



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

January Sheriff's Column - Sheriff's Office/Highway Department Work Together on Crime Prevention Initiative

A couple months ago, I wrote about Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design asking everyone to consider how they can prevent crimes with simple landscaping projects. When I wrote that article, Dodge County Sheriff's Office Sergeant Joseph Nicholas brought an idea to me to help cut down on criminal activity at a location in the northeast corner of our county. That location is the Interstate 41 wayside on the northbound side. Through the years, the sheriff's office has taken many complaints of criminal activity at the wayside. The complaints are far more frequent at the northbound wayside than the southbound wayside. The reason for that is simple. The northbound wayside has been blocked by brush, trees and poor landscaping from the view of the highway where the southbound wayside is easy to be seen.

Sergeant Nicholas's idea was to work with the Dodge County Highway Department and the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation to remove the overgrown trees and brush. By doing so, it would make it less difficult to conceal criminal activity and it would make that wayside a safer location for those traveling Interstate 41.

I spoke with Dodge County Highway Commissioner Brian Field who liked the idea and ran the idea past his contacts at the Department of Transportation. Commissioner Field already has the equipment to clear the brush, but we needed the authorization of the state to move forward. Officials at the state agreed with the proposal and loved the concept. Shortly after approval, the project was assigned to Highway Supervisor Joe Lechner. He and his staff found time to get the work done and significantly changed the look of the wayside very quickly.

We are hopeful that this work will pay off and while we cannot predict what will happen in the future, we are excited that these changes very well may help to reduce the drug activity, illegal sexual activity and physical assaults that have historically occurred at the northbound wayside. It is our hope that it will reduce the calls for service of sheriff's office personnel so that we can focus our attention on better serving other areas of the county. We will measure the success over the next few years and if these changes significantly impact in a positive way the safety of the wayside, we will look for other areas of the county to make similar proactive changes.

Sergeant Nicholas certainly made an impact by fulfilling the sheriff's office vision statement by partnering with the community to find proactive solutions toward making Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt

