



JOHN McMAHON, SHERIFF-CORONER



**Overview** –The San Bernardino Sheriff's Community Liaison Unit is our way of connecting law enforcement with the public, and with public leaders in the community.

**Problem or Challenge-** At no other time in recent law enforcement history has the importance of good public relations between police and the public been so apparent as now. The need for heightened and sensitive outreach on the part of law enforcement is greater than ever. This outreach must go beyond the polishing of an agency's image in the popular mind; it must involve a deep, continuous and sincere attempt to find the representatives of every segment of the population, treat them with respect, and honestly solicit their input. Law enforcement must take every ethnic, religious and political tile in the mosaic of its community seriously, and – within the limits of policy and constitutional considerations – be responsive, transparent and accommodating.

**Solution** - Just such a commitment to public outreach can be found in the Community Liaison Unit of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. Established in 1989, this unit weaves itself into the fabric of our diverse communities on a daily basis, attending a colorful spectrum of events and meetings, breakfasts and board meetings, holding one-on-one consultations with various leaders, and constantly taking the pulse of every demographic enclave in the county. The Inland Empire Hispanic Leadership Council, the National Council of Negro Women, the Inland Empire Vietnamese Association, the Korean-American Grocer's Association, the Victorville Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the County Superintendent of Schools Advisory Board, and all the mainstream organizations including consular affairs and local legislative affairs are dealt with on a daily basis. Many of these groups are represented in the Sheriff's Information Exchange Committee, coordinated by the unit, which meets quarterly for the airing of concerns and grievances. In these meetings the Sheriff takes an active part, and spokespeople for various groups know that any one of their concerns is addressed directly by the Sheriff himself.

The Sheriff takes a very hands-on approach to our external partners, and he knows that trust between the department and the public has to be built anew every day; this is accomplished through the Community Liaison Unit. The Community Liaison Unit coordinates and teaches P.O.S.T. LD-42 cultural diversity, hate crimes, and sexual harassment at the sheriff's basic academy. It is also asked by community based organizations, educational institutions and the faith based communities to present on these topics.

**Budget/Costs/Savings** - The Unit is staffed by a Community Liaison Officer (\$134,365/yearly) and two deputies (\$162,394/yearly, each). These expenditures are put in perspective by the realization that a single incident of mass civil unrest can cost millions of dollars. (The Baltimore riots cost that city about \$9 million.) Also, costs arising from civil litigation, because of culturally insensitive policing, can easily reach that level as well. The savings seen in proactive community engagement are thus on a vast scale, impossible to calculate precisely. The dividend that is paid as a result of this high level of community involvement is the reaction of our multicultural coalition of neighborhoods when potentially explosive events occur.

**Results** - When the Dante Parker and Allen Kephart incidents took place in 2011 and 2014 (high profile taser incidents in which the suspects died), there were no violent protests. In the aftermath of the 2015 Francis Pusok beating incident in Apple Valley, there were no violent protests. In fact, the President of the local chapter of the NAACP told reporters that – following the airing of the videotape -- he received a phone call from the Community Liaison Unit *before* he had even found a chance to contact it.

As America watches the sequel to events in Ferguson, Baltimore, and the terrorist attack in San Bernardino, it is an opportune moment to recognize the extraordinarily proactive efforts of the Community Liaison Unit, which demonstrate to the world of law enforcement how future paroxysms of civil unrest can be avoided through vigorous and tireless community involvement.

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