

For the Office for the Sheriff:

My philosophy in law enforcement is to use events and experiences to determine courses-of-action. These can be positive or negative. We pride ourselves on being proactive vs. reactive. I do not believe that we should wait for things to go wrong and then react. I would rather try to stop things from going wrong. Very often we use the media to aid us in our cause or communication with you.

A good example of being proactive is some of our traffic safety initiatives. If we identify an intersection that has abnormal high rate of crashes we identify the problem or a safety feature to prevent future crashes. That may include rumble strips, stop signs, reduced speed limit ect. This proactive approach works in many areas.

Last week we experienced a problem at a local drinking establishment. The incident involved an intoxicated patron and a knife. I received numerous comments (pro and con) on my stance with the event and who is responsible. When we talk about these cases we must ask ourselves what we can do to ensure these calls are the exception and not the norm? How can we prevent this? If we would not conduct this type of analysis and assessment we are not doing our jobs as community caretakers.

Over the past few years we have been able to contribute numerous criminal acts and deaths to drinking. It does not take a Harvard graduate to identify alcohol as the leading contributing factor in fights, traffic crashes, domestic abuse, and gambling. As Sheriff, my role in the community is to reduce the likelihood of these criminal acts and develop the means to do so. Recently we had a man killed in a bar fight, we had a 24-squad response to a man with a gun in a crowded bar, and we frequently respond to physical altercations between intoxicated patrons in bars. This IS an issue!

Most disturbing is the investigations into our traffic fatalities and learning the person killed had just left a drinking establishment and had a blood alcohol level that is 2 – 3 times the legal limit. I personally have been to traffic fatalities where the victim had crashed within three miles of the establishment they had just left – intoxicated, now dead!.

I will not apologize for my firm stance on the excessive serving of alcohol. Law enforcement is doing all it can to reduce the likelihood of alcohol related crimes. It is time for individual responsibility to kick in, be it the patron or employee. Step up to the plate and do the right thing - conform to the wishes of society. Identify potential conflict early and mitigate the causes.

Dodge County is a great county and has too many responsible establishments that comply with the laws and regulations of their license. Many of these businesses adhere to the professional standards of organizations such as the Tavern League of Wisconsin and the Dodge County Tavern League. They represent a very large number of businesses that are critical to our economy and provide needed services. The leadership understands that and we use this mutual understanding to foster the cooperation and partnership we enjoy today.

The Dodge County Sheriff's Dept. is committed to retaining its proactive approach. If that means telling it the way it is - so be it. I am a straight shooter and will never jeopardize my oath and look the other way when confronted with these societal issues and its root causes. Thanks for listening tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.

