

Herman Goldstein Submission

2011

Finding Hope: Bringing Transformation to Families of Domestic Violence



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INTRODUCTION:

Domestic Violence (D.V.) is a far reaching societal problem that affects people from all walks of life. Almost one-third of female homicide victims reported in police records are killed by an intimate partner¹. In 70-80% of “intimate partner homicides,” regardless which partner was killed, the man physically abused the woman before the murder².

The impact of domestic violence on family is profound. Aside from the affect on intimate partners, it has far reaching implications of modeling violent behavior to the next generation of our youth. Education and early intervention is key to addressing this issue. Project goals were to reassess methods of police response to domestic violence, and produce a powerful model that leads in innovation and effectiveness.

A model was constructed for addressing the aftermath of a domestic violence incident, and intervening at the earliest possible stages. Another goal was to track the number of D.V. incidents in Citrus Heights. The Citrus Heights model includes:

1. Unique partnership with our non-profit Domestic Violence Intervention Center (DVIC).
2. Training to shift the mentality of responding officers.
3. Formation of the unique Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) who makes contact at the moment of crisis.
4. An emergency shelter for victims.
5. Thorough tracking of D.V. incidents at earlier phases before a violent incident.
6. Education of our youth.
7. A dedicated D.V. Detective who collaborates with the District Attorney’s Office to supplement investigations and increase case filings.

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports* “Crime in the United States, 2000,” (2001)

² Campbell, et al. (2003). “Assessing Risk Factors For Intimate Partner Homicide.” *Intimate Partner Homicide*, NIJ Journal, 250, 14-19. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice

SCANNING:

Citrus Heights, located in the State of California, has approximately 85,000 people. The city encompasses 14 square miles of the Sacramento Metropolitan area. Citrus Heights is a working class community with a median annual income of \$58,931.

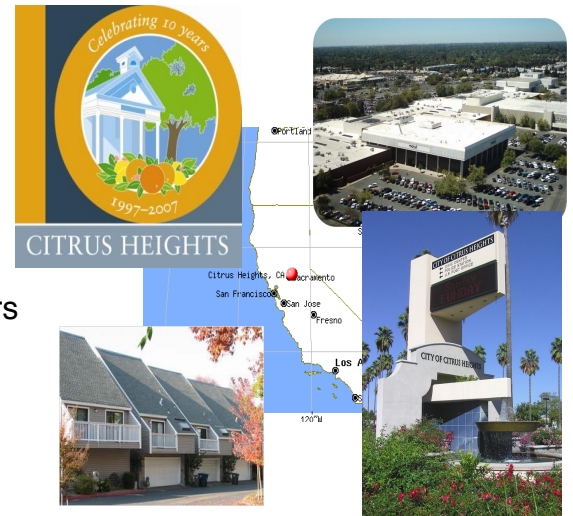
In June 2006, led by Chief of Police Christopher Boyd, CHPD effectively took over police services from the county of Sacramento. The new police department consisted of officers who transferred from 73 various law enforcement agencies across the state. Many labor hours went into the response and investigation of domestic violence reports, with minimal victim follow up. Victims seeking assistance felt officers were unapproachable.

Additionally, officers were responding multiple times to the same house for couples who were endlessly stuck in the cycle of violence. The average method of responding to a call, determining a primary aggressor, then affecting an arrest was ineffective.

Chief Boyd's commitment to use unconventional means positively changed the community. He helped change the frustration and cynicism within the police culture through an in depth intervention and response model, effectively changing the way police agencies respond to domestic violence.

ANALYSIS:

Chief Boyd understood the commitment to fighting domestic violence must start with his command staff. Analysis began through collaboration with the Domestic Violence Intervention Center (DVIC). DVIC was founded in 2000. Its goal is to provide services to victims of domestic violence. In April of 2008, Elaine Whitefeather and Robin Basinger, both experts and key stakeholders in the field of domestic violence, became the Executive Directors of the DVIC. Combined, they possess 52 years of experience in the field of domestic violence. They had new vision and direction of how to reach



victims. As Whitefeather and Basinger began leading DVIC, their official partnership with the Citrus Heights Police Department began. A new vision and direction in services to D.V. victims was initiated.

For several months, Chief Boyd and DVIC met to identify the key issues surrounding domestic violence in the community of Citrus Heights. They started with a basic understanding of domestic violence, then identified key issues surrounding the problem.

Whitefeather and Basinger insisted on building a collaborative domestic violence intervention program that addressed the needs of the whole family, and promoted an innovative relationship with the police department. Historically, the relationship between police and victim advocates was adversarial. Victim advocates did not feel police officers were empathetic to victims. They did not fully understand the restrictions placed on officers regarding domestic violence arrests (ie. verbal or financial abuse), although legislation has made it easier for officers to arrest abusers.

"Whitefeather and Basinger insisted on building a collaborative domestic violence intervention program that addressed the needs of the whole family..."



Domestic violence is a deliberate pattern of abusive tactics used by one partner in an intimate relationship to obtain and maintain power and control over the other person. It takes many forms including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse or verbal abuse.

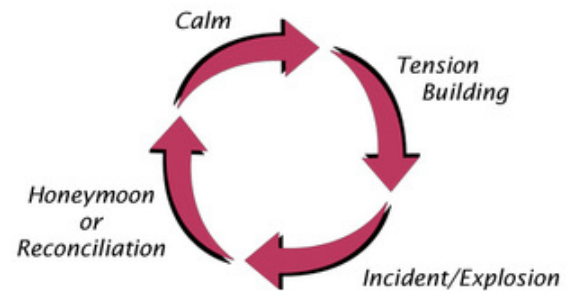
The Cycle of Abuse is a theory developed in the 1970s by Lenore Walker³, which categorizes the patterns of behavior that take place in domestic violence relationships:

1. Tension building- Tension exists between the two parties. The victim senses an impending episode of violence. They attempt to placate the abuser, even as communication breaks down.

³ Walker, Lenore E. (1979) *The Battered Woman*. New York: Harper and Row

2. Incident- Verbal, emotional or physical abuse occurs. Anger, blame and arguing may exist. Intimidation and threats are common.

3. Reconciliation- The abuser is apologetic. The victim is blamed, or the incident denied completely. The abuser may buy gifts for the victim, be especially nice, or communicate the incident was “not that bad.”



4. Calm- The “honeymoon phase,” is a time of calm. All appears normal until something occurs and tension builds again, repeating the cycle.

Once domestic violence was defined and the cycle of abuse explored, domestic violence calls for service were analyzed.

From 06-01-06 to 12-31-06, CHPD officers responded to 690 reports of family disturbances. Of those calls, 272 cases for domestic violence were taken and documented.

In 2007, officers responded to 1471 reports of family disturbances. Of those reports, 421 cases were taken and documented for domestic violence incidents. Domestic violence calls were dominating a large portion of resources for CHPD.

Next, documentation of domestic violence incidents was examined. Victims tend to feel a certain stigma is associated with being a victim of domestic violence. Often they feel weak because they don't immediately leave their abusers. Guilt and fear plague their emotions. Women caught in “the cycle” feel judged by friends, family and even police officers after a violent incident. It is therefore believed that domestic violence is significantly under reported.

Domestic violence can take place even before a physical incident. During the “tension building” phase of the “cycle of violence,” emotional and verbal abuse often occurs. Although officers responded to verbal arguments or disturbances, few reports were taken. Consequently, police lacked an accurate account of the problem.

Patrol responses to D.V. incidents varied due to diversity of training and experience of CHPD officers. Common practice was to secure the scene on arrival. The involved parties would be separated, checked for injuries, and interviewed individually. A dominant aggressor was determined, then either an arrest made or a complaint filed with the district attorney’s office. If it was a verbal argument only, both parties were separated and counseled without a report. It was often suggested the parties separate to prevent further escalations. In all cases, domestic violence informational brochures were provided. According to research provided by DVIC, approximately four percent of victims contacted or utilized follow up counseling services. A better mechanism to deliver these services was needed.

The Sacramento County District Attorney’s Office reviews each domestic violence case for sufficient evidence to prosecute abusers for domestic violence. Deputy district attorneys have broad discretion when reviewing these reports. Often times cases were rejected for prosecution due to how the police report was written, evidence collected, witnesses present and physical injuries.

Improved and more consistent follow up after an incident could increase the number of cases filed by the District Attorney’s Office. Officers needed training in interviewing victims and suspects, evidence collection and district attorney filing standards. Officers also needed a more effective way to keep victims of domestic violence safe from their abusers. With limited county shelter availability, it was apparent an emergency shelter was needed for domestic violence victims.

CHPD officers initially had a negative attitude common in some police agencies. Veteran officers developed callousness towards victims, known as compassion fatigue.

Emotional separation for officers is vital to their own emotional survival, but it unfortunately tends to harden empathy towards victims. Additionally, officers felt they were responding to the same victims time and time again, who rarely sought counseling, and fell back into the “cycle of violence.” Victims also became uncooperative when the time came to prosecute abusers. Domestic violence was simply a revolving door.

Many officers, who had come from other agencies, had adversarial relationships with their D.V. support services. These negative experiences carried over to CHPD. The police officer culture would have to shift from an adversarial relationship, to a collaborative partnership with DVIC.

D.V. cases cost the city an untold amount of man hours and resources, and there is a destructive impact on families with children. One national survey estimated between 53% and 70% of male aggressors also abuse their children on a regular basis⁴. Children who live in homes where domestic violence is prevalent are neglected, physically or sexually abused at a rate of 15 times the national average⁵.

A survey was distributed at one of the local high schools to determine the number of teenagers living with domestic violence. It would help determine how to reach out to the teen culture in Citrus Heights with domestic violence prevention education. Students were asked several questions about their experiences with abusive relationships, both personally and within their families. Of the surveys returned, 24 percent of the respondents stated they have witnessed domestic violence in their family and 6 percent stated they were currently in an abusive relationship. The survey revealed the need for better D.V. training for teens.

⁴ Straus, M.A., & Gelles, R.J. (1990). Physical violence in American families. New Brunswick, NJ:Transaction Publishers

⁵ McKay, M. (1994). The link between domestic violence and child abuse: Assessment and treatment considerations. Child Welfare League of America, 73, 29-39

The DVIC had this commitment to the whole family from the moment they began meeting with Chief Boyd and the police department. Though not always the most popular method in the domestic violence advocate industry, DVIC did not want to help just the victims and their children, but the abuser as well.

In order to achieve timely intervention, the effective implementation of a Domestic Violence Emergency Response Team (DVRT) model was discussed. There are several DVRT models utilized throughout the country. They consist of specially trained victim advocates who make follow up contact with victims after a domestic violence incident. They provide counseling services and resources to victims. DVRT members normally consist of paid staff or social workers.

An analysis was conducted to determine which days of the week had the most domestic violence reports, so DVRT could deploy on the busiest days. The analysis revealed Sunday had the most domestic violence calls, Saturdays the second highest number, and Fridays the third highest number of calls.

RESPONSE:

In 2007, with City Council support, the City of Citrus Heights purchased a shelter naming it Harmony House. The shelter is part of the collaborative domestic violence response plan that began even before the police department officially partnered with DVIC.

Harmony House is an emergency shelter located at an undisclosed location in Citrus Heights. It provides emergency housing to women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Serving the residents of Citrus Heights, along with surrounding jurisdictions, Harmony House is part of an underground network of safe houses. Victims of domestic violence across the U.S., who are forced to flee across state lines to escape their abusers, stay at Harmony House while in transit to other locations.

Once Harmony House was purchased, the difficult task of furnishing the shelter began. The community rallied together to make the Harmony House dream a reality. Lowe's

Home Improvement Store donated all the furniture, including eight beds where victims and their children could find a comfortable place to sleep in their time of crisis.

Since the shelter was purchased, police personnel took ownership of Harmony House. Chief Boyd mowed the lawn for months. Other police personnel later took on the job. As various services were needed, personnel from the police department made sure they were accomplished. One of the concerns identified was security of the building. The CHPD S.W.A.T. team procured a high level security door and installed it on the house. Additionally, citizens recently voted to allocate some of the city's community funds to purchase security lighting for the Harmony House. Police personnel volunteered to conduct the installation. Officers who were cynical of advocate counseling programs, now volunteered their time to make the shelter successful.

The community also supports the Harmony House through fundraisers. Every year citizens from the community and police department, take part in the California International Marathon. Pledges are obtained for team runners, and the proceeds given to Harmony House and DVIC. CHPD officers, along with support staff and administration turn out in full force to support the marathon.

Next, in depth officer training became the focus. Several types of training were presented during 10 hour blocks of time:

- A formal emergency response plan was formulated for the Harmony House.
- Officers were refreshed in tactical response to D.V., emphasizing safety and defensive tactics.
- Deputy District Attorney Danielle Abildegaard provided training on detailed report writing, and investigation for strong court prosecution.
- Dispatchers were trained to ask key questions on recorded lines in case victims later recanted testimony during trial.
- Abildegaard rode along with patrol officers and provided valuable feedback from an attorney's perspective.

- Elaine Whitefeather provided advanced training in victimology, helping officers understand the thought process of a victim.
- Training on compassion fatigue and how to prevent it was presented.
- Development of a D.V. checklist, a visual reminder of all investigative steps needed during a D.V. investigation.

As better tracking and documentation of domestic violence occurred, one key issue was brought up. Officers now understood that a verbal argument could be an abuser and victim in the beginning phases of the cycle of abuse. It was necessary to document verbal arguments which were volatile enough to generate a response from the police department. Officers could document verbal disputes before physical incidents occurred. This documented evidence would show the courts that a cycle of abuse was prevalent, even if it was the first time an abuser was being prosecuted. A Domestic Violence Intervention Card (DVIC) was created for this documentation. Officers now gather information on both parties, and the verbal altercation is documented before clearing the scene.

In order to conduct better investigations, a detective was assigned specifically to work domestic violence cases. That detective serves as a liaison between the police department, District Attorney's Office and DVIC. They conduct advanced follow up on D.V. investigations, often returning several days after the incident to take follow up photographs of injuries and obtain medical records. On an as needed basis, DVIC will keep victims housed at their shelter until a detective can complete their investigation.

The victim is kept safe and secure, which makes them more willing to follow through with prosecution.

"An idea was born that truly defines the Citrus Heights Police Department's domestic violence response plan."



As the response plan unfolded, an idea was born that defines the CHPD domestic violence response plan. That innovation exists with the award winning Citrus Heights Domestic Violence Emergency Response Team (DVRT). This unique and talented group of individuals has revolutionized the way CHPD responds to domestic violence .

Highly trained advocates are partnered with police officers on nights with the highest number of domestic violence calls. Officer/advocate units are designated to handle all domestic violence calls along with their normal patrol duties.

Victims are contacted by advocates literally minutes after a domestic violence incident has taken place. It is an unprecedented opportunity to make contact with victims in their very moment of crisis. Limited one on one counseling is provided at the time of contact and resources are provided. Advocates schedule appointments for victims to receive services at DVIC. When the victim shows for their appointment, the same advocate meets them at DVIC to assist with intake.

What sets Citrus Heights DVRT members apart from other response teams, is the fact they ride with the officers and they are all volunteers. They are not paid for their time commitments, but serve for the sole purpose of making an impact on domestic violence in Citrus Heights. Their training includes:

- 230 hours of total training.
- 52 hours of training for basic advocate certification.
- 6 months training on services provided by DVIC and Harmony House.
- 57 hours specialized training for placement on DVRT.
- Topics include victimology, psychology of D.V., report writing, self defense, CHPD orientation, and California Department of Justice background checks.
- The training exceeds CA State requirements for certified advocates training.

DVRT recently received an award from the Domestic Violence Prevention Collaborative (DVPC), for their outstanding service and efforts to prevent domestic violence. DVPC was created by law enforcement to help assess and address the impact of domestic violence on children. It promotes partnership between domestic violence agencies, child advocate agencies and law enforcement. It is made up of organizations such as the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office, the Child Abuse Prevention Council and Women Escaping A Violent Environment (WEAVE).

As previously stated, services are not only geared towards victims. A collaboration was made with “Kids First” through the DVIC. Kids First is an organization specializing in reaching out to children who come from domestic violence homes. They partner with DVIC and CHPD to provide counseling to the children of domestic violence victims.

Analysis discovered that domestic violence begins very early in the lives of teenagers. Teens witness domestic violence in the home, then learn to engage in the same behaviors as they form romantic relationships. After the eye opening survey at one of the local high schools, CHPD approached school administration about teenage domestic violence.

On May 23rd 2011, DVIC, San Juan High School and CHPD hosted a domestic violence resource seminar after school. Eleven students consisting of both boys and girls attended. Students learned how to recognize domestic violence, and steps for prevention. The students were more than open to the training. As a group, they insisted on another meeting to strategize a long term method of teen domestic violence intervention. Several ideas were brought up, including a campus support group, a Facebook page where students can reach DVIC resources, and future trainings hosted at the high school. Several students communicated that domestic violence is widespread in teen culture. They were excited that DVIC and CHPD were bringing early intervention strategies to the public school campus.

Another key partnership was formed in January of 2011. In an effort to address all parties involved in a domestic violence incident, “Man Alive” was brought into partnership with DVIC. “Man Alive” is a certified batterers treatment program offered through DVIC. Batterers are offered either a 12 week anger management course or a 52 week batterers treatment program. Both courses are registered with Sacramento County Probation and are accepted by the Sacramento County court system.

ASSESSMENT:

In assessing the impact CHPD has made on domestic violence, several areas must be evaluated:

The Harmony House is a highly effective service to victims of the community. In 2010 Harmony House sheltered 54 women and 50 children. This translates into 392 bed nights for this 8 bed facility. Maintenance and upgrades continue to be provided by police personnel and community groups. Donations continue to be given as the community embraces the Harmony House and the philosophy of DVIC.

Partnership between CHPD and DVIC has cultivated what is a regionally recognized method of helping those who are affected by domestic violence. At this time, DVIC receives approximately 150 referrals a month from other Sacramento County agencies including the probation department. In a time when budget shortfalls are common and services are being cut, DVIC and Harmony House are thriving. They assist when other domestic violence programs fall short due to staffing and budget constraints. The collaborations send a message that CHPD and DVIC are committed to impacting entire families.

In depth training has benefited officers. The training included monthly training bulletins, D.V. legal updates, restraining orders, stalking, criminal threats, pet and property abuse, child abuse and child custody disputes.

Training on the psychological effects of abuse has helped officers understand why victims continue to remain in abusive relationships, and why they recant statements after an arrest.

Compassion fatigue training and victimology training helps officers remain compassionate towards D.V. victims. The department is seeing more victims who are reporting domestic violence for the first time, despite being involved in it for years.

Victims feel that Citrus Heights is a safe place to report domestic abuse with an expectation that something will be done to help if you are a victim.

The DVI cards have resulted in much better tracking of D.V. incidents citywide. In 2008 there were 362 reported incidents of domestic violence. In 2009 when the DVI cards were implemented, 596 incidents were reported. The large increase is demonstrative of how often verbal abuse occurs, but is undocumented. With this documentation, better analyses can occur to staff DVRT members on the particular days of the week with the most domestic violence incidents.

Partnership with the district attorney's office has opened lines of communication and assisted with getting more cases filed. Training provided to officers by domestic violence prosecutors continually refreshes the criminal elements of D.V., and assists officers with better investigative techniques. The D.V. detective continually reviews each arrest officers make, and routinely conducts follow up to make stronger cases to the D.A.'s office.

The impact is apparent from statistics provided by the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office. The year before a D.V. detective was designated (2008-2009), the D.A.'s office saw 240 in custody arrests for D.V. in Citrus Heights. Of those arrests, 28 of the cases were actually filed as felonies and 68 of the cases filed as misdemeanors. During that same time frame there were 188 cases that officers requested arrest warrants. Of those cases, 12 felony warrants were issued and 45 misdemeanor warrants issued.

The year a D.V. detective was appointed and more training was implemented for officers (2009-2010), there were 309 in custody arrests for domestic violence. Of those cases, 53 felony cases were filed and 115 misdemeanors were filed. 216 warrants were requested that year. 11 felony warrants were issued and 35 misdemeanor warrants were issued for D.V.

The 2010-2011 statistics show 333 in custody arrests. 53 were filed as felony and 96 filed as misdemeanors. 16 felony arrest warrants were issued and 40 misdemeanor warrants issued.

Statistics show an almost 29% increase in domestic violence arrests starting with the year a domestic violence detective was appointed and training efforts were ramped up with officers (see appendix A graph). Felony cases filed by the district attorney's office increased by 89%. Misdemeanor filings increased by 69%. More cases are being filed by the D.A.'s office as officers conduct higher quality investigations and take extra time to gather evidence.

The most impressive results however, have come from DVRT. When DVRT went live, advocates were assigned to work with specific patrol officers for their shift. Officers were resistive to an advocate sharing their vehicle for the evening. Even when DVRT first went live, there was still the adversarial mentality of the officers to contend with. One officer candidly told their assigned advocate they didn't want an advocate in their car, and only agreed to it because it was assigned. It wasn't long before advocates began to win the respect and admiration of officers. It was apparent that DVRT members were highly trained in dealing with victims at the moment of crisis. Officers were free to focus on their investigation and gathering evidence, as the DVRT members focused solely on counseling victims.

Officer mentality has changed so much, that patrol officers now request to have advocates ride with them on patrol. The very same officer who once did not want an advocate in the car, has become one of the most vocal supporters of DVRT.

Whitefeather and Basinger have marveled at the unique relationship DVRT shares with the police department. In their years of being involved in victim advocacy, this is the first time they have witnessed such a relationship.

One of the most amazing facts is before DVRT was implemented, 8% of victims who were contacted by officers actually utilized follow up counseling services through DVIC.

Now that DVRT has partnered with patrol officers, **50% of victims contacted follow up with services through DVIC**. This represents a 525% increase in victims who follow up with services. That number showcases the incredible effectiveness and impact this program is making on victims in Citrus Heights. The city has transformed its ability to reach out to entire families who are affected by domestic violence. Other outside advocacy groups have been recently inquiring about the Citrus Heights model of domestic violence intervention. The model is quickly becoming recognized as a new innovative way to impact domestic violence.

As more victims come in contact with officers and become part of support groups at the DVIC, we are learning even more about the impact being made. Victims are telling each other in support groups they have noticed a major difference in how officers now respond to domestic violence. Victims feel officers are approachable, safe people to report domestic violence incidents to. Many victims have started spreading the word through networks of friends, about the innovations CHPD has made along with DVIC. A couple of victims admitted they took the bold step of moving to Citrus Heights, because they heard about the police response to domestic violence and wanted to live within the jurisdictional boundaries of CHPD.

To better evaluate success, an analysis was conducted on D.V. calls with injury for the year 2008. It was compared to an analysis of 2010, after the domestic violence response plan was in operation for two full years. Between 2008 and 2010 there was an 18.35% increase in D.V. reports with simple injuries (ie. scratches, red marks), however there was 58.44% decrease in aggravated injuries (major injuries resulting in advanced medical care). It is believed the large decrease in severity of injury during a D.V. incident is directly a result of earlier intervention and more victims reporting D.V. at early phases of the cycle of violence.

CONCLUSION:

DVIC has reached out to other advocacy groups across the United States. Additionally, other police agencies across the State have been contacted regarding their victim advocacy partnerships. At this time we are unaware of any other agencies that have deployed a domestic violence emergency response team in the same manner as CHPD. As mention of DVRT is made, outside agencies are surprised at how we have been able to build such a unique relationship in order to reach a city that is afflicted with domestic violence. Even more surprised, are other domestic violence organizations as they learn of the Citrus Heights model. Such a close partnership with the local police department is unheard of in the industry. The traditional approaches to domestic violence were done away with, and a new and more effective system was put in place.

A great Problem Oriented Policing Project can be measured on its impact to the community. This project has forged lasting and innovative partnerships between police, victim's advocates, victims, schools, businesses and the community at large.

In five short years, the quality of life of all these groups has improved dramatically. Officers and advocates have been given the tools to effectively impact the problem of domestic violence. The community has been educated to spot the warning signs of violence and given resources for assistance. Victims have received dramatically improved services and intervention. Even abusers, or would be abusers have been given tools to prevent the cycle of violence from continuing.

CHPD, in partnership with DVIC has been able to impact an entire city. But most importantly, families that have been decimated by domestic violence are finding new hope. Not in a system that only reaches out to victims, but in a new approach that encompasses the entire family. A partnership where DVIC, Kid's First, Man Alive, the City of Citrus Heights and the CHPD all join together with a philosophy of bringing wholeness to broken families.

APPENDIX A

■ In Custody Arrests ■ Felonies ■ Misdemeanors
■ Felony Warrants Issued ■ Misd Warrants Issued

