

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

News Release



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Hennepin County Sheriff's Office honors jail volunteers

April 10-16 is National Volunteer Recognition Week

April 11, 2011 (MINNEAPOLIS) – In recognition of National Volunteer Appreciation Week, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office honored a special group of citizens who volunteer at the Sheriff's Office. Tonight, a reception was held for volunteers who work with inmates in the Hennepin County Jail.

"Some of the volunteers visit the jail everyday in an effort to help change the direction ---and ultimately change the lives of the people who are behind bars," said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek. "The Sheriff's Office appreciates the tremendous dedication of all of our volunteers."

There are 151 people who volunteer for the Sheriff's Office by providing instruction or counseling to inmates. Last year, they provided more than 4,000 hours of service to the Sheriff's Office by working at the jail.

The Sheriff's Office organizes a comprehensive volunteer program in order to provide opportunities for instruction or counseling. Topics include positive life skills, Alcoholics Anonymous, domestic violence prevention, and religious instruction. All denominations and faiths are accommodated at the jail. Participation in classes and other programs is optional for inmates.

Because nearly all of the people who are in the jail --- will eventually return to the community, the volunteers are making a contribution to the entire community by providing quality instruction to inmates.

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At the recognition event, 14 volunteers who have served at the jail for ten years or more received special recognition.

In addition, Sheriff Stanek awarded three outstanding volunteers with the Sheriff's Award of Merit. These recipients included:

Chaplain David Whiteford of Minneapolis received the Sheriff's Award of Merit. Chaplain Dave is supported by the Good News Jail and Prison Ministry organization and he has volunteered at the jail since 2001. He works 35 each week at the jail and his mission is to accommodate counseling and religious requests for inmates of all faiths. Among his many duties, Chaplain Dave arranges for religious leaders from a variety of faiths to meet with inmates who request such visits. He recruits and trains other volunteers who work at the jail. After the 2007 I-35W bridge collapse in Minneapolis, Chaplain Dave provided counseling to victims' families.

Wally & Naomi Johnson of Anoka also received the Sheriff's Award of Merit. They are with International Bible Givers. For 22 years, they have been providing Bibles to inmates who request them at the Hennepin County Jail. Besides their work in the jail, the Johnsons also work in other locations, including chemical dependency units, health care facilities, fire and police departments, dozens of libraries, and homeless shelters. They are devoted and enthusiastic volunteers.

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