

## Four officers join department

By Jessica Langdon  
Tuesday, September 1, 2009



Four officers will join the forces of the Wichita Falls Police Department, with a goal of cutting into the number of crimes committed in the community.

"We're excited," said Sgt. Joe Snyder, supervisor of the Community Services Section. The four additional officers will focus on community policing.

The funding for the officers comes in the form of a \$713,676 grant, designed to pay entry-level salaries and fringe benefits for three years, with the city covering those expenses for a fourth year, as well as any raises that might go into effect during that timeframe.

The city applied in the spring for a COPS Hiring Recovery Program Grant and got word in late July that it had been awarded the funding. Tuesday, City Council members voted to accept the grant. The grant program is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.



"It's going to help us take what we've found to be a very successful program — and that's the Crime Free program — and we'll be able to enhance the crime prevention techniques we're already using and expand this theory to many other venues," Snyder said.

The city adopted an ordinance in 2008 requiring Crime Free Multi Housing training for owners and managers of apartment communities that meet certain criteria. This summer, police extended the Crime Free theory to self-storage facilities, and the program has received quite a bit of response. The goal of the Crime Free idea is to help these entities take a proactive approach to crime prevention.

Snyder looked forward to further expanding the programs within the community.

"If we can judge it by the successes of the Multi Housing program, everyone can expect to see a reduction in the number of crimes committed," he said. That program saw a 21-percent reduction in the number of calls for service to apartment communities in August 2009 compared to the same month in 2008. Arrests in those communities were down 66 percent for August. "And we anticipate self-storage facilities to have a 60 percent reduction in their calls for service, and these are the successes we hope to bring to RV parks, hotels and motels, condominiums and family homes," Snyder said.

"It's involving the community through education to try to achieve a safer city," District 4 City Councilor Jim Ginnings said during Tuesday's City Council meeting. He sees it as an innovative idea, and most likely a look at what the future will hold.

The primary mission of the additional officers will be to reduce the number of crimes that occur by working in the Crime Free program, Snyder said. The WFPD plans to implement this as soon as possible.