

We are a community that takes the notion of public order and safety seriously. Passage of the 9-1-1 sales tax, a new Crime Lab, community mobilization to reduce gang activity, positive results on the annual Springfield Police Citizen Survey, an excellent Insurance Services Organization (ISO) Rating, and emergency responses to a major ice storm were all identified as blue ribbons in previous *Community Focus* reports. And, through the combined efforts of many and the leadership of the Safety Council of the Ozarks, we remain a Safe Community as designated by the World Health Organization - only the third in the United States to receive such an award. This designation is awarded to communities that have demonstrated leadership in promoting safety, reducing injuries, and preparing their citizens for natural and man-made disasters.

However, as reported in the 2007 and 2009 *Community Focus* reports, public safety agencies in Greene County have endured serious budget reductions resulting in significant staff shortages affecting law enforcement*. The strong foundation that had been built over the years to ensure a safe community in Springfield was in jeopardy. Fortunately, all involved in the arena of public safety came together to collaborate, innovate, and create positive change to help address problems from the use of volunteer staffing in some agencies to finding grants to offset some of the local funding streams that were reduced. City leaders worked to address the police and fire pension issue, funding was identified for additional police personnel, and fire stations went off rotational closure. A significant shortage remains in Judicial, Prosecution and Public Defender personnel that constrains advances in public safety and will be exacerbated by increases in law enforcement personnel without proportional increases in these parts of the criminal justice system*.

BLUE RIBBONS

Addressing the Police /Fire Pension Plan*

City and community leaders worked diligently to address the underfunded Police and Fire Pension Fund and a sales tax was passed to generate revenue dedicated to adding monies to this fund. This was critical for two reasons: police and fire personnel were leaving the departments due to uncertainty surrounding the underfunding that exacerbated the existing staff shortages, and the shortage had a potential negative impact on the entire City budget.



Chief Paul Williams, Springfield Police Department, and Sheriff Jim Arnott, Greene County Sheriff's Office.

"Public safety is something most of us take for granted; we only miss it when it's gone. The new community strategic plan will, for the first time, contain a chapter devoted to public safety. Through the city's strategic planning process, it became apparent that public safety has a strong interrelationship with most of our community's red flag issues. Imagine trying to promote economic development and recruit employers to a city that gains a reputation as being unsafe."

Greg Burriss, City Manager, Springfield

Collaborative Efforts to Address Public Safety

The City of Springfield initiated a collaborative, multi-sector Strategic Planning Process that included a Public Safety section to chart a positive path for the future. During this process, many innovative ideas came forth that allowed community leaders to look at public safety in an expanded light, including the role technology plays in public order and safety.

In an effort to increase collaboration and stretch resources, the Greene County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) and the Springfield Police Department (SPD) are working together in many areas, including training, investigative task forces, and records management sharing. A Police-Fire Regional Training Center also is being built. Additionally, community agencies and private citizens have stepped up to enhance public safety efforts, such as Kurt Lawson's Safe and Sober Prom Initiative, Southeast Rotary's Don't Meth With Us presentations for 5th graders, and the Gang Task Force's Graffiti Reporting program, a youth-driven initiative.



Springfield Firefighters in Action.

Development of Emergency Resources

The Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management has enhanced The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training for citizens and local agencies. CERT trains volunteers to assist in the event of a disaster and to date 72 of the 584 people trained are registered CERT volunteers available should a major disaster occur. Demand for this 30-plus hour training is high. A new Public Safety Center also is being built to house the Office of Emergency Management and the 911 Center, which will further centralize emergency services and emergency call response.



Greene County DWI and Drug Courts

These specialized courts have gained national recognition by the U.S. Department of Justice for their outcomes. Defendants have been assisted in obtaining services in residential or community-based treatment centers, and many have been able to seek employment. There has been a shift from punitive to restorative justice, and in many cases families have been able to remain together as defendants have been diverted from incarceration.

RED FLAGS

Public Safety Snapshot			
	2008	2009	2010
Meth labs found (Springfield Police – SPD)	28	37	67
Meth labs found (Greene County Sheriff’s Office – GCSO)	12	22	13
Alcohol Related Crashes (SPD)	352	377	286
Alcohol Related Crashes (GCSO)	167	199	169
DWIs (SPD)	1,503	1,411	1,200
DWIs (GCSO)	351	364	300
Crimes Against Persons (SPD)	1,068	1,197	1,328
Crimes Against Persons (GCSO)	887	1,026	1,078

Source: Springfield Police Department & Greene County Sheriff’s Office

Public Safety Staffing

A shortage of sworn Springfield Police Department (SPD) officers has been a red flag since the 2007 *Community Focus* report, although the passage of the pension sales tax, a small revival in the economy, and federal stimulus funds for 15 additional officers allowed the City to authorize two police academies for fiscal year 2010-2011. According to national standards, though, SPD staffing of officers remains below recommended levels and they continue to experience a significant shortage of non-sworn personnel due to a hiring freeze. Based on the 2010 Census, SPD is at 1.9 sworn officers per 1,000 population, as compared to 2.2 for agencies within the Uniform Crime Reporting Midwest Region. Staffing issues have undoubtedly affected police response time, a previous red flag, and although the department has not yet met its benchmark, the trend is positive.

In Greene County, a serious personnel shortage exists in the Sheriff’s Office. There are only 37 uniformed deputies serving unincorporated Greene County, which translates to one officer per 1,274 citizens. In 2010, the patrol division was dispatched to 31,995 reactive calls for service, up from 28,153 in 2009.

Other justice-related agencies also are experiencing resource shortages*. There is a shortage of judges to hear cases and public defenders are overtaxed. In the Greene County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, there is an urgent need for both prosecutors and support staff to handle the increased case load resulting from the high number of domestic violence calls, child abuse cases, and increased criminal and drug activity.

Inadequate Jail Space

The Greene County Jail remains seriously overcrowded and a threat to public safety, a red flag identified for many years. It runs over maximum capacity almost daily, and measures are now underway to release certain detainees prematurely to free up space. To obtain adequate staffing levels for the average daily occupancy rate, an additional 53 detention officers and staff would need to be hired. As we hire more police and deputies to reduce crime, however, more criminals may end up in an overcrowded jail and the resulting number of cases needing to be handled by the Prosecutor’s Office will continue to grow.

Illegal Drug Use

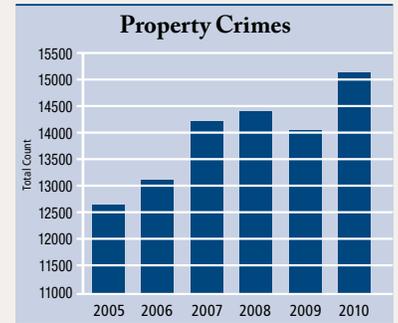
A red flag since the 2004 *Community Focus* report, methamphetamine manufacturing and use continue to be a major problem for the Springfield-Greene County area. Despite efforts from law enforcement, treatment centers, and educational agencies, the number of confiscated meth labs continues to rise. Legislation to limit the sale of products with pseudoephedrine, a blue ribbon in 2005, has had limited success. Plans to introduce legislation making the sale of pseudoephedrine products only available by prescription may be of help, and SPD introduced a meth lab map, accessible via its website, to help educate the community as to the scope of the problem.

We also have seen a sharp increase in the teen abuse of prescription medications as well as the emergence of use by young people of analog drugs, including bath salts, K3, and mephedrone. At the same time, resources devoted to educating young people about the dangers of illegal drug use have declined. Springfield Public Schools had to cut its substance abuse specialists due to the ending of a federal grant. While organizations such as Community Partnership of the Ozarks have worked hard to provide substance abuse education, they, too, have been affected by staffing and budgetary constraints.

Rising Crime Rates

Identified as a red flag in the 2007 *Community Focus* report, crimes against persons and property continue to increase, according to the Springfield Police Department. Crimes against persons, which include rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, rose 10.94 percent from 2009 to 2010; however crimes against property remain the highest volume crime category reported. During 2010, the number of property crimes reported to the SPD was 15,216, up from 14,012 in 2009.

Property crimes are most often associated with illicit drug activity and drug arrests for those under 18 years of age are also beginning to trend upwards after a period of decline. These crimes are a serious threat to the community and the shortage of law enforcement personnel has most certainly compounded the problem.



Source: Springfield Police Department

Alcohol-Related Accidents

Alcohol-related accidents have been identified as a red flag in several *Community Focus* reports, and while numbers have dropped from 352 in 2008 to 286 in 2010, they remain a serious problem in terms of loss of life, injury, and property loss. Local, county, and state law enforcement agencies continue to work together to reduce alcohol-related accidents through joint enforcement and education.

High Rate of Domestic Violence

Greene County continues to experience one of the highest domestic violence rates in the state, which has been identified as a red flag since the 2004 *Community Focus* report. The number of domestic violence assaults reported by the Springfield Police Department increased from 2,318 in 2008 to 2,398 in 2010, after showing a small decline in 2009. Many factors play into this high level of domestic violence, but drug activity, including the use of methamphetamine, is one of the leading causes. Not only do the adult victims suffer from this violence, but the children involved may experience abuse, neglect, and a myriad of emotional and physical problems. Diversion programs, family violence shelters, anger-management counseling, and referrals to community support services are some of the methods being used to combat the problem. In some cases, however, arrest and incarceration are necessary.

Inadequate Community/Individual Disaster Preparedness*

The challenge exists of preparing our community members to be able to adequately respond to and recover from local disasters. This was cited as an emerging issue in the 2009 *Community Focus* report and a recent community survey on the state of preparedness shows both a lack of individual preparedness, as well as a need for improvement on the part of business and the faith community in adopting preparedness principles.

* Indicates Emerging Issue in 2009 Community Focus Report