

Rotarians and Guests,

It is hard to believe that it was 2 ½ years ago I was your Guest Speaker. As I stated then and I say today it is an extreme honor to be the 66th Sheriff of Wood County. Today I want to talk to you about our accomplishments at the Wood County Sheriff's Office and address some issues. I hope you noticed I stated our, because it has been a TEAM effort. Each of you should have received a copy of our 2010/2011 Fiscal Report, which goes into detail of many of the items I will touch upon today, and a copy of our staff directory.

In January 2009, my staff and I conducted an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Wood County Sheriff's Office. As the first new Sheriff in Wood County in 23 years, I had to understand where the Sheriff's Office had been, where it is now, and what direction it should proceed for the future.

I report to you today that there were numerous strengths and some weaknesses at the Wood County Sheriff's Office in January

2009. The biggest strength was and continues to be the employee's, and weakness being internal controls. For the sake of some great public servants do not allow the actions of 3% of the workforce cloud the achievements of the hard working men and women I have the honor to lead. Having worked in government, the private sector, and my own business, I can tell you ----that the citizens of Wood County have some great public servants. Today I invited one of our newest Sergeants, Brett Pickens. (Explain Process) He is a great public servant and cares about the citizens of Wood County. In fact we are proud of our hiring process that we have implemented. A candidate is required to be subjected to a full background investigation including a polygraph. Just the fact that a polygraph is going to be performed has resulted in candidates deciding they were no longer interested in the position. We have eliminated out all individuals that would not and should not have the honor to wear the badge of a Wood County Deputy. The West Virginia State Police Academy has personally commended the Wood County Sheriff's Office on the quality of our new Deputies.

The first critical area that we identified needing to be addressed was the internal controls of the Wood County Sheriff's Office. Prior audits showed internal controls that were lacking, meaning a dishonest employee could violate the integrity of the entire Sheriff's Office. To put it bluntly there was no accountability. As a result of this effort we uncovered several alarming activities. There was an embezzlement that involved the theft of thousands from the Home Confinement Program. (HOW IT WAS DONE). Secondly, it was uncovered that over \$8,000.00 was missing from an investigative fund actually located in the Sheriff's Office. In an attempt to make this matter non political the Prosecutor and I referred this matter to the West Virginia State Police. All members of the Senior Staff volunteered to be polygraphed.

Our last audit showed that our efforts have worked. What we did was simply install checks and balances.

The second critical issue was the inter-structure. Our vehicles, office space, firearms, and radio equipment to name a few was

decayed or in disarray. Vehicles were breaking down and radios were going out of service on a regular basis. GIVE EXAMPLE

I feel it is important to point out at this time that the Wood County Sheriff's Office does not have a budget for the purchase of assets. All requests for assets have to be directed to the Wood County Commission. One of the complaints I here from a few citizens is that I am spending too much money and always asking for money. I have no choice, because that is the way our system works. Thanks to the Wood County Commission we have been able to reduce the average replacement of our vehicles from 104,000 miles to 93,000 miles. My goal is to get it down to 80,000 miles. This will place us in line with National Police recommendations. Just the reduction from 104,000 to 93,000 has saved thousands in repair costs.

Another area of importance is 911 calls. Many citizens were complaining that it was taking in some cases days to meet a Deputy. This issue was easy to understand, our Deputies were in

security posts in our County Building and transporting Mental Hygiene Patients to various hospital throughout the State. With the help of the Commission we copied what our US Marshall's have done for decades and that is to hire retired Military and Police Officers to assume these posts and allow the Deputies to perform their duties. This has not only allowed the Deputies to go from 15,000 911 calls in 2006 to a projected 21,000 in 2011. But the \$93,000.00 in wages for these new positions resulted in saving the Wood County over \$300,000.00 in overtime. I commend the Commission for approving this new program.

The second was the office space of Public Safety and Confinement Operations. Non working restrooms, leaking water, filth, when it rained water poured down some of the interior walls, and carpet worn down to the matting. Thanks to the efforts of the Commission in 2009, we got the walls painted, floors cleaned and some new chairs. Donations by Bill Parrish with 3 B Carpet and Rob Parrish with Family Carpet Outlet we replaced the worn out and rotten carpet. This quick fix restored some pride; however the

vision of the Commission to obtain new office space was so important. I commend the Commission for their vision. Their vision will have many lasting advantages. Just the savings in utilities will exceed \$30,000 per year.

The next issue was our radio communications. (Missing child Story) Thanks to Captain Woodyard and Director Smith's work with the Military we have been able to make great strides. I call them the Wood County PICKERS. In fact over \$900,000.00 worth of equipment has been obtained for free from the Military. I would be reminisce if I did not recognize Tom Smith for his eBay shopping. Many of our installed radios he won on Ebay at a cost of \$600.00 each. These radios retailed for over \$2,500.00 each.

Wood County is very fortunate to have one of the nations best firearm instructors. MATT SMITH. As a former firearm instructor myself we knew we had some issues. Weapons were breaking down at the range. The great fear was this could also occur in a time of extreme danger. Secondly Deputies and Officers had

reverted to purchasing their own weapons. Could you imagine playing football with each team having their own size football? Could you imagine being in a shootout and not being able to share ammo with you partner? Our Military have basically 2 sizes of ammo, 9mm and 223. Thanks to a joint effort by the Commission and the WCSO we were able to convert to new weapons costing \$55,000.00 for less that \$6,000.00.

There have been so many modernization milestones, I cannot discuss them all, but I will end with our internal reporting system In-synch. Every time we receive a 911 call a case is opened and it tracks the case till it is closed or forwarded to the Prosecutor with a recommendation for charges to be filed. Secondly In-Synch with our computer modems has allowed our Deputies to increase productivity and save 1000's of gallons of gasoline.

Training and education prevents law suits and injuries. All of our employees have had countless opportunities for training. Due to time I cannot talk about all of them. From murder investigative

training to the US Secret Service training at the FLETC in GA, the training has solved crimes. Give Examples

With funding saved from reducing manpower at Confinement Operations we formed an Intelligence Unit. Joe Gonzales has led the way to transform our effectiveness. In his first month on the job he developed a case that lead to a drug forfeiture of \$32,000.00, and since then has exceeded \$150,000.00.

When most people think of the Wood County Sheriff's Office, they envision Deputies in black uniforms. This concept is literally the "tip of the iceberg," what is not seen is the contribution; dedication, commitment, and sacrifice of the Wood County Sheriff's Office 56 civilian employees whose average yearly salary is approximately \$27,500.00.

We have officers in Blue uniforms in Confinement Operations. Confinement Operations is under the umbrella of Chief Dennie Huggins and ran by Director Steve Stephens. They inherited a difficult situation, and within 24 months got the staff professional

training, removed the collection of Home Confinement payments, and developed quality protocols to reduce potential lawsuits. This is an important program because it cost the citizens of West Virginia \$48.00 per day to keep an individual in our Regional Jails. I commend them for their public service

Tax Operations is managed by Chief Dennie Huggins. I am proud to state that Wood County is first Sheriff's Office in West Virginia to be fully transparent. Meaning every bank account we handle of taxpayers money you can see on line at WoodCountyWV.com. If it was not for the Tax Deputies at the Judge Black Building day in and day out collecting and correctly applying payments to the right taxpayers account our county would be in disarray. These individual handle complex estates when we are ordered by the courts to do so. Currently we have 27 conservators in which we handle approximately 8 million in cash and assets located in multiple states. We pay all their bills and taxes. We current manage dozens of properties, one of which borders a major league ball park. This year tax collections have

totaled 28 million, with 1.4 million currently being delinquent. The Tax office handles our counties Concealed Weapons permits which have received praise by the public and the NRA. The biggest concern with Tax Operations 2 years ago was the internal controls and based on the last audit report we have improved greatly. In the near future we will be converting to a new computer bookkeeping system that will even enhance internal controls and security even more.

Administrative Operations has now adopted all budgets, payroll, and procurement of the entire Sheriff's Operations. This unit is run by Director Tom Smith. This has streamlined and improved the Sheriff's office, by having just one function of the Sheriff's Office handling personnel and payroll has saved resources. In fact, page 4 of our Annual Report, shows that during the past 3 years have been \$380,546.04 under budget. Isn't it interesting what Democrats and Republicans can do when they work together!

The commitment to public service by the Wood County Sheriff's Office employees is truly inspiring. However my biggest concern is that with the continued rise in the cost of living, necessity may force many of these employees to leave the Wood County Sheriff's Office. I currently have 6 fully trained Deputies that are seeking new positions. An example Washington County pays their Deputies a starting salary of \$38,000 per year compared to Wood Counties \$31,600.00. A Washington County Deputy in 5 years makes more than my Captains with 30 years of service.

- Let me end today's speech with what has been headlines many times during my tenure as Sheriff and that is employment issues. Many of you here today are well respected business leaders, educators, and professionals. If a person under your employment steals from you most likely you will terminate their employment. Government is the same. However, if a person gives you a false statement or lies, you may make a decision to give them a second chance. The law enforcement profession is much different. Since 1963, as a result of Brady v. Maryland the Supreme

Court held that prosecutors have an affirmative duty to disclose all exculpatory evidence to the accused. Case law expanded Brady's obligations to law enforcement officers concerning credibility, including evidence the defense might use at trial to impeach a witness. Giglio v. U.S., (S. Ct. 1972).

As Sheriff of Wood County, I am sworn to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and the State of West Virginia. During my term in office and for years after I depart, I could not live with myself if a murder, rapist, or child molester got set free because I swept an employment issues under the table or turned a blind eye. The following is pulled from law school training material:

“Ladies and Gentleman of the jury, consider the testimony of Officer _____. The prosecution calls as THEIR witness and asks you to believe a man who will lie to his OWN brother and sister of the shield about a relatively small matter. You have to ask yourselves what such a documented liar might do when the stakes are as high as they are in this case. “

In 1799 Governor James Wood of Virginia named Colonel William Lowther the first Sheriff of Wood County. He was known as a strong leader and protector of the citizens of the then Northwest Territory. Although the job as Sheriff is much different than it was 200 years ago, the job is the same. You have to be a strong leader and you still have to protect the citizens that have entrusted you to office. I am proud to be a 7th generation ancestor of Colonel Lowther and proud to be your Sheriff and I am proud of the employees at your Wood County Sheriff's Office. As our motto states **“Doing what’s right for Wood County Citizens Everyday!”**