

SHERIFF'S COLUMN 03/14/2010

Preparing to Succeed

Recently, after the Super Bowl as I was watching the post game interviews I was struck by how Packer quarterback Aaron Rodgers responded to a question about how cool and calm he seemed in the biggest game of his career so far. He calmly and confidently replied that he works hard during the week in practice, pays particularly close attention to details in film study and takes his responsibility as a leader on the team very seriously as seriously as anyone on the team. He said it is this preparation and commitment to his teammates that gives him the confidence that he will perform well in the game.

I think Rodger's statement also applies to law enforcement. If you work hard, pay close attention to details on the job and in training and take your responsibility to your fellow officers and your community, you will be prepared and take the best and most correct action even in a "worst case" scenario.

Recently I and my deputies had the opportunity to complete an 8 hour "Active Shooter" training session with Chief John Annear and officers of the Richland Center Police Department. The training was very important and beneficial on many levels and I heard a lot of positive feedback about the experience from my fellow law enforcement officers.

When I say the training was "very important" to our local law enforcement officers on "many levels" I think it's important to tell citizens why I feel this is the case.

At its most basic level, the joint training showed how law enforcement officers from different departments thrown together by the fate of who happens to be on duty at the time of an incident, can work together to accomplish a goal. While this isn't a great revelation because we do it now most every day, it is important to know that even in the most stressful and dangerous situations such as an "active shooter" we can communicate and work together as one.

On another level the training offered local law enforcement an opportunity to train at Richland Center High School, an actual site where the potential exists for such an incident to occur. While I hesitate to say too much about this issue it is quite obvious from paying attention to the news media that schools are one of the most extremely vulnerable locations for an active shooter situation.

It was also very beneficial to review the layout of the school and actually go from room to room searching for the "play acting" instructor who was playing the part of an actual intruder who presented a viable threat. It was a valuable training experience!

I want to note the cooperation of Rachel Shultz and Brian Jones of the Richland School District and thank them for hosting us and conducting a detailed and technical tour of the high school and answering our various security related questions about their facility. Both Rachel and Brian also stayed around after the tour to watch us as we trained on room searches, high impact room entries and subduing the simulated active shooter. This showed me how seriously they take your children's safety.

On another level, the recent training offered local law enforcement an opportunity to seriously and appropriately train and prepare for a "worst case scenario." This is vitally important because in our line of work when these worst case scenarios occur our preparation and training kicks in without delay and we take immediate action it becomes our second nature. It can be the difference between life and death. There is no time to ask for input or debate all the possibilities. It takes a properly trained and prepared officer to make the split second decisions to take action to effectively subdue an active shooter and make the situation safe. Sometimes there is no opportunity to call a "time out" or to "phone a friend" or ask for help. You know it's you and only you- face to face with what has to be done-it's your duty to act.

In law enforcement our training, attention to detail and preparation is what determines our success as a law enforcement officer especially when dire situations arise. This is why as sheriff I have put a lot of emphasis on training, attention to detail and preparation.