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PRESS RELEASE

The Sioux County Sheriff's Office will test a *School Resource Officer* program at two High Schools

Sheriff Dan Altena announced today that the Sioux County Sheriff's Office will test a *School Resource Officer* (SRO) program at two local High Schools this coming school year – Boyden-Hull and Western Christian, both located in Hull.

Altena said the idea originated from a FEMA training seminar he attended with his Chief Deputy, Jason Bergsma, earlier this year. The topic of the class was, "Rural Domestic Preparedness", with a focus on school safety.

After the seminar Altena met with several local school, sheriff's office, and government officials to brainstorm the possibility of such a project in Sioux County. A SRO from the Des Moines Police Department was also present at the meeting to provide input. The group liked the idea but ultimately decided there wasn't money available at the present time to fund a new officer for the project.

Because the concept was still very intriguing, the sheriff's office developed a scaled down version of the original program. The new version of the original program was presented to both schools and approved by each for the upcoming school year. Altena said this will give the sheriff's office and both schools the opportunity to "test drive" the program, to determine if it's something that would be beneficial and worth pursuing.

Altena stated that the project was not developed because of current problems in either school; on the contrary, he said law enforcement is always looking for ways to provide improved public safety and a School Resource Officer would accomplish that by working in the schools with the goal of creating, maintaining and building a good rapport with students and staff in order to provide a safe educational environment.

Altena has appointed Deputy Waylon Pollema as the SRO.

What is a School Resource Officer (SRO)? - A SRO is a law enforcement officer working in the schools with the goal of creating, maintaining and building a good rapport with students and staff in order to provide a safe educational environment for students, teachers, and staff. A SRO is a valuable resource for their assigned schools and school districts in which they work. SRO's are Law Enforcement Officers, Informal Counselors, Teachers of law related to education and Role Models.

The Sioux County Sheriff's Office Pilot SRO Program:

- The SRO will spend one half day each at Western Christian High School and Boyden-Hull JR/SR High School once a week for the 2010/2011 School Year.
- The SRO will arrive one half hour prior to the start of the school day and stay one half hour after dismissal.
- The SRO will consult with the school's administrator and staff regularly each day to be made aware of any problems that should be addressed.
- The SRO will coordinate all activities with the school administrator.
- The SRO will assist in developing plans and strategies to prevent and/or minimize dangerous situations.
- The SRO may be used for a Guest Speaker or Informal Counselor.
- The SRO will conduct a walk-through of the schools and parking lots and report any unsafe conditions.
- The SRO will investigate criminal activity committed on or adjacent to school property and provide necessary follow-up investigations as required.
- Incidents not handled by the SRO will be handled within the school by alternative means; the SRO will document these incidents.
- The SRO will not act as a school disciplinarian or be used as a scare tactic; this will damage the rapport trying to be built. However, if the school administrator believes an incident is a violation of the law, the administrator should contact the SRO. The SRO and administrator will then determine whether law enforcement action is appropriate.