

To the citizens of Franklin County

My Friends,

When I was a Police Chief, I always ended the year with a report that highlighted the activities of the department to include achievements as well as failures. As Sheriff, I feel this practice should continue with a report to the taxpayers of the county.

During my campaign, I talked a great deal about increasing the visibility of our patrol deputies in rural areas. I am happy to report we have achieved this by establishing a new program for camp and business patrol checks. Earlier this spring, deputies left flyers all over the county at private business and camps. The owners had the option to fill in contact information regarding their properties and then mail them into the Sheriff's Office. That information was then entered into our system and set up for regular patrol checks. During regular patrol activities, deputies now travel the dirt roads and back woods of rural Franklin County to conduct their security checks. This type of patrol activity has increased the presence of deputies in areas that did not see routine patrol activity in years past. There were several occasions during these patrol checks that deputies were able to preempt criminal activity before it occurred and also to notify owners of unsecure conditions of their properties.

In the past, deputies were constantly at the Sheriff's Office writing reports which kept them away from their patrol function. With the assistance of EMA Director Tim Hardy, we were able to secure a grant from Homeland Security which paid for the purchase of reconditioned Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) for each of the patrol vehicles for half the price of new ones. This purchase was important because deputies now have the ability to write their reports inside of their vehicles while still at the scene of the incident. This has many positives; staying in their patrol areas, saving on fuel consumption by not traveling back and forth to the office and less radio air time to conduct routine identity and traffic checks which allows county dispatchers more time to take care of emergencies.

Regarding School safety we've traveled to many of the rural schools to evaluate school safety plans and participate in school reaction drills to a violent event. Deputies have also started a school visitation program throughout the county where they stop by at random times and check in with the administrative staff during the day. They also sit at the parking lots of the schools to write reports simply to be visible. The Sheriff's Department has enhanced the ability of our deputies to respond to an active shooter situation, should that be required, through increased training and new equipment. K-9 deputies also visit the schools when requested for public relations events.

The Criminal Investigation Division has been very busy this year solving robberies, burglaries and sex crimes. Detectives using new technologies were able to solve crimes such as the robbery that occurred at Trantens II in Kingfield (a case that was over a year old). During a recent daytime attempted burglary case, detectives not only solved that case but also solved burglaries that occurred in Lincoln County. They work closely with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in order to solve crime and share information.

One of my greatest challenges this year (and continues to be) the struggle with the State Board of Corrections and its grip on county jail facilities. It has truly been a David vs. Goliath endeavor. We started out the year testifying before the criminal justice committee regarding an LD to have our jail reinstated, it was denied. We then made our case before the Board of Corrections providing a report that proved we could run our jail as a full time facility under the mandated tax cap. The National Institute of Corrections agreed with it and an appointed working group sub-committee of the Board agreed with it; however the main Board of Corrections denied it again. Not all is lost though. The Board recently acknowledged that it would benefit the system to have Franklin's facility reinstated to a full time jail; the caveat being that we get the Legislature to appropriate \$650,000 dollars. Why \$650,000? Because that is the amount of taxpayer money we contribute to the system each year that subsidizes the B.O.C. Should we go full time, we could keep that money for our own operations. While we did not get the jail back this year, my hope is we will see its return within the next two years.

Another accomplishment this year was the completion of the new communications center which we hope to occupy by March of 2014. The new Director, Stan Wheeler, and his excellent staff will have the latest equipment to support the public and first responders for years to come.

The Sheriff's Department stands ready to assist all other agencies with any type of assistance and 2013 was no exception. We responded to 270 calls for assistance from other agencies throughout Franklin County. That assistance comprised of requests for K-9 searches for missing persons, searches for fleeing criminals and drugs. Detectives assisted with criminal investigations regarding child abuse, drug use and crash reconstruction involving serious personal injury or death. Deputies responded to municipalities and other areas in the county to assist municipal police and Troopers with reports of fights in progress, barricaded suspects and assisted in arrests. Deputies, who are Maine Criminal Justice Academy instructors, provided annual firearms training/qualification to various agencies within the county. Other Deputies volunteered their time at the Academy to assist with training.

What are we looking to accomplish in 2014? We are initiating a Citizens Police Academy starting in January. The first course will be held in Eustis and will involve meeting on Tuesday evenings for 8 weeks. This course will highlight how the Sheriff's Department conducts law enforcement operations, explains criminal & traffic law and how it is enforced. Participants will be able to participate in "ride a longs" with deputies and have a tour of the jail. This course will answer all the questions you have always wanted to ask. We will also continue with our yearly inspection and invite the public.

I want to tell you about our new website which is located at <http://franklincounty-me.org>. On that site you can find the "Tips" page which allows anybody to contact us anonymously and provide information on ongoing criminal activity, and juvenile consumption of alcohol and drugs.

I want to thank Commissioners Clyde Barker, Gary McGrane and Fred Hardy and the staff at the Commissioner's office for their support throughout the year. I would also like to thank all the Police Chiefs, Fire Chiefs, and their staff as well as the Troopers, Border Patrol agents and everyone else who work very hard to protect and serve our communities.

Respectfully Sheriff Scott Nichols