

## **Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission Programs Background**

After many years of organized crime, political corruption and lawlessness, in 1949 a Jackson County Grand Jury called for the legitimate business community to initiate a crime commission, patterned after the one in Chicago, IL, to investigate corruption and police department in Kansas City. The Kansas City Crime Commission (now the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission) was born. Business and community leaders from across the city came forward to join this organization. To this day, the list of board members contains influential corporate and community leaders from both the Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri metropolitan area and the mission has changed drastically.

Today our mission is to make the Kansas City metropolitan area a safer, more secure place to live, do business, and visit by supporting law-enforcement and justice agencies and their causes. Geographically, the Crime Commission serves the greater Kansas City metropolitan area on both sides of the state line to include, but not limited to, the counties of Cass, Clay, Jackson, and Platte in Missouri, and Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas.

In the years since its inception, the Crime Commission has assisted law enforcement agencies in such ways as supporting bond issues for jails and helping pass an earnings tax that provided money to hire badly needed police officers and firefighters. It continues to help educate the public in regard to law enforcement related issues and worked to help pass a quarter cent sales tax for capitol improvements for the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department.

As an organization, the Crime Commission has 12 full-time employees and four part-time employees. In addition, a full time active duty police officer assigned from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department serves as coordinator for the TIPS Hotline. We have 140 volunteer boards of directors serving on three program boards.

Under the Crime Commission's operational umbrella are five vital components for a safer community: the Greater Kansas City Crime Stoppers TIPS Hotline (816-474-TIPS), Metropolitan Community Service Program (MCSP), Surviving Spouse And Family Endowment Fund (SAFE), Ceasefire and Second Chance Foundation.

### **Greater Kansas City Crime Stoppers**

From the time the first anonymous call was taken in 1982, the Greater Kansas City Crime Stoppers TIPS Hotline 816-474-TIPS (known metro wide as the "TIPS Hotline") has proven to be a vital crime fighting instrument in our neighborhoods. It has become one of the most recognized phone numbers in the eight county metropolitan areas.

The TIPS Hotline is a member program of Crime Stoppers International, and as such, conducts itself under its policies and guidelines. There are over 1,000 Crime Stoppers programs in about 20 nations around the globe. However these local programs receive no funding from Crime Stoppers International. The Kansas City program is consistently ranked in the top three worldwide for its productivity and effectiveness. Its record of success grows each year.

More than 100,000 tips from citizens with information on felony crimes in the metropolitan area have been taken by the call-takers that man the hotline. These tips have led to over 9,000 arrests and the clearance of over 22,000 crimes or warrants. These

numbers include more than 500 arrests for murder and nearly 1,500-armed robberies solved. More than 2,300 fugitives have been caught thanks to these tips.

The TIPS Hotline is funded by the generosity of our local business community and working contracts with over 30 local law enforcement agencies. The Crime Stoppers Annual Golf Classic is but one of many events conducted to raise money to pay rewards.

### **Metropolitan Community Service Program**

In 1994, in response to a federal mandate to reduce overcrowding in the Jackson County Jail, once again the Crime Commission stepped up to the plate by taking on sponsorship of the Metropolitan Community Service Program, known in the community as MCSP. MCSP is a non-profit organization funded through fees paid by the offenders ordered to do community service, by donations from private citizens and program contracts.

MCSP operates in conjunction with and under the guidance of a volunteer advisory board that collectively supports the position that the community could best be served by providing a non-profit self-supporting sanction to the criminal justice system. It serves as a tool for returning the offender to society in a meaningful way while at the same time restoring resources to the community.

Ordered by the courts to complete community service in lieu of jail, clients are assigned to assist community policing programs that support neighborhood clean-up activities and select non-profit organizations instead of sitting in jail at taxpayer expense. Harvesters, Restart, Kansas City Zoo and Missouri Council of the Blind are just a few of the forty non-profit organizations that benefit from the no-cost labor provided by MCSP. Millions of dollars of labor have been provided through MCSP to area programs.

### **Surviving Spouse and Family Endowment Fund (SAFE)**

In 2003 Rick Easley, then Chief, Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and Karl Zobrist, President, Board of Commissioners, Kansas City, Missouri Police Department, contacted the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission and asked them to study the possibility of forming a 100 Club in the Kansas City area. A review of web sites for 100 Clubs indicated that a club had existed in Kansas City many years ago, but the Commission was unable to locate anyone familiar with that club and it was listed as "Unable to locate or no longer in operation" in the directory of 100 Clubs.

Rick Cook, then President of the Crime Commission, discussed the idea with the Crime Commission Board over the next year. Meanwhile, Rick Easley directed one of his Commanders to contact the club in St. Louis and obtain information regarding the ins and outs of starting a club. In late September 2003, Rick Cook contacted retired ATF ASAC Sonny Wilson and persuaded him to take on the project full time.

On October 30, 2003, the Crime Commission formally announced the creation of the Kansas City 100 Club known as SAFE, the Surviving Spouse And Family Endowment Fund. It operates under the umbrella of the Crime Commission's 501 © 3 status and makes all donations/contributions fully tax deductible. The program covers local police officers, firefighters and emergency service personnel in the Missouri counties of Clay, Cass, Jackson and Platte and the Kansas counties of Douglas, Johnson, Miami, Shawnee and Wyandotte and other jurisdictions as may be determined by its Board of Directors. It does not cover State or Federal personnel.

SAFE provides immediate and possibly long term financial support to the spouses, children and/or dependent parents of those covered persons who are killed in the line of

duty. Upon the death, in the line of duty of a covered individual, representatives of the Board will visit the family within 24 hours and present them with a check for \$10,000. There is no application to fill out and no strings attached. Sometime later (this will occur after our fund is fully endowed) the Board will again visit the family and possibly assist with financial matters on a long-term basis depending on the individual family needs. Each situation will be different and therefore long term help may or may not occur.

SAFE is funded through fully tax-deductible donations/contributions and has four classes of memberships including Individual-\$120/year; Family-\$150/year; Corporate-\$500/year; and Lifetime-\$5,000 (one time payment). All members receive 2 window decals and lifetime members receive a commemorative shadow box with the SAFE shield appropriately displayed.

### **CEASEFIRE**

The CEASEFIRE campaign is an awareness and education initiative to reduce gun crimes by targeting convicted felons who carry firearms in violation of federal law, seeking a long-term solution to the violent crime problem plaguing the community. Many places in our metropolitan area are withering because people are afraid to leave the security of home to go out and enjoy their neighborhood. CEASEFIRE will deter and ultimately reduce gun crimes so that community building can take place in a safe environment and every neighborhood can enjoy the fruits of their labor in safety.

Since inception in 2001, Crime Commission has spent over \$1.1 million in locally raised funds and in-kind donations on the CEASEFIRE media awareness campaign in Kansas City. One year after CEASEFIRE began, gun crimes have gone down by an average of 6% in Kansas City when compared with one-year prior to CEASEFIRE. Homicides and violent crimes with guns were down by over 30% in Kansas City in 2002. Over 80% of the felons, the target audience, now know about the CEASEFIRE message. The Crime Commission is now the recipient of federal Project Safe Neighborhood funds to continue the CEASEFIRE effort.

### **Second Chance Program**

In 2008 William H. Dunn, Sr., Chairman Emeritus of JE Dunn Construction, contacted the Crime Commission regarding the idea of an offender re-entry program. Studies show approximately 50% of released offenders return to prison within three years of release.

The Second Chance Program is a coordinating force to advocate for effective prisoner re-entry, providing fundraising for local programs, conducting research, task forces and focus groups, and performing special projects. The Second Chance Board of Directors consists of individuals dedicated to the vision of released offenders making a seamless transition back into the community and receiving the second chance they so desire.

With the success of the Second Chance Program citizens can look forward to a reduction in crime as offenders who take advantage of the increased opportunities presented after their release will not be the ones contributing to our crime rates.

The scope of the Crime Commission has broadened over the years, becoming involved with justice and law enforcement issues and neighborhood initiatives on both sides of the state line. In 1997 the organization officially changed its name to the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission to more accurately reflect its area-wide mission.