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Statistics show that part one crimes in Liberal fell from 1,365 in 2006 to only 602 in 2013 and part two crimes fell from 1,561 in 2006 to 973 in 2013. LPD has also been able to partner with the KBI, which has developed a Southwest Kansas task force along with the Seward County Sheriff's office, the DEA and federal agencies to help deal with more serious offenders.
Courtesy photo

By ELLY GRIMM

• Leader & Times

After looking at the numbers, Liberal residents can sleep better at night thanks to the efforts and actions of the Liberal Police Department.

Statistics from the police department show that overall, crime is down in Liberal.

“It’s definitely a decrease, so with regards to that, yes crime has gone down over the last 6 to 7 years and our goal is to always try to improve on that,” said Alan Sill, chief of police. “I’m not naïve and saying we will have zero crime rate someday but our goal is to obviously not let the crime rate spike real high like what it was in past years, but to improve on that and see if we can continue to make the community a safer place to live.”

Sill said tracking crime is categorized in two sections – part one crimes, which are more severe, and part two crimes, which are less severe.

Statistics show that part one crimes fell from 1,365 in 2006 to only 602 in 2013 and part two crimes fell from 1,561 in 2006 to 973 in 2013. He added there are several things the department has done to achieve the overall decrease in crime, including implementing new programs and action plans to try to help take a more proactive approach.

“Our command staff and key personnel meet to look over key statistics about various crime data and with that, we’re able to look at some of the fluctuations. We get together, and we discuss what’s going on throughout town on each watch day and night, and then we develop strategies and action plans to help combat some of the problems that we’re experiencing,” Sill explained. “We’ve taken a more proactive approach to it – looking at these statistics and discussing what exactly is going on in town, why exactly have we seen this particular increase, and we’ve developed strategies and action plans to develop that so we develop a plan, and the next time we meet we discuss what we did with that plan and those strategies to determine if anything worked.”

Sill also said the department has been able to move away from some of the older police practices, including restricting officers to just one part of town, giving them more freedom to follow up their investigations in other parts of town if they need to.

The department has also begun to implement more intelligence-led police practices to help deal with repeat offenders and habitual violators.

“We may arrest someone who, after they’ve gone through the court system, they may never

repeat that again, they've learned their lesson, they've become a good citizen, and we don't have any continuing problems with them," Sill said. "But those people that are continuing to plague communities, those are the ones that, nationwide, communities are finding that those are the ones committing a lot of the crimes. So we've implemented more intelligence-led policing strategies to help us deal with that a little bit better and have more of an open eye to that."

Sill added the police department has also been able to partner with the KBI, which has developed a Southwest Kansas task force along with the Seward County Sheriff's office, the DEA and federal agencies to help deal with more serious offenders.

"Largely, these people don't live just in Liberal – they live everywhere, and they commute quite a bit. We find many times that people travel to go commit crimes," Sill explained. "So partnering with these other agencies, I think, has been very impactful, and we do that, we've done that routinely, we'll continue to do that, and it will be a big benefit for us."

Overall, Sill said he feels, with all of the available data, the city is very safe. However, he said that part of the department's number one goal is to improve on what's already going on in the community.

"I see people walking at night, I see kids walking to school, I see kids riding their bikes, I see people playing in the parks, I certainly believe that there is a level of safety in town that people in town are comfortable with and our strategic plan – that's our number one goal, in fact, is to reduce crime and provide safe living of the community," he said. "I think in Liberal, we don't have these neighborhoods where people feel unsafe and just lock themselves in the house and never come out, I don't think we have that here, and I think, by and large, people do feel safe."

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