

Police employ unique tactics to reduce crime rates



Photo courtesy of the FBI

Data analysis and increased patrols lead to violent crime rate reduction

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While both national and local crime rates decreased in 2008, it took more than routine police work to help bring the numbers down.

“What we’ve found over the years is when you reduce the amount of little disorder-type crime and nuisance-type crime throughout a community, it generally has an impact that’s felt all the way across the criminal spectrum where even violent crime is reduced,” said Criminal Investigations Division Capt. Tim Splain of the Asheville Police Department.

Nationwide, the number of violent crimes reported for 2008 decreased by almost 2 percent from 2007, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The violent crime rate dropped from roughly 467 per 100,000 inhabitants to about 455 per 100,000 inhabitants.

Asheville had 30 more violent crimes during the same time period, but had a decrease in the number of murders, from 10 to two, according to the State Bureau of Investigations.

Asheville police focus on violent crimes and gun-related crimes in an effort to prevent people from using guns in public, according to Splain.

“The other part of that is more jurisdictions do community policing and concentrate more widely on quality of life issues and minor kind of nuisance-type

crimes,” he said. “And a lot of arrest work and investigation in that area and our end result is we’re seeing anywhere from 20 percent to a 40 percent reduction in firearm-related calls for service, which then also connects to a reduction in people being shot, people being killed and on down the line.”

To further help fight crime, the police department’s crime analyst gathers data on reported crime and then the department addresses areas in need of more attention, according to Splain.

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—Ed Eads,

APD crime analyst

“You’re going to find some differences here and there, but generally crime has come down. I think we’re just part of that national trend,” said Ed Eads, the department’s crime analyst. “So people are going out less and there’s less opportunity for criminals to steal a pocketbook or that kind of thing.”

Unemployment benefits might also contribute to the downturn in crime, according to Eads.

“So there’s still a cushion going on, and that’s that people, yeah, they’re out of work, they’re probably staying home more, but they’re also getting funded in some way with the extended benefits,” he said

In addition to a lower violent crime rate, the property crime rate also decreased by 1.6 percent nationally, ac-

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