

2005 NSA *Crime Victim Services Award* Recipient



Sheriff Craig Webre
Lafourche Parish, Louisiana

The Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, Sheriff's Office is the 2005 recipient of NSA's *Crime Victim Services Award*. The award, which recognizes "outstanding achievement by a Sheriff's Office in support of victims and victim assistance," is funded by the Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice, and administered by NSA's Standing Committee on Crime Victim Services.

Since 1992, Craig Webre has been the Sheriff in Lafourche Parish, where he established the motto *Whatever It Takes*. This motto, according to Sheriff Webre, "exemplifies the willingness, dedication, and sacrifice of the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office (LPSO) to go to any and all lengths to ensure the security of the citizens of Lafourche Parish." A top priority of the Sheriff's Office is meeting the needs of crime victims: "No matter what the requests of the victims may be, the LPSO will make every attempt to meet these requests," says Sheriff Webre, "living up to our motto, *Whatever It Takes*."

The Police Social Services (PSS) section of the LPSO provides comprehensive services to victims of crime. Crisis services are initiated immediately, on-scene, when a victimization occurs, and continue throughout the entire criminal justice process for as long as the victim requires help. Serving an average of 1200 – 1400 victims each year, the PSS section operates as the hub for community resource allocation. PSS staff are highly trained professionals and volunteers who strive to assist crime victims through the intervention of social services combined with law enforcement. In addition to providing 24-hour, on-scene response to serious victimizations, staff also review each and every report to identify potential victims: it is the belief of the PSS section that victim services must be brought to victims of crime rather than having victims seek the services.

One of the most successful services provided by PSS is the administration of the Crime Victims' Reparations (CVR) Program. PSS deputies personally meet with victims and assist them in completing CVR applications to recover expenses suffered as a result of the victimization. Another important aspect of PSS is the provision of law enforcement training. In one year alone, the PSS section trained over 350 law enforcement officers throughout the State of Louisiana on the importance of victim services.

Beginning in 1997 with only one full-time officer and one volunteer, the PSS section has blossomed into an 8 officer section with many volunteers. Today, in addition to general victim assistance services, PSS has several specialty services, such as Elderly Victim Services, a Crime Victims with Disabilities program, and a Domestic Violence Unit.

The Police Social Services program was the recipient of the Louisiana Attorney General's Office *Award for Program Excellence*. And the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office is recognized with NSA's *Crime Victim Services Award* for "the vision, leadership, and action of Sheriff Craig Webre and his staff to improve the lives of victims in the aftermath of a crime," according to Sheriff John Whetsel, Chair of NSA's Standing Committee on Crime Victim Services. Ultimately, however, "It is the gratitude received from the thousands of victims served by the Police Social Services program," says Sheriff Webre, "that drives the LPSO in its pursuit of victim assistance excellence."

NSA established the *Crime Victim Services Award* in 2005 to focus national and local attention on law enforcement services provided to victims of crime, and in recognition of the unique needs of crime victims and that appropriate assistance to victims should be provided by law enforcement as early as possible in the response process. The award is funded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, and administered by NSA's Standing Committee on Crime Victim Services. The deadline for receipt by NSA of 2006 nominations is November 18, 2005. For more information, contact Tim Woods, Director of Research, Development & Grants, at 703-836-7827.