickers were identified and arrested by federal authorities utilizing intelligence and investigations originating in our area

School Resource Officers:

Photo to the right: SRO Nate Lundeen and Reserve Deputy JR Garcia prepare for an active shooter training scenario at Arlee High School

We still have one full time deputy stationed at Polson Schools, one at Ronan Schools who also serves Charlo Schools, and one who serves St. Ignatius and Arlee Schools. Our SRO's provide security for the schools, special events, and engage in educational and public outreach programs at the schools. In recent years, a focus of SRO's has been conducting "Run, Lock, Fight" training to prepare school staff for the threat of "active shooters" which have been a big concern of American communities not unlike our own. These trainings have also been extended to other area entities such as hospitals. The reality for the potential of this kind of violence makes the job of our SRO's very important and I'm proud of the work they do.



Patrol:

The Patrol Division is the backbone of any uniformed law enforcement agency. Ours consists of 2 squads working 4 separate shifts to provide for 24 hour coverage. They patrol the 1600+ square miles of Lake County, respond to emergencies, calls for service, and conduct proactive patrols of our communities. This also includes occasional patrols of Flathead Lake and response to water related complaints and investigations. They conduct criminal investigations, civil process, traffic enforcement, and compliance monitoring of sexual and violent offenders.

Our deputies kept very busy responding to over 1725 complaints in 2017 (down from 1800 in 2016) to include:

- 1 homicide
- 14 sex crimes
- 6 robberies
- 16 criminal endangerment
- 10 arson
- 153 assault crimes including 52 with weapons and 12 assaults on peace officers
- 190 domestic assaults, 6 of which an offender destroyed a communication device to prevent a 911 call
- 24 incidents of resisting arrest
- 12 stalking cases
- 144 burglaries
- 55 trespass to property or vehicle
- 344 theft/fraud
- 111 criminal mischief/vandalism
- 196 DUI's

- 352 drug related cases
- 83 fire protection shifts were covered during the fire season (nearly 1000 hours)

A few notable cases in 2017 include:

- In January, a deputy sheriff encountered a vehicle stuck in the ditch on Hwy 28 west of Elmo. In further investigation, the deputy encountered indications of drug trafficking. As a result, the vehicle was seized and impounded and over 1 pound of methamphetamine and nearly 1 pound of marijuana were located in a subsequent search.
- In February, an armed robbery occurred at a bar in Woods Bay. After an investigation by Deputies, a juvenile was identified as a suspect. He was arrested and further investigation resulted in the arrest of his mother for solicitation of armed robbery and tampering with a witness.
- In April, detectives were able to piece enough information together to arrest a suspect in the arson of a Rollins residence, where the homeowner had nearly \$20k stolen from his home, prior to waking up with it ablaze. The suspect was charged with arson, theft, and attempted homicide.
- Over 50 people were injured in a June deck collapse on the West Shore of Flathead Lake, near Lakeside. Deputies responded to administer first aid and assist in the coordination of rescue efforts.
- Sheriff's deputies and detectives identified a male who had been posing as a Coast Guardsman in the Polson area, who had been stopping people on their boats and conducting law enforcement activities. He was cited for impersonating an officer in August.
- Also in August, Deputies investigated the death of 36 year old, Jessie Qualtier, on East Post Creek. Qualtier died due to injuries sustained after exiting a moving vehicle. The driver was charged with 2 counts of criminal endangerment.
- In September, deputies and detectives investigated a homicide in Pablo, and arrested 28 year old Ryan Black, in the case. The County Attorney's Office would later have those charges dismissed, against the opinion of investigators.
- In November, a months-long burglary spree was ended when deputies identified a female suspect with the aid of social media tips where her vehicle was identified in surveillance photos.
- In December, two women suspected of a robbery in Missoula, engaged in a high speed pursuit from Missoula into Lake County. The women brandished a firearm during the case and fired shots at law enforcement. A tribal officer returned fire ending the chase. No one was injured. The women are still in the Lake County Jail pending trial in the case.
- Another December case resulted in the arrest of 5 people by deputies who caught them in the act of burglarizing the home of a recently deceased Polson man.

Patrol K9 Max:

Deputy Sciarretta, and K9 Max had another productive year, conducting 71 K9 deployments. The K9 is deployed to search for indications of drugs or drug paraphernalia when an officer develops reasonable suspicion that drugs or drug related items are present. This is typically as a result of a vehicle stop, though of those 71 deployments, 16 were not for vehicles. Oftentimes, these other searches are of buildings as a result of search warrant service, or conducted at the request of Montana Probation and Parole. Here's the rundown:

- 32 of these deployments were for LCSO investigations
- All others were assisting other agencies, MHP, Tribal PD, Polson and Ronan PD, and Montana Probation and Parole
- 55 of the deployments were for vehicle drug searches, with 100% success rate in officers locating drugs or drug related paraphernalia in vehicles where there was a positive indication by the K9 of the presence of drugs (37 of 55)
- Every deployment of the K9 with a positive indication resulted in a judge granting a search warrant
- Sciarretta and Max re-certified as a North American Police Working Dog Association (NAPWDA), and National Narcotics Detector Dog Association (NNDDA), certified K-9/Handler team



I'd like to take a moment to thank Deputy Sciarretta for his dedication to this office and the community via the K9 work he does. Max does not belong to the Lake County Sheriff's Office, but to Sciarretta personally. A minimum of 190 hours of training were conducted during Sciarretta's personal days off in 2017, in addition to normal in-service training, and a week-long certification course that the Sheriff's Office provided. A K9 is a very expensive resource, and may not otherwise be possible for Lake County; however, years ago, endeavoring to have a K9 as part of the LCSO team, Sciarretta refused to hear the reasons why it was impossible, and instead continues to make it possible. Thank you, Deputy Sciarretta!



K9 Max and his friend Charlotte

Training:

In 2017, a great deal of focus was spent on training, with about 1900 hours of in-service training being provided to officers. That was up from a little over 1100 the previous year. A great benefit of this training is that much of it was hosted locally, thus our deputies didn't have to travel great distances to receive it, in many cases. Though the Montana Law Enforcement Basic Academy provides adequate basic training, this is a career field where it is absolutely necessary to continue keeping up with the latest trends and maintaining sharp skills. It is my goal to have as many deputies as we possibly can attend active shooter response, SWAT basic, Interview and Interrogation, and other essential courses that every officer can use, but many don't receive formal training in. Aside from that, courses in

leadership are always important for officers, as well as maintaining certification in CPR and other proficiencies.

An exciting event this year was the donation of 25 AED (Automatic External Defibrillators) to the Sheriff's Office by a local philanthropist family. All deputies are now equipped with an AED unit and certified in its use.



Lake County Search and Rescue:

Lake County Search and Rescue was founded in 1970 by Bill Phelps, recognizing a need for having trained emergency response personnel available in the event of lost person incidents. The volunteers of the unit were trained in navigation and medical response to help aid lost persons back to safety.

The mission statement of Lake County SAR: Lake County Search and Rescue is dedicated to providing professional ground, air, and water search, and rescue support based on our education, training and capabilities to the Sheriff's Office and the citizens of Lake County. Our goal is to find and/or locate, render aid, and provide quality professional and expedient services to the citizens of Lake County and other surrounding counties who are in distress or need of help, making sure to minimize the injury, damage of property, and loss of life. We are there to help educate the community to minimize risks that pertain to being lost, and to help provide professional body recovery services as needed. "Lost and Then Found" is our motto that we live by each and every time we are called upon by the Sheriff's Office.



Lake County SAR covers 1200 square miles and trains on a weekly basis in all areas of study to help in the aid of rescue, such as: Ropes, man-tracking, use of ATV's and boats, ice-rescue, incident command, horse use, K-9 tracking, avalanche rescue, mapping, navigation, and lost person behavior. We take pride in the skills of professional conduct, logical

thinking, and quick decision making when it comes to deployment of resources at our disposal. In 2017, the volunteers of the Lake County SAR logged nearly 1200 hours of training. The unit consists of 40 active members. In 2017, Lake County SAR conducted 13 searches totaling 425 hours of search-related operations. This is nearly double of 2016!

Swan Mission Search and Rescue:

During the late 1950's, an increase in lost persons resulted in a volunteer organization being formed that consisted of individuals who were familiar with the area. In about 1960, this group became the Swan

Mission Search and Rescue. A need for rapid response and medical treatment lead the SMSAR to become the first emergency response unit in the Swan Lake area. We operated as the sole provider of first responder medical assistance until the mid-1980's when the Bigfork QRU began to provide that expertise.

The group's Mission Statement reads "Swan Mission Search and Rescue is a group of volunteers who are dedicated to searching for and rescuing persons in time of need. Our mission is providing lifesaving services through a highly trained and professional rapid deployment unit that is on call at all times".

Today SMSAR operates primarily within the Swan and Mission Mountain Ranges, which includes the Swan Valley from the Lake County line to the Missoula County line, as well as the area from the Lake County line in Bigfork to the boundary with the Flathead Indian Reservation on the East Lake Shore of Flathead Lake. Our knowledge of the area is critical. We stage our operations out of our search and rescue hall, which is located in the community of Swan Lake.

Members of our search and rescue team train bi-monthly in a variety of life-saving skills. We pride ourselves in being professionally trained in swift-water/river rescue, rope rescue, avalanche, ice rescue wilderness first aid, GPS and land navigation. Our members are extensively trained in the use of ATV's, snowmobiles, snow bikes, avalanche transceivers, personal watercraft, boat operations, dirt bikes and river rafts. Our training and expertise in these skills prepares us for the unexpected. Beyond certifications and trainings, our SAR volunteers have a lifetime of experiences that are critical for their missions as well.



We are a "family" that works together for the benefit of those in need. We also provide mutual aid to the Swan Lake, Bigfork and Condon Fire Departments as well as to any agency requesting our assistance.

Montana Law Enforcement Academy Graduates:

In 2017, the Sheriff's Office graduated Deputy Ross Holcomb from the Montana Law Enforcement Academy's Law Enforcement Officer Basic Course.

Detention Officers, Jordan Cox, and Samantha Merry graduated from the Montana Law Enforcement Academy's Corrections and Detention Officer Basic Course #143 in December of 2017. Congratulations to Officer Merry for achieving the Bill Westfall award for academic excellence during her academy.





In closing, I would like to thank you, the citizens of this county, for your support of law enforcement in our community, and our country. The past few years have been difficult for the men and women who proudly serve in this profession. Nationally, a great deal of misplaced blame has been assigned to the hard-working officers who ensure that we all enjoy peace in our homes and communities. Though each of our communities has its unique set of challenges, law enforcement is only part of the solution. It's great living and serving in a place where so many people do their part, and support us in doing ours.



Officers from across the country line up outside the church where funeral services were held for Broadwater County Sheriff's Deputy, Mason Moore, who was tragically killed in the line of duty on May 16, 2017. Many Deputies from the Lake County Sheriff's Office were also in attendance. Photo credit - Jeff and Neal Krogstad