

Message from the Sheriff

The year 2008 will certainly be recognized for its sense of dichotomy. On one hand, the global economic downturn resulted in a greater necessity for social programs and housing assistance for county residents. On the other hand, the percentage of violent crime was reduced in the same area. Figures for unemployment rose, yet the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department not only met, but exceeded, its recruitment numbers. Many large government and business entities retreated, re-tracing their paths and re-crossing bridges in an attempt to try to find a brighter future. In contrast, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department continues to move relentlessly forward, blazing a trail of growth and expansion.

The level of dedication and professionalism exhibited by every sworn and professional staff member never ceases to amaze me. We stand in the courtrooms, enabling the judicial system to function; we stand in custody facilities, providing security so the jail system works, and we stand in the street to combat evil, upholding our mission statement to "Lead the fight to prevent crime and injustice." We continue our Tradition of Service in the face of the country's economic problems, we continue to research and improve our tactics and training, we continue to update and refurbish our facilities, we continue to reduce crime at the core with educational school programs like Vital Intervention Directional Alternatives (VIDA) and Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) and we attempt to halt jail recidivism with programs like Men Evolving into Recovery Through In-custody Treatment (MERIT). We earn the trust of the residents of Los Angeles County by continuing to "Partner with the people we serve to secure and promote safety in our communities."

When we come together as a law-enforcement family, wonderful things often occur. In April, the Men's Central Jail Running Team brought home the Baker to Vegas Challenge Cup Relay trophy in an exciting finish. During the holidays, Compton and Lennox Stations combined to recover over 1800 shotguns, pistols, and assault rifles during the annual "Gift for Guns" program, which we hope to expand to the entire county in the near future.

We mourn as a family as well. In May, we paid tribute to our fallen brothers Deputy Raul Gama and Officer Randy Simmons during the 39th Annual Los Angeles County Peace Officers Memorial Ceremony. More than 3000 law-enforcement officials participated in the Memorial Torch Run that followed. Less than three months later, we gathered to mourn the loss of Deputy Juan Escalante, another young life cut short whom we shall not forget. Not long after that, Deputy Randy Hamson succumbed to his injuries resulting from being struck by a car in 2004.

You continually met every challenge head-on, brilliantly creating methods to defeat any obstruction or obstacles, once again proving that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is a leader in the law-enforcement field. I wish to thank every department member for the outstanding job accomplished in 2008. It is truly my honor to lead such an incredible group of people.

Lee Baca, Sheriff

