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County Commission Communications

A Periodic Column Written by Ed Douglas, Presiding Commissioner

LEARNING MORE ABOUT COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT

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Recently, I took a three hour "ride along" with Livingston County Sheriff Steve Cox. Law Enforcement is a fascinating field (that is why there are so many police shows on TV), and so it was very interesting discussing with Steve very real law enforcement issues in our county. We drove over some back roads near Chillicothe and drove through and around Utica, Ludlow, Dawn and Wheeling. On the trip, Sheriff Cox pointed out a number of houses in which there are known drug dealers and a couple of other houses in which there were registered sex offenders. Unfortunately, Livingston County has our share of these, just like other counties.

From discussions with Steve and previous discussions with our Prosecuting Attorney, Adam Warren, I think I can say that the overwhelming majority of crimes in our county are drug related. Drugs are a terrible problem, and drug use and addiction can ruin many lives - of users and victims of users.

Arresting dealers is not an easy task. Officers can't just park in front of a dealer's house and wait until drugs are sold. It takes a lot of hard work and in some cases undercover operations. Not necessarily typical, but as an example of a few of the dealers/users the Sheriff's department has seen is someone who works pretty hard to get on Social Security Disability which then can qualify them for Medicaid. At that point, the dealer/user might be able to find a doctor to prescribe pain killers by the tablet that can be purchased through Medicaid for next to nothing and then resold by the dealer/user for a 1000% mark up.

Some counties have the luxury of having Drug Courts for specifically handling drug cases and facilities for drug rehabilitation that can improve the odds of rehabilitation which might lower prison costs and related crime costs. We plan to explore this subject to learn about the effectiveness and costs as well as if there could be potential grants to fund those programs.

Also very recently Steve Cox invited us down to the Livingston Co Sheriff's office to participate in using a law enforcement simulator that is being used by Chief Deputy Michael Claypole who is teaching training classes here in town for officer candidates. This piece of machinery cost \$60,000 and was loaned to us by the Missouri Sheriff's Association for the classes and for use by our officers for training. The equipment used in this "shoot or don't shoot" simulation allows a person to actually experience multiple very real situations that can require verbal communication and even the use of force of either a taser or gun. When a gun is used, it shows where your shots went, off target or on. It is an amazing tool and is very important for the officers to be trained so that in a split second life or death situation an officer reacts to his training, hopefully saving lives. The training machine underscored for me how little time there is to react and how many different situations require different reactions. (Incidentally, fellow Commissioners Todd and Ken went through various simulations with the equipment and I would say I won - actually not, but it makes a good story.) Several others from the community tried the simulation too including media, attorneys and judges.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Steve Cox and all our officers in the county and city for what they do to protect us and keep us safe. Law enforcement is not a high paying job and yet, dedicated men and woman put their lives on the line for us every day. I personally would not want to stop a car not knowing if the driver is on something, is violent, or has a gun. I'm very appreciative that these dedicated men and women are willing do this job on our behalf. Thanks, officers, for all you do. >> [See related story and photo.](#)



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