



# PSN in Practice II

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**MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA**

The three U.S. Attorneys' Offices (USAOs) located in Alabama have implemented Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) statewide, forming partnerships with each other and with law enforcement, state and local agencies, and community organizations. The resulting coalition, Alabama ICE (Isolate the Criminal Element), is a powerhouse network with an extensive range of resources and tools for effectively addressing firearms violence.

When President Bush declared gun crime reduction a top domestic priority, the Middle District of Alabama (MDAL) devised its local Alabama ICE initiative. In the Middle District of Alabama, Alabama ICE established a task force to coordinate federal, state, and local law enforcement officials and prosecutors and community leaders to reduce gun crime. The result has been a significant increase in gun crime prosecutions, which has deterred gun violence and other violent crimes throughout the district.

MDAL recognized early on that aggressive federal prosecution of gun crimes in Alabama would act as a deterrent for three reasons. First, the federal firearm statutes are much tougher than their state counterparts, imposing significantly longer sentences. Second, offenders serve almost their entire sentences in the federal prison system, as there is no parole. Third, cases proceed to trial more quickly in the federal system than in the state system, which ensures that offenders are removed from the streets more quickly. In short, the enforcement efforts of Alabama ICE send the message that gun crime means hard time, and that message is reinforced through MDAL's vigorous media campaigns.

MDAL and its PSN partners have done an outstanding job of increasing federal prosecution of gun crimes. Fiscal year 2005 closed with MDAL attaining its highest number of PSN indictments to date. The number of gun crimes prosecuted under 18 U.S.C. 922 and 924 by MDAL in FY 2005 increased over 37% from FY 2004 and represents a 660% increase since the inception of the district's PSN program. PSN defendants are receiving an average sentence of over six years in prison, demonstrating that MDAL continues to target the most violent repeat offenders through its Alabama ICE initiative. In the last year, the offenders prosecuted included a kidnaper/rapist, armed car jackers, armed bank robbers, and a corrupt federal firearms licensee. An overwhelming majority of their ICE convictions (over 90%) are secured through guilty pleas.

An integral part of Alabama ICE is intensive training of state and local law enforcement on the ICE initiative and federal gun statutes, which leads to an increased number of cases being referred for federal prosecution. Requests for officer training continue to flood MDAL and are accommodated by the USAO for the MDAL and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Generally, 500 to 750 officers receive PSN training annually, and the training is now part of the Montgomery Police Academy's regular curriculum. Their state and locals partners have embraced and supported the initiative.

MDAL uses PSN community engagement grants to further PSN interests and achieve Project Sentry objectives. Last year, MDAL awarded PSN grants to ten applicants, including eight different programs designed to accomplish Project Sentry objectives or provide services to victims of domestic violence, and two prisoner reentry programs.

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

One grantee was Montgomery Area Crimestoppers, which used PSN grant money to sponsor crime prevention and anti-violence functions at area schools.

Crimestoppers established an anonymous tip line for students to report illegal activity, including the possession of guns and other weapons. It also distributed comic strips, pencils, posters, stickers, tattoos, and similar items to educate juveniles on gun safety and violence reduction. Through the partnership with Crimestoppers, MDAL reaches approximately 5,000 students every six months with a message of anti-violence and gun safety.

PSN grants are also used to support a summer program called Street SMART, which targets at-risk youths between the ages of six and 15 in the Dothan/Houston County area and teaches them how to resist gangs. It helps the youths identify gang recruitment strategies, educates them on the negative consequences of gang involvement, and teaches them resistance and survival skills.

PSN grants are also awarded to the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office to help fund its GRAVE (Getting Real About Violence and its Effects) program. This program is aimed at aggressively educating first-time juvenile weapons offenders on the impact of violence in the community, the consequences of choices involving violence, and acceptable conflict resolution alternatives. The program requires attendance by the juveniles and their parents on four weekend days.

The result of MDAL's successful partnerships, prosecutions and outreach initiatives has been a tangible reduction in violent crime in the district. Since the inception of Alabama ICE in MDAL, Montgomery crime statistics show a 38%

reduction in both attempted homicides/homicides and robberies between calendar year 2002 and 2004, and a 24% drop in assaults in the same time frame.

Alabama ICE is a critical law enforcement tool in this district. MDAL will continue to put forth its best effort through extensive media outreach, training, identification and prosecution of PSN cases, and through the formation of new partnerships, to ensure the continued success of Alabama ICE.

## **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA**

With the implementation of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), the Northern District of Alabama experienced a 75% increase in federal prosecutions of firearms offenses between FY 2000 and FY 2004. Violent crime experienced a converse trend. In 1999, Birmingham had the eighth highest homicide rate among similar cities. By 2002, Birmingham had fallen out of the top ten deadliest cities. Such results have prompted praise from local officials. According to Robert L. Burrell, District Attorney (DA) for Morgan County: "The implementation of the ICE (Isolate the Criminal Element)/FREEZE program in Morgan County has had an impact far greater than could have been expected in such a short time. . . . The district's local program has had an enormous impact on the morale of local law enforcement at a time when Alabama's financial crisis has increased the speed of the state's 'revolving door' penal system. Frankly, ICE/FREEZE has given us all a sense of a team approach to fighting crime that has been sadly lacking in the past."

In August 2005, 12 federal indictments were returned which arose from a successful initiative, called "Operation Gunsmoke." This initiative was a result of the

## SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

partnerships that formed between the Calhoun County DA's Office, the Anniston Police Department, the Calhoun/Cleburne Drug and Violent Crime Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Northern District of Alabama. The indictments included charges of felons and drug users in possession of a firearm, possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and possession of controlled substances with the intent to distribute. Through the media coverage announcing "Operation Gunsmoke," the clear message of zero tolerance for gun crimes could be sent to that community.

In February 2006, 11 individuals were charged in connection with "Operation Flea Collar", a two year undercover investigation into illegal sales of firearms at area flea markets. This investigation, which involved law enforcement agencies from 12 counties in three states, exemplifies the prosecutorial and investigative partnerships Alabama ICE has formed to stop illegal firearm trafficking. At the conclusion of the investigation, search warrants were executed, and 556 firearms were recovered. The indictments included charges of dealing in firearms without a license, and the sale of firearms to convicted felons and out-of-state residents. The district, through this investigation's intensive media coverage, received the message that Alabama ICE focuses on not only the felon who possesses a firearm but on the suppliers who are engaged in illegal gun sales.

The district continues to work on developing an educational curriculum that can be disseminated to at-risk schools and are still in the process of networking and analyzing the feasibility of such a project. Further, they organized a basketball clinic for at-risk

youth in Madison County which provided useful information relating to gun violence as well as fundamental basketball skills and are in process of organizing another basketball clinic in Jefferson County.

Recognizing that arrests and prosecutions alone will not effectively combat gun violence, the Northern District of Alabama has implemented a community outreach campaign to engage the community and educate citizens about the dangers of gun violence and the penalties for federal firearms offenses. The USAO created a video to educate felony inmates nearing release and misdemeanor domestic violence offenders about the stiff penalties they will face if they are caught with a gun. This video has been distributed to all state correctional institutions and to every DA's Office in the state. Alabama ICE presentations have been given at conferences and to groups throughout the district.

## **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA**

The Southern District of Alabama's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative, operating under the statewide moniker of Alabama ICE (Isolate the Criminal Element) has continued to evolve and adapt since its inception four years ago. The Southern District of Alabama consists of 13 counties, which include several population centers as well as large rural areas that contain a number of small municipalities. A combination of training efforts, well-founded partnerships, enforcement, successful prosecution, and public outreach has been at the forefront of the district's initiative, and it has proven to be a successful combination.

The success of Alabama ICE has been demonstrated both statistically and

## DISTRICT OF ALASKA

anecdotally. The research component of Alabama ICE was concentrated in the City of Mobile because it has the single largest population in the district and because the Mobile Police Department (MPD) was able to provide the crime data necessary to evaluate the initiative's effects. MPD offered support to all phases of the program.

Their research partner, Dr. Tim O'Shea of the University of South Alabama, has analyzed the instances of gun-related crime in Mobile from January 1, 1998, through October 1, 2005. The results of the research demonstrate the success of the initiative, or as Dr. O'Shea said "although we cannot say without qualification that PSN Operation ICE 'explains' the decreases in the various categories, these findings are certainly encouraging and suggest that the program had the intended effect." Total gun crimes following the start of Alabama ICE have decreased on average by 31 incidents per month. To put these numbers in perspective, the average number of gun crimes per month over the studied period is approximately 117 incidents per month. Clearly, a reduction of 31 incidents per month is substantial and impressive. Violent crimes with a gun have decreased on average by 14 incidents per month (from an average number of 47 incidents per month over the entire period). More specifically, robberies with a gun and menacing with a gun have decreased on average by nine and seven incidents per month, respectively (with an average number of 36 robberies and 32 occurrences of menacing per month over the entire period).

Not only has Alabama ICE been proven successful statistically in Mobile, it has also proven successful within the smaller communities of the Southern District of Alabama. Local law enforcement agencies report that the use of federal firearms laws to

prosecute the worst actors in small communities has had a significant impact on the safety of their communities. There reportedly have been instances in which offenders apprehended in connection with drug and firearm offenses have been willing to take responsibility for the drugs but deny any connection to the firearm. The word has spread that "gun crime means hard time."

Extensive training sessions with local law enforcement agencies have been conducted throughout the district. The training sessions were conducted by a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Special Agent, ATF task force agents and the Criminal Chief for the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Southern District of Alabama. The sessions were interactive and explained how law enforcement officers should prepare firearms cases for federal prosecution. These training experiences have been very successful, and requests for the training sessions around the district continue.

The USAO anticipates the continued success of Alabama ICE. They are confident that the partnerships that have been formed, the training that has been administered, and the successful prosecutions that have been documented will continue to reduce violent crime and gang activity.

## **DISTRICT OF ALASKA**

Alaska continues to demonstrate its commitment to coordinating with local, state, and federal law enforcement efforts throughout the state to prosecute the most violent and dangerous firearm offenders under Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). In Anchorage, the state's largest city, the PSN coalition has used crime mapping to identify hot spots and to focus community efforts on reducing gun violence.



Coordinating with the Project Sentry initiative, the Anchorage Police Department has teamed up with state probation officers to engage in heightened supervision of youthful gun offenders and to coordinate the referral of firearms cases for prosecution in state or federal court.

The district's aggressive approach to firearms investigations and prosecutions, combined with the media campaign and community outreach efforts, has sent the strong message of "Hard Time for Gun Crime." The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Alaska's commitment to making communities safer throughout the large and diverse state of Alaska is also paying off with more gun prosecution referrals than ever before coming from remote and rural towns and villages. The office has found that prosecuting the most violent offender in a small community can have a dramatic and immediate beneficial impact on the entire community.

Recognizing that Alaska leads the nation in firearm thefts per capita and that firearms theft is the main source of supply for crimes guns in Alaska, their PSN coalition task forces developed the "Not With My Gun" campaign. The campaign encourages lawful gun owners to protect their firearms from unauthorized use and theft and to record important information about the firearms that they own. Without the requisite information, stolen firearms can not be accurately identified and reported. More than 20,000 self-recording cards were distributed at community events that allow gun owners to keep their own records of the make, model, and serial numbers of their guns, so that they have the necessary information to report and recover their firearms if they are stolen.

The U.S. Attorney (USA), PSN Coordinator, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agents, and other PSN coalition partners regularly attend community council meetings, community events, faith-based outreach events, sportsman shows, and other activities to discuss PSN. ATF agents and the PSN Coordinator make presentations to students and to a graduate class for teachers. The implementation of a "Hard Fact" media campaign, including a bus-board on the local city bus, highlighted the mandatory minimum sentences imposed and aggressive approach being taken in firearm crimes in their state.

The following additional enforcement and outreach successes further demonstrate how Alaska's PSN coalition has used the PSN initiative and PSN grant assistance to improve the quality of life for all Alaskans:

- From FY 2000 to FY 2004, federal firearms prosecutions in the District of Alaska increased over 94%. The PSN Coalition has targeted and jailed some of the state's most significant offenders. As a result, the average sentence for defendants charged with federal firearms crimes in Alaska is now over seven years.
- Local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies have focused on investigating those involved in shooting incidents and suspected gang-related activity because those offenders often represent the largest threat to community safety. As a result of coordinated efforts, a series of such offenders were targeted in a joint Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), ATF, and Anchorage Police Department investigation resulting in the successful prosecution of multiple offenders,

## DISTRICT OF ALASKA

including a successful jury trial of one violent felon caught purchasing firearms in the parking lot of a local movie theater.

- In other cases, state prosecutors, local police, probation officers, and federal authorities have coordinated to use the federal firearms laws to prosecute chronic offenders. In one case, the USAO prosecuted an armed career criminal who robbed a gas station convenience store and its customers with a .45 caliber handgun. The defendant was sentenced to nearly 16 years in federal prison. In another case, a repeat offender was charged federally and convicted by a jury of illegally possessing a stash of eleven firearms, including a stolen M16 military machine gun.
- The PSN task force has also targeted drug dealers and manufacturers who use firearms to protect and further their narcotics trafficking activities. In one case, a dispute over payment for a drug deal resulted in a shootout and the death of one man. A difficult to overcome self-defense claim and other obstacles in state court made federal prosecution the best avenue to address the crimes involved. In numerous other cases, drug dealers were successfully prosecuted and sentenced to mandatory minimum sentences for using firearms in furtherance of drug trafficking.
- As the PSN coalition continues to expand, state probation officers who cover the remote and rural regions of the state have assisted in bringing town trouble makers to justice. With the assistance of probation officers and the state troopers who cover the large territory of Alaska, several dangerous

individuals have been recently prosecuted using federal gun laws under PSN.

- Project Sentry efforts include participation in the Anchorage Police Department's gang and youth violence meetings. Coalition members assist in youth crime investigations and help prosecute adults and juveniles involved in illegal guns and drugs.
- The PSN coalition also remains committed to enforcing the federal gun laws that relate to domestic violence. The district provided training to state and local partners regarding the federal prosecution of offenders prohibited from possessing firearms because of prior convictions for qualifying domestic violence misdemeanor offenses. Because not all state domestic violence convictions qualify under federal law and state and local prosecutors need to understand the federal consequences of their charging and plea decisions, a chart was created to demonstrate what state and local domestic violence offenses would or would not prohibit the possession of firearms under federal law.
- Two TV public service announcements (PSAs) were produced locally to highlight messages believed to be most effective in Alaska. The first, building on the PSAs created for the national PSN campaign, vividly demonstrated that those convicted of firearm crimes are sentenced to long periods of incarceration, taking them away from their children and family members. The second drew upon an actual prosecution of a defendant who was selling crack cocaine and using a loaded firearm at a

local high school. The PSN message was visually emphasized as the local police turned the defendant over to ATF agents when they found the loaded handgun.

### **DISTRICT OF ARIZONA**

Since the inception of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) in the District of Arizona, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Arizona has built partnerships with law enforcement and prosecution agencies from across the state through the formation of the PSN Executive Council. Member agencies of the Executive Council include officers, agents, and prosecutors from urban and rural Arizona communities, who address the diverse law enforcement issues of the district: expansive geography, the international boundary with Mexico, a large Indian Country jurisdiction, firearms trafficking, and firearms in the hands of illegal aliens. By collaborating with all law enforcement agencies willing to commit to the PSN initiative, the USAO and the Executive Council are able to expand the impact of PSN over as much of the district as possible.

Through PSN training opportunities and meetings of the PSN Executive Council, local law enforcement agencies are encouraged to build relationships with Special Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to consult at the field level about the most appropriate venue for gun crime prosecutions. An Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, to consult with agents or officers on issues of federal firearms law. As a result of this network of PSN partnerships, the USAO has brought federal charges against some of the most

serious firearms offenders in smaller cities and towns.

In Phoenix, the Violence Impact Project brings together the Phoenix Police Department, ATF, ICE, U.S. Marshals Service, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Maricopa County Probation, the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, and the USAO to target crime in two geographic areas identified through crime mapping by the district's PSN research partner, the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission. Integral to the success of the Violence Impact Project has been the formation of the Phoenix Police Gun Squad, a group of firearms detectives based out of the ATF Phoenix offices working side by side with ATF agents to enforce both state and federal firearms laws.

In Tucson, the USAO, Pima County Attorney's Office, Tucson Prosecutor's Office, ATF, ICE, Arizona Department of Public Safety, Pima County Sheriff's Office, Tucson Police, Marana Police, Oro Valley Police, and Pima County Probation and Parole have formed the Pima County Gun Task Force to target gun crime in the Tucson metropolitan area. In addition, the Tucson office has founded a task force of federal and tribal officers, agents, and prosecutors to target firearms offenders on the Tohono O'odham Nation, resulting in a significant increase in felony firearms prosecutions there. The USAO has also brought PSN enforcement training to the Four Corners Conference to highlight the prosecution of firearms offenses in Indian Country.

The PSN Executive Council continues to encourage new law enforcement and prosecution agencies to join the PSN initiative through enforcement coordination, training, or attendance of council meetings.

## EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS**

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) three-pronged initiative in the Eastern District of Arkansas (EDAR) is focused on training, outreach and enforcement. The initiative has been successful in each of these areas.

The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the EDAR, along with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), has presented federal firearms-related training to law enforcement officers across the state of Arkansas, in addition to school teachers and school administrators/faculty. ATF special agents and task force officers (TFOs) presented several weeks of training to every police officer on the Pine Bluff Police Department, the Little Rock Police Department, and to select investigators of the Pulaski County Sheriff's Department.

Nationally renowned speaker Lt. Col. Dave Grossman was invited to train law enforcement officers, school teachers, administrators, resource officers, and parents for a full day in 2005. First, Col. Grossman explained theories on school safety and violence prevention. He also described practical steps necessary to improve safety in schools. This training also ties in nicely with their school outreach efforts.

Two separate PSN-funded school programs are teaching elementary-aged children in the EDAR about dangers posed by unsupervised handling of firearms and by possession of firearms by anyone using bad judgment or harboring bad intentions. The SHOT (See it, Hear it, Tell it) program was developed by Pine Bluff Police Officer Richard Davies. SHOT is a creative way to educate children in elementary and middle school about the value of gun safety and the importance of making responsible choices. A separate

program, "The Magic of Smart Choices", uses magic to communicate similar themes to school kids. So far, over 10,000 children in the EDAR have seen one or both shows. The school shows have been extremely well-received. School officials regularly request one or both shows, for the first time, or for a repeat performance.

EDAR PSN started with a focus on Jefferson County, Arkansas, which includes the city of Pine Bluff. In proportion to its population, Pine Bluff has consistently ranked among the nation's most violent communities. The program began as a reactive, demand-side prosecutorial initiative relying on heavy and consistent cooperation with local law enforcement and state prosecutors in Jefferson County. PSN then expanded its affirmative focus to Pulaski County, including the Little Rock metropolitan area. The Pulaski County program now is characterized by aggressive and proactive anti-gang investigations and prosecutions by the ATF and the Little Rock Police Department. In addition to the formal partnerships forged in these two counties, a general invitation has gone out to state prosecutors throughout the district asking that they partner with the USAO on any case involving gun crime. Several cases have been prosecuted from virtually every corner of the district. The anti-gang efforts have focused on utilizing confidential informants, undercover purchases and execution of search warrants that have led to arrests of armed gang members. Those arrests have led to up-the-ladder cooperating witnesses and further arrests.

Between the reactive prosecutions of adopted gun cases and the proactive investigations of armed gang members, the EDAR's PSN initiative has increased gun prosecutions more than 300% in three years. Over 350 defendants have been charged

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS

federally and hundreds more have been charged by the State of Arkansas. Sentences for PSN defendants averaged 60 months during the first 24 months, and have increased, along with the number of Title 18 Sections 924(c) and 924(e) convictions, to average over 90 months in the past year.

Proactive supply-side investigations and prosecutions have not been neglected. The ATF and USAO have investigated and prosecuted both licensed and unlicensed dealers unlawfully trafficking firearms. Included in this effort is the targeting of straw purchasers who facilitate the acquisition of firearms for criminals.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS**

Under the Western District of Arkansas's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative, the Fort Smith Police Department and Sebastian County Prosecuting Attorney screen cases, removing those cases that do not fit their general criteria and contacting the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Western District of Arkansas or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to further determine whether those cases meet the PSN criteria for federal prosecution, which include felons or aliens in possession of firearms (particularly those with a violent criminal history or significant history), and other violent criminals or drug offenders engaged in activity involving a firearm. The process is a fluid one, as many cases are unique. The goal is to prevent individuals with significant criminal histories from engaging in further criminal behavior by removing them from the streets for as long as possible.

The PSN program is branching out to other parts of the district, particularly northwest Arkansas, which is the fastest growing area of the state. A PSN case screening process

is being instituted with police agencies and local prosecutors in the major cities in northwest Arkansas similar to that in the Fort Smith area.

The district reports frequent contact with state and local prosecutors, who refer cases for federal prosecution and help coordinate the transfer of defendants to the federal system. The district has focused on increased prosecution of violent and chronic offenders, resulting in a significant increase in indictments and convictions as well as average prison time for offenders.

The district co-sponsored a speaker who presented an intriguing program on firearms and other forms of violence in schools. This program was recorded and professionally produced into a two DVD set, which they intend to distribute to school administrators and community and school leaders within the district.

Gun safety programs for primary and secondary school children are being formed to educate children as to the manner in which firearms should be treated and the dangers inherent in handling them if unsupervised.

Media outlets are being utilized to spread the success of the PSN program to the general public and to put violators on notice that they will be vigorously prosecuted.

### **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

With more than 18 million residents, the Central District of California is the most populous federal judicial district. The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Central District of California is the second largest in the country with approximately 250 lawyers spread through three offices located in Los

## CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Angeles, Orange County, and Riverside. Though crime problems vary widely throughout the district, members of organized street gangs, motorcycle gangs, and robbery crews are responsible for a significant amount of the district's violent crime and drug trafficking offenses. Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is used to address crimes committed by these groups throughout the district. The USAO has created a multi-agency task force, consisting of key federal, state, and local agencies, to aggressively identify and target violent drug traffickers and criminally active members of street gangs and robbery rings. PSN has brought together federal, state, and local agencies to break up criminal organizations through proactive investigations and prosecution of reactive cases.

In Los Angeles County, upon implementation of PSN, the USAO designated a specific target area based on crime data provided by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD). The target area is that patrolled by the LAPD's 77th Street Station and the Century Station of the LASD, an area rife with large numbers of violent street gangs. The USAO has partnered with the LAPD, the LASD, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Los Angeles County District Attorney's (DA's) Office, the Los Angeles City Attorney's (CA's) Office, and units within the parole and probation departments. The USAO established and chairs a PSN Oversight Committee, which consists of representatives from partner agencies and meets monthly or bimonthly to discuss gun prosecutions, active criminal gangs or organizations, and the intake process. The Los Angeles CA's Office has provided a Deputy City Attorney to serve as a Special Assistant United States Attorney

(SAUSA) to handle intake and federal prosecution of PSN cases originating in the City of Los Angeles.

In Ventura and San Bernardino Counties, the USAO has been participating in monthly gang task force meetings, where gang intelligence is shared, along with ideas for successful state and federal prosecution of gang members.

In Riverside County, the U.S. Attorney's Office has partnered with the Riverside County Sheriff's department and ATF to form a task force to combat gang violence in the Inland Empire.

In all of these counties, the intake component of PSN relies upon referrals from local law enforcement officers, the ATF, and the FBI. The guidelines for prosecution include subjects with prior convictions for drug trafficking offenses, violent felonies and domestic abuse, and subjects illegally in possession of firearms with known gang affiliations. Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) have trained police officers and federal agents on firearms, narcotics, and immigration violations through roll-call trainings and other forums, focusing on investigative efforts and protocols at the street level, as well as on the differences between federal and state prosecution. For example, in November 2005, the ATF and the USAO hosted a three-day training session for over 1,200 local law enforcement officers and prosecutors. The training session included lectures on federal prosecutions, firearm identification, and firearm tracing.

In Orange County, the City of Santa Ana was selected as the target area due to the large number of organized violent street gangs. PSN has established a positive working relationship with the Santa Ana

Police Department, which has devoted resources to this project. To assist with the PSN program, the Orange County District Attorney (DA) has provided to the Santa Ana Branch of the USAO a senior prosecutor who has been designated as an SAUSA. The SAUSA has access to the Orange County DA's database of criminal filings, receives a weekly report of cases where serious firearm-related charges have been involved, and is able to quickly retrieve and review investigative reports relating to these cases. The SAUSA selects the more serious and/or complex cases wherein there is federal jurisdiction and the likelihood of a greater federal sentence. Once a case has been selected for federal prosecution, the assigned Orange County DA prosecutor is notified and arrangements are made to transfer the defendant to federal custody. In addition, the SAUSA periodically visits local police departments to advise their officers that the SAUSA is available to review any particularly serious or complex cases that they might want to refer directly for federal prosecution.

The offices of the U.S. Attorney (USA), Los Angeles County DA, Los Angeles CA, Orange County DA, Ventura County DA, Riverside County DA, and San Bernardino County DA work cooperatively to determine how a case will be prosecuted, taking into account sentencing, jurisdiction, and evidentiary issues. California's three strikes law, gang sentencing enhancements, and Fourth Amendment Search and Seizure issues are all considered in determining whether a case is more efficiently and effectively prosecuted federally or by the state.

PSN's partnership approach has produced significant results. A joint ATF/LAPD investigation led to the successful federal prosecution of an East Coast Crip gang

member who operated as a firearm and drug trafficker in an apartment complex, resulting in a 120 month term of imprisonment. A joint FBI/LAPD investigation led to federal prosecution of a member of a violent jewelry robbery crew, who robbed jewelry vendors at gunpoint for years, but now has been sentenced to 492 months in prison. A joint ATF, FBI, and LAPD investigation of an armed cocaine and crack cocaine drug trafficker led to his conviction, and he is now facing a federal mandatory life without release sentence. A joint effort with the Riverside County DA's Office and the Riverside Police Department resulted in several successful federal prosecutions including that of one gang member who received a sentence of 120 months imprisonment. A joint effort with the Ventura County DA's Office resulted in a gang member being sentenced federally to 188 months imprisonment.

The Central District of California continues to implement and expand its PSN initiative, working cooperatively with federal and local law enforcement agencies to target violent criminal organizations and armed drug traffickers. Efforts also continue to implement community outreach and education programs centered on reducing gun violence.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

A key component of the Eastern District of California's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) strategy has been outreach to and training for the vast and varied communities within its 34 counties, stretching from the northern border of Los Angeles County to the southern border of Oregon. Over the last several years, with PSN grant funding, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the

## EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Eastern District of California has provided the very well-received Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) training program on firearms investigation techniques to over 700 local law enforcement officers throughout the state. The starting point of the office's PSN outreach was the U.S. Attorney's (USA's) personal visits to every city and rural county in the district at which he invited their chief law enforcement officers to refer persistent problem violent offenders for federal prosecution.

The district's PSN strategy places more focused emphasis on the urban areas affected by higher incidence of gun violence, such as Stockton, Sacramento, and Modesto, where local police departments have assigned officers as ATF task force agents to identify and target local offenders for federal prosecution consistent with that city's local priorities, which include targeting specific gangs and cleaning up particular neighborhoods. Recognizing that different cities have different crime problems, Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) participate in Weed and Seed sites, local law enforcement gang meetings, and other local law enforcement forums in these cities to strategize with local departments and district attorneys (DAs) to identify and implement the most effective, highest-impact use of federal prosecution resources in those communities.

Over the past five years, approximately 85 offenders from Stockton—all with either drug or violence prior convictions—have been convicted in federal court for federal firearms violations. Since the commencement of PSN, the Sacramento Police Department and Sheriff's Office have routinely referred cases to the USAO for prosecution in federal court for violations of federal firearms laws. In 2005, at least half

of the Sacramento offenders prosecuted federally were confirmed gang members.

In addition, the USAO has taken a lead role in coordinating special short-term targeted investigations designed to combat particular drug and gun violence problems. In 2005, the USA took a lead role in obtaining a VCIT (Violent Crime Impact Team) designation for the City of Fresno. The designation of additional ATF agents and the development of a localized task force to concentrate on the same issue at the same time have led to a 46% rise in the gun prosecutions from the USA's Fresno district office. Over the past two years, 123 crime guns were seized, and 51 PSN and VCIT defendants were prosecuted federally.

Other special projects have included USAO support in a 2004-2005 multi-agency ad hoc task force formed after a Merced Police Officer was murdered. The USAO prosecuted eight Merced Gangster Crips, including the leader of that gang, on federal drug and gun charges. In the City of Modesto, a joint state and federal task force arrested 44 defendants, many from the Norteno criminal street gang. The USAO prosecuted 14 of them on federal drug and gun charges. Police officials have reported an 80% drop in gang homicides since that operation. Between 2004 and 2006, as a result of a joint investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Modesto Police Department, the USAO prosecuted approximately 30 armed robberies of banks and businesses in the Modesto area, most of which were committed by street gang members. One Sureno gang member was sentenced to more than 2,000 months in federal prison for eight armed robberies. A Norteno gang member recently pleaded guilty to six armed robberies with a stipulated 30 year sentence. Recently, the FBI formed a Safe Streets



Task Force in Stanislaus County to target Norteno gang members with guns and drugs. In addition, the USAO has taken an aggressive role in securing the deployment of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Mobile Enforcement Team to several cities in the district, including Sacramento, Modesto, and Fresno, and has supported those efforts with record numbers of federal indictments for the drug and gun offenses arising from those operations.

The task force has been able to support all of these efforts through the PSN grant program. Several local prosecutor positions have been funded in the cities in which the PSN efforts are focused. The local distribution method permits the funds to be used in a more comprehensive manner than through traditional centralized grant programs. For example, in Sacramento a grant was initially provided to the local crime lab for a National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) technician. It was later learned that this grant was not resulting in the firearm “matches” getting to detectives any faster because a delay in fingerprinting caused the guns not to be released to the labs. A grant in the next cycle was awarded to the police department to hire a gun-only fingerprint technician and almost immediately there were 139 NIBIN matches available to local detectives.

The overall number of cases prosecuted in the Eastern District of California continues to increase from pre-PSN levels. From 2000 to 2005, there has been a 158% increase in the number of firearms offenses prosecuted in the Eastern District of California. The number rose 15% from 2004 to 2005. More importantly, the USAO has improved the cooperative relationships between the federal law enforcement agencies and the local police, sheriffs, and district attorneys and has taken on a more prominent role in

the prevention and prosecution of violent crime in the communities it serves.

### **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program in the Northern District of California is thriving and having a demonstrable impact on the reduction of firearms-related violence within the district. Both the quantity and quality of the U.S. Attorney’s (USA’s) cases have increased. Due to the success of the program in San Francisco and Oakland, the USA is expanding PSN to other areas of the district, including the counties of Sonoma and Santa Cruz, and the cities of East Palo Alto, Richmond, and San Jose.

The USA’s most successful strategy to reduce gun violence involves a targeted approach to federal firearms prosecutions. Through task force meetings, the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Northern District of California focuses on dangerous felons who are committing firearms-related violence. This strategic approach has been successful. Notably, the USAO is finding that the majority of individuals committing firearms-related violence are previously convicted gang members.

The USA has successfully formed partnerships tailored to individual areas by combining local and federal law enforcement entities into task forces. For example, the USA’s Operation Ceasefire Task Force partners include the San Francisco Police department, Sheriff’s Department, Adult Probation, Juvenile Probation, Federal Probation, State Parole, the District Attorney’s (DA’s) Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the mayor’s office.

## SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

In April of 2004, the gang-related homicide rate in San Francisco was on the rise, culminating in the tragic death of Officer Isaac Espinoza, who was gunned down by a gang member wielding an AK-47 type rifle. Officer Espinoza was a member of the Ceasefire Task Force. In response to this surge in gang and gun violence, the task force identified approximately 53 individuals responsible for gun violence. Over a seven-month period, approximately 38 of those individuals were placed in custody and approximately ten were killed as a result of gang violence.

In addition to investigating and prosecuting felon in possession of firearms cases, the USAO has used its Strike Force Unit with its arsenal of RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) and VICAR (Violent Crime in Aid of Racketeering) charges against violent criminals and gangs. As a result of these efforts, *The San Francisco Chronicle* wrote an article in July of 2005, crediting the trigger lock and gang prosecutions for lowering San Francisco's gang homicide rate by over 50%.

The Homicide Task Force was formed in 2002 in response to an alarming homicide rate in Oakland and surrounding areas. Headed by the USAO, and chaired by the Chief of the Oakland Branch Office, the task force consists of members from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), FBI, ATF, California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement (BNE), Oakland Police Department, Alameda County DA's Office, and various other agencies.

The task force has targeted violent gang activity, prosecuted individuals federally, conducted Title III wiretaps, and cultivated cooperators in its effort to reduce the violent crime and homicide rate in Oakland. In an effort to impact violent activity at an earlier

stage, the task force implemented a highly effective truancy program to address record numbers of absences from local schools. These efforts contributed to an approximate 25% reduction in the homicide rate in Oakland during 2004.

### **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

As part of the Southern District of California's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative, the San Diego Violent Crimes Task Force's Gang Group was awarded a grant in August 2003, to combat gun violence in southeast San Diego. Typical of the results of this ongoing, joint federal and state effort, six federal and state search warrants were executed in August 2005 to address the violent nature of a local street gang in the targeted area. Drugs were seized and 12 weapons (including a pistol with silencer and two assault rifles) were taken off the streets.

PSN funding in the Southern District of California has provided gun-tracing analysis of firearms involved in crimes such as homicides, attempted murder, drug distribution and felon in possession of a firearm. Images of bullets and cartridge casings entered into the database system have increased progress in identifying guns used in crimes and linking them to criminal suspects. The program is supported by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. PSN funding has been essential in securing the skills of a highly-trained technician and maintaining related equipment.

The district has now started focusing its efforts on illegal firearms cases involving domestic violence and illegal/unlawful alien in possession cases.

PSN funding was used to educate the community, parents, and youth about the dangers of gun crime and violence and to increase awareness and involvement in violence prevention programs and efforts. Major highlights include:

- Produced more than 50,000 safety/gun lock brochures in English and Spanish for dissemination to parents/guardians.
- Secured grants from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to implement the GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training) program at five middle schools in communities with high rates of gun crime, violence and gangs.
- Secured over 20,000 gunlocks for dissemination to parents and guardians.
- Conducted back-to-school nights with the Ninth District PTA to inform parents and guardians about the importance of gun safety and how to prevent gun crime and violence.
- Worked with eight local law enforcement agencies to partner in distributing gunlocks from police impounds, community substations and neighborhood events.
- Distributed more than 10,000 gunlocks at community events, parent education forums, violence prevention workshops, schools and law enforcement facilities.
- Distributed more than 14,550 Safe Gun Storage brochures at community events, parent education forums, violence prevention workshops, schools and law enforcement facilities.
- Conducted more than 18 community presentations educating parents about

gun safety and gun crime/violence prevention.

- Worked with local youth to design and produce more than 15,000 gun crime/violence prevention posters which are disseminated at locations such as local schools, community-based agencies, Boys and Girls Clubs, and YMCAs.

### **DISTRICT OF COLORADO**

Coordination has been a critical component to the success of Colorado's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative. Federal and state prosecutors communicate about the best venue to prosecute a particular case. Local police officers and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agents pool their resources to conduct thorough investigations. Additionally, programs designed to train state judges, parole officers, and street officers have all contributed toward making PSN a success in the District of Colorado. Their enforcement message has reached the community, as evidenced by one Colorado Springs drug dealer admitting that, because of PSN, he started to leave his gun at home so that he would not "...catch a federal case"—which he knew would mean more prison time if he was caught in possession of a weapon.

The District of Colorado has focused its attention on law enforcement coordination. Assistant United States Attorneys (AUSAs) have attended numerous police roll calls throughout the Denver metropolitan area to conduct firearm training for local police officers. Prosecutors have also conducted training for state judges and probation officers, explaining the importance of making a good factual record at sentencing hearings. With the State of Colorado's Office of Parole, the district has instituted an

## DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

innovative program that enhances offender supervision in the community. Working closely with Parole and with Colorado Department of Corrections Youth Offender Services, protocols have been created to remind parolees and juvenile inmates convicted as adults that they cannot lawfully possess a firearm and that there are serious consequences for violating the law. The centerpiece of this program is that state and local parole officers are closely tracking parolees at high risk to recidivate, sharing that information with law enforcement officers on a regular basis, and coordinating with ATF agents and local police when they receive information that a parolee might have a firearm and when they actually recover a firearm during a contact with a parolee.

A number of projects are underway in Colorado to bring awareness to PSN's message, "gun crime means hard time." The district has worked closely with Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons to bring attention to cold case firearm homicides. This project serves as a reminder that no matter how long ago a violent gun crime is committed, there will always be investigators looking for those responsible. The project also reassures the victims' families that authorities do everything in their power to solve their cases.

In Aurora, Colorado, the Weed and Seed Office plays a critical role in spreading the word about the consequences of gun crimes. Aurora police officers conduct education and training classes at local middle schools, and the district works with local district attorney's offices on various firearm initiatives, such as project TARGET (Team Approach Regarding Gun Education Training) in Pueblo, Colorado.

The National Shooting Sports Foundation is teaming up with state officials and local law enforcement agencies to distribute over 350,000 free gun locks throughout Colorado as part of the national Project ChildSafe initiative.

## DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

The defining element of Connecticut's successful Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative is the forging of meaningful relationships between and among federal and state prosecutors and local law enforcement authorities. PSN partnerships and gun enforcement teams have been established in the state's urban centers of Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury and Hartford. The teams are responsible for responding to all firearms recoveries and every crime incident involving a firearm. The response teams are "on call" seven days each week, twenty-four hours each day. Among other things, the response teams attempt to obtain post-arrest statements from offenders concerning the firearms they possessed, and then focus their investigations of the sources of the firearms. They have found that by simply conducting post-arrest interviews, they often obtain inculpatory statements in over 80% of the cases where such interviews are conducted. In addition to the firearms response teams, each and every offense involving a firearm is reviewed jointly by a state prosecutor and a federal prosecutor. Together, a judgment is made concerning the most appropriate forum for prosecution.

With the assistance of a research partner, they have also established a WOW (Worst-Of-the-Worst) list. The list is compiled by ascribing a numerical value to each prior arrest of each convicted felon in the subject city. For example, an individual convicted

of murder and distributing narcotics may have a violence severity index (VSI) score of 20. A second individual convicted of burglary and assault with a firearm may have a VSI of 17. In this fashion, individuals with the highest VSIs are identified and prioritized for law enforcement response. If individuals with high VSIs are the subject of an active warrant, that warrant is prioritized for execution. Similarly, if an individual with a high VSI is under court supervision – on probation, parole or some other form of supervised release – efforts are made to ensure that conditions are scrupulously honored. Finally, if the individual is released to the community, efforts are made to ensure that individuals with high VSI scores are not engaged in continuing criminal conduct.

A recent initiative includes partnering with John Walsh of *America's Most Wanted* to create "Connecticut's Most Wanted". Each Saturday night, during the airing of *America's Most Wanted*, a "Connecticut's Most Wanted" segment is aired featuring a fugitive who has committed a violent crime with a firearm. Approximately 50% of the fugitives featured on Connecticut's Most Wanted have subsequently been captured.

With respect to community outreach, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Connecticut has developed and produced a Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) video in English and Spanish that is shown to each and every inmate of the State Department of Corrections before release. In addition, each defendant on probation or parole is required, as a condition of release, to attend an offender meeting. State and federal prosecutors advise probationers and parolees of the PSN initiative, of the consequence of firearms possession and/or narcotics distribution, and advise that such

offenses will be vigorously prosecuted. Additionally, they arrange for service providers to be present, including drug counselors, job trainers, and persons who specialize in home-life issues and anger management, and they urge those present to take advantage of the services. The attendees are informed that if they appear before a court in the future, excuses such as drug addiction, and unemployment, simply will not be countenanced if no effort was made to avail themselves of the services being offered. Offender meetings are held monthly in each of the partner cities. In addition, to engage youth, the district has created a mock trial competition and partnered with the New Britain Rock Cats, a local baseball team.

The following descriptions of PSN enforcement and outreach activities demonstrate the success of PSN in Connecticut and the various strategies utilized in the district:

- In the state's largest cities, enforcement meetings have been established for the purpose of identifying the most serious offenders and devising strategies to facilitate their removal from the community. A senior member of the Hartford Police Command Staff will assign a specific unit to develop information on the target and report on the target's activities at the next meeting. If it is determined that the target is actively engaged in criminal activity, the unit will dedicate law enforcement resources with the intent of building a criminal case. Every target on this list is identified in the Hartford Police Department internal database. If a target on the enforcement list is arrested, the arresting officer will be alerted that the arrestee is a target on the list. A designated state prosecutor, who attends

## DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

- the enforcement meetings, is notified to ensure that the case receives appropriate attention.
- The USAO and state partners conduct police department and emergency operator training. Some issues covered include Fourth Amendment issues, Fifth Amendment issues, evidence recovery, report writing, significant recent court decisions, investigative techniques, etc. Enforcement training sessions have also been conducted with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).
  - Since the creation of the enforcement list in March of 2003, 108 individuals have been targeted. Fifty-seven of those have been arrested and successfully prosecuted with an average sentence of approximately 5½ years. Three targets from the list are currently in custody on pending murder charges. Thirty-six targets were placed on an 'inactive list' when it was determined that they were not actively engaged in criminal activity.
  - Connecticut's PSN strategy includes community outreach and the involvement of members of organizations in communities affected by crime. Connecticut's community based organizations reach out to those recently released from prison and to young adults, who may be at risk for engaging in criminal activity. They offer a variety of resources, including job training, adult education, substance abuse counseling, family counseling, and spiritual guidance. One of the most important outreach initiatives is the monthly offender meetings held in Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, and Waterbury.
  - The district has created a video about the PSN program that is viewed by each and every inmate before being released from state custody. The district also has presented the PSN message to various community and faith-based groups.
  - An agreement with the New Britain Rock Cats baseball team allowed 1000 youth from across Connecticut to receive tickets to numerous home games, merchandise, a PSN advertisement in the Rock Cats yearbook, public address messages, scoreboard displays, and live radio broadcast announcements promoting PSN. In addition, the Rock Cats' final game of the season against the Altoona Curve on Labor Day, September 6, 2004, was dedicated to PSN, and the team provided a picnic for 1000 youths and chaperones who attended.
  - The district, through the Project Sentry initiative, is creating a mock trial competition at the Manson Youth Institute, a juvenile detention facility in Cheshire, Connecticut that houses approximately 700 to 800 youth offenders. The hope is to use the mock trial competition to sensitize the youths to the victim's perspective and to discuss career goals when they are released.

**DISTRICT OF DELAWARE**

The goal of Operation Disarm is to increase federal firearms prosecutions, seize illegally possessed guns, train law enforcement officers, and conduct successful gun violence reduction and gun safety outreach programs. From September 2001 through December 2005, over three times as many defendants were charged with federal firearms offenses in Delaware compared to the preceding corresponding period. Additionally, aggressive enforcement initiatives have had an impact. An undercover investigation recently resulted in the conviction of a gun dealer who illegally sold a firearm to a felon, and a gun store salesman who illegally sold a gun to a straw purchaser. Those prosecutions sent a strong deterrent message to federally-licensed firearms dealers. Further, federal and state prosecutors have implemented a case review mechanism that has contributed to an increase in state and local firearms cases that have been adopted by the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Delaware.

The Operation Disarm Investigative Task Force, which consists of the USAO, the Attorney General's (AG's) Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Delaware State Police, Dover Police, Seaford Police, Wilmington Police and New Castle County Police, has seized a substantial number of illegal firearms. Since October 2003, the task force has seized over 970 guns.

Since early in the initiative, Operation Disarm has provided training to law enforcement. The ATF has been an invaluable ally in this endeavor. Operation Disarm training focuses on federal gun laws, search and seizure, preserving DNA evidence in gun investigations, and

characteristics of armed criminals. This training has helped law enforcement develop skills to effectively combat gun crime.

Operation Disarm has conducted a significant number of gun violence reduction and gun safety outreach initiatives. For example, in the Truth About Consequences (TAC) Program, representatives of the USAO and the Christiana Care Trauma Prevention Program/ThinkFirst Delaware explain the criminal and health consequences of committing and being the victim of a gun crime. Further, a mother shares her anguish from the loss of her son who was shot to death. This program has been presented to approximately 1500 teenagers to help them appreciate the realities of being the perpetrator and the victim of gun violence. After one participant in the program was released from a juvenile detention facility where he attended the TAC program, he approached the mother who spoke of her son who was lost to gun violence, introduced his parents to her and said that he had not touched an illegal gun since he heard her presentation.

Additionally, Operation Disarm has partnered with elementary schools and the district's Weed and Seed sites to spread its outreach message. McGruff the Crime Dog, the Dover Police, Delaware State Police, Wilmington Police, U.S. Probation Office and USAO have participated in gun safety presentations to over 2000 attendees from Delaware's schools and Weed and Seed sites. In the Play Station II and Video Smart programs, Weed and Seed sites have used nonviolent video games to teach gun safety and provide anti-violence messages to youth. In 2005, the USAO and Weed and Seed sites sponsored a conference in which speakers encouraged over 200 attendees to stop violence by strengthening families,

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

influencing youth to make positive choices and changing the cultural environment of at-risk youth. Further, local organizations discussed what services were available to assist the attendees in their efforts to curb gun violence. The conference was so well-received that it led to a similar conference in 2006. The aforementioned achievements are a tribute to the exemplary cooperative efforts and hard work of Operation Disarm partners.

### **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

The Washington D.C. Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program utilizes a multi-faceted approach to combat gun violence. The program employs various enforcement measures involving the numerous partner agencies and police departments in the area. Enforcement strategies include an incident review process, call-in meetings with offenders under court supervision, the formation of a violent crime impact team, and enhanced prosecution. These strategies have had an impact on violent crime in the district, such as substantial increases in court filings and convictions. Perhaps the most notable change was a 20% decrease in homicides. The district also has been working to develop its community outreach strategies. Outreach workers have consistently interacted with community members, offenders, law enforcement, and other partners, through meetings, conferences, and education programs and seminars. The district also participates in Project ChildSafe, which has distributed 9,500 gun locks to residents. The coordination of activities among the various constituents is a vital component of the gun violence prevention efforts in Washington, D.C.

The Fall 2003 homicide incident review serves as the foundation for new enforcement efforts targeting violent offenders and firearms-related crime in the city. The planning, development, and execution of these new enforcement strategies, largely modeled after the Boston Gun Project, is ongoing.

On January 13, 2005, the district held its first call-in of 40 probation and parole supervisees, in U.S. District Court. These 40 offenders represented 25 different violent groups operating in the highest crime areas of D.C. The seated offenders faced a line of law enforcement partners from the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Columbia, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), D.C. Housing Police, D.C. Attorney General's (AG's) Office, U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Parole Commission, and the U.S. Probation Service in the District of Columbia. After a U.S. District Court Judge called the roll, MPD Chief Charles Ramsey opened the meeting by discussing the unacceptable level of violence in their city, the combined law enforcement partnership dedicated to ending further killings, and the clear choice confronting each of the 40 participants—"End the violence or be prepared for all your crew members to face tough law enforcement consequences." The other law enforcement speakers reinforced the message and offered detailed information on criminal enterprises currently operated by participants. A team of the city's youth outreach workers and faith-based leaders is present at the call-ins to extend an offer of assistance with an array of services,



including employment, vocational training, substance abuse treatment, and GED courses. The PSN Task Force has scheduled call-in sessions at three-month intervals for the remainder of this year. Gangs responsible for violent acts have been identified and the law enforcement operation plans are underway.

The district also formed a VCIT (Violent Crime Impact Team), consisting of Metropolitan police and specially-trained federal agents to focus on high crime incidence areas in the city. The investigators make use of high-technology surveillance and crime-mapping tools.

There were 1,327 PSN-related indictments/informations filed from January 1, 2003, to December 31, 2003, in the local Superior Court and 84 juvenile gun cases were initiated. From January 1, 2004, through December 31, 2004, 1,257 PSN-related indictments/informations were filed and 101 juvenile gun cases were initiated.

In the first year of full implementation, D.C. achieved a 20% decrease in the number of homicides in the district. This dramatic decrease is coupled with an overall decrease of 12% in UCR Part I crimes measuring a reduction in each of the nine categories. This success represents the cumulative efforts of smarter police deployments, PSN training for line officers and crime scene officers, implementation of gun guidelines, joint federal-local investigations, better intelligence sharing, and a greater emphasis on interagency coordination. Aggressive enforcement and stronger cases allowed the USAO to enhance prosecution of firearms cases. District Court case filings, which increased by 20% in 2003, were up again in 2004. District Court convictions attained in 2004 were up 9% over the previous year, coupled with a 12% increase in the number

of guilty verdicts rendered. The district is encouraged by these numbers, and believes its gun guidelines and comprehensive training for both police and prosecutors has led to this continued success.

Unique among its colleagues, the USAO prosecutes both local and federal cases in the District of Columbia. In the first nine months of 2005, the district filed 864 local cases involving firearms crime. It also secured 610 convictions in cases involving firearms and firearms violence, an increase of 13% from this time last year. The district's trial conviction rate remains relatively steady at approximately 70%. In calendar year 2004, the office filed a total of 1342 local cases involving firearms violations, and successfully prosecuted 721 cases.

The incident review process, which is similar to the Indianapolis Project in the late 1990s, has provided task force members with rich, qualitative fields of data that guide their development, implementation, and execution of coordinated and comprehensive law enforcement strategies. Looking below the surface of crime statistics and crime mapping, information obtained through the incident review process provides additional analysis among victims, suspects, locations, and groups involved in homicides and other violent offenses. The district feels the information is vital to the success of law enforcement strategies in the District of Columbia.

The USAO hosted a day-long conference with 300 community and government participants and focused on a range of crime issues, including gun violence. In addition, the district's ten community prosecutors and eight community outreach specialists attended over 600 community meetings last year. They work closely with the mayor's

## MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

office and its outreach staff on a number of community-oriented problems, including drug, prostitution, and nuisance property issues. In addition, they work regularly with faith-based organizations on matters involving crime reduction and offender reentry. The office recently conducted an overhaul of its public website in order to improve communication with residents. Finally, the office produces a monthly crime report for residents in each of the city's seven police districts, highlighting crimes and prosecutions originating from these areas.

The Project Sentry point of contact communicates regularly with D.C. AG's Office and the Juvenile Court (JVC) on specific juvenile cases, as well as general matters of policy and administration regarding juvenile matters. In addition, the Project Sentry point of contact coordinates an extensive network of community-based programs and initiatives for youth in the District of Columbia, in partnership with the community, various law enforcement agencies, government agencies, and the private sector. These programs include Weed and Seed, Project LEAD (Legal Enrichment and Decision-Making - an interactive curriculum for fifth grade students, taught by teams of prosecutors and staff from the USAO), Drug Education for Youth, and a partnership with Amidon Elementary School.

### **MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA**

The Middle District of Florida is a fast-growing, evolving district that encompasses 35 counties, over 10 million people, and over 50% of Florida's population. The Middle District has a diverse population and size; including major metropolitan centers (Tampa, Orlando, and Jacksonville), major tourist destinations, the Florida Space Coast,

as well as suburban and rural agricultural regions. Such a diverse and expansive district creates unique challenges for the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative. The Middle District of Florida is meeting those challenges by creating effective partnerships among federal and local law enforcement, the community, and the media.

The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Middle District of Florida has teamed with federal and local law enforcement and state prosecutors to take the most violent offenders off the streets. For example, in North Florida, the efforts of the USAO, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, and the Palatka Police Department resulted in the federal convictions of two of the area's main targets. In Ft. Myers, the partnership of the USAO, ATF, Lee County Sheriff's Office, and the Ft. Myers Police Department resulted in numerous convictions of offenders under the Armed Career Criminal (ACC) Act. For example, two violent offenders were sentenced to 200 months and 280 months as ACCs. In Jacksonville, the USAO joined with ATF, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office to target an armed and violent drug organization. The investigation resulted in a 12-defendant indictment, in which 10 defendants have pled guilty and await sentencing. Since February 2005, 24 defendants in Jacksonville – including many convicted of ACC charges – were sentenced to a total of almost 2,500 months imprisonment, or an average of 104 months per defendant. In Tampa, the PSN partnership of the USAO, ATF, Tampa Police Department, and Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office has targeted violent gang members. As a result, one leader was

convicted of an ACC charge and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. Also in Tampa, two violent home-invaders were sentenced to 35 years imprisonment. Similarly, the PSN partnerships in Polk, Brevard/ Seminole, and Manatee Counties have resulted in numerous ACC convictions for major violent felons, including a 66 year term of imprisonment for a violent serial bank robber in Brevard County.

The Middle District of Florida has implemented a community outreach campaign to engage the community and educate citizens. The district's efforts have resulted in the placing of public service messages on television, billboards, newspapers, the internet, flyers, and buses. In Brevard County, members of the Neighborhood Prosecution Team go door-to-door distributing flyers that describe recent successful prosecutions. The Neighborhood Prosecution Team is a unique collaboration that consists of the State Attorney (SA), law enforcement officials, and members of the local Weed and Seed committees. In Duval and Hillsborough Counties, police officers and PSN prosecutors have invited school children to join a pledge against gun violence. To date, over 65,000 school children have signed the pledge that will be a central theme in future annual school efforts.

In what continues to be a model of an effective PSN partnership, the USAO in Orlando, ATF, the Sheriffs and Police Chiefs in Seminole and Brevard Counties, and the SA of the 18th Judicial Circuit have excelled with community outreach initiatives, neighborhood prosecution teams, and cross-designation of Assistant State Attorneys (ASAs) as Special Assistant United States Attorneys (SAUSAs). This partnership is a model of information sharing. The SA of the 18th Judicial Circuit

sponsored a "Rap Against Violence" music contest to increase public awareness about gun crime and violence. The SA received over 125 entries from performers who were invited to create an original hip-hop song containing an anti-gun crime and gun violence reduction message. The songs contained lyrics such as "hard time for a gun crime," "stop the gun violence," "federal time for gun crime," and similar messages. Ten winners were selected from the entries, and the winners were transported by limousine to a professional recording studio, where they recorded their songs. Each song was recorded onto a compact disk, entitled "Rap Against Violence." Ten thousand copies were produced and will be distributed throughout Central Florida as part of the district's community outreach campaign.

#### **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA**

The Northern District of Florida is committed to Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) and to the vigorous enforcement of federal firearm laws. Since the commencement of the PSN initiative in their district, they have significantly increased their firearm prosecutions and maintained a high level of firearm prosecutions. As the analysis of their research partner (the Florida Department of Law Enforcement) has demonstrated, the number of firearm offenses continues to decrease significantly over the past several years throughout the district.

The district's PSN plan can be described as a "Smart Prosecution" strategy – coordinating with local prosecutors in identifying which gun-related offenses should be prosecuted federally. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) in each of the four geographic localities receives arrest and booking reports from the State Attorney

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

(SA) for each offense that involves a firearm. After screening by ATF to determine if the offender is an armed career criminal, a felon in possession, or used a gun in furtherance of drug trafficking or a crime of violence, the PSN local Task Force Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) consults with the local Assistant State Attorney (ASA) to determine if the case should be prosecuted federally, or remain in the state system. The State of Florida has enacted very stringent firearms laws and has ensured that convicted felons spend 85% of their sentences behind bars.

Part of the PSN “Smart Prosecution” strategy includes the vigorous prosecution of juvenile offenders as adults by state authorities when juveniles use firearms to commit violent crimes. The State of Florida has flexible procedures that allow state prosecutors to “direct file” charges against juveniles and to treat the juveniles as adults. Significant prison sentences have been obtained both in state and federal courts for armed career criminals and those individuals who have committed firearm violence.

Their PSN research partner, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), has reported a continuing decrease in firearm-related criminal offenses during the implementation period of their PSN initiative. In 2004, the district overall maintained significantly decreased gun crime numbers—down less than one percent over 2003, but 14.3% lower than in 2002 and 18.8% lower than 2001. FDLE has also determined that several of the PSN target counties experienced decreases in firearm offenses in 2004, when compared with 2003. Alachua County experienced a 2.7% decrease in firearm offenses, and Bay County experienced an 8.9% decrease in firearm offenses.

ATF and the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Northern District of Florida have partnered to conduct training seminars for state and local law enforcement on PSN, gun-crime analysis, firearms tracing, and crime submissions. This training was accomplished in all four divisions of the district, along with training at the district’s annual Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee (LECC) conference. The PSN task force, through FDLE, has also conducted a two day seminar for approximately 75 local law enforcement officers on street level firearm interdiction and covered such topics as recovery and enforcement techniques, firearm detection, firearm case articulations and handling and processing gun related crime scenes.

As part of their PSN/Project Sentry initiative for the past several years, the district’s PSN Task Force has awarded PSN grant money to outstanding juvenile firearm crime prevention strategies. PSN grant money was awarded to the Escambia County Sheriff’s Office for a project that (1) focuses on educating youth on gun safety and the consequences of being involved in gun-related crimes and (2) provides close probationary monitoring for all juveniles under sentences for gun-related offenses. Additionally, the SA’s Office in Alachua County was awarded a grant for its project to reduce gun violence using the resources of the SA’s Office and community outreach efforts. The project educates at-risk youth through a gun violence reduction program, and provides an educational program for schools identified as having higher incidences of violence and gang involvement.

PSN grants have also been awarded to the Leon County Sheriff’s Office and the Pensacola Police Department for the development and implementation of an

innovative gun violence prevention program in the schools. The program uses professional videotapes that are viewed in county middle and high schools to educate students about firearm safety, the dangers of gun violence, and the serious consequences of bringing weapons into schools.

An additional juvenile firearm crime prevention program was awarded PSN grant money by the PSN Task Force late last fall. The Gainesville Police Department's "Preventing Youth Firearm Violence" project addresses at-risk juveniles currently under sentence of probation for firearm/weapon offenses. Two officers, a representative of the SA's Office, and a juvenile resource officer help to monitor the offenders by making periodic bi-weekly unannounced visits. The close monitoring helps the offenders remain crime free, and the supervisors use the opportunity to educate the offenders about gun violence prevention.

The district's PSN outreach partner, the Florida Department of Corrections, has printed hundreds of copies of the district's PSN brochure, distributed them and other PSN materials at various community anti-drug rallies, and has made PSN presentations to law enforcement agencies and community groups such as Neighborhood Watch. The Department of Corrections ordered 10,000 Gun Lock Safety Kits from Project ChildSafe and distributed them to community members throughout the district. The Department of Corrections has also distributed PSN posters and materials to all state prisons and county jails, and it is now distributing PSN materials to newly-released state prisoners.

## **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA**

The Southern District of Florida's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative is executed through four Regional Task force groups: The Northern Counties region (Palm Beach, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Martin, and Highlands counties); the Broward County region; the North Miami-Dade region, and the South Miami-Dade region. Their task force efforts focus on research-based enforcement and prevention activities as the keys to successful implementation of their PSN strategy.

The district's PSN research partner has worked with the law enforcement components to create an area-wide understanding about the levels of firearms crimes occurring throughout the South Florida area. This effort includes statistics and geographic analysis, and it informs the task force participants about the locations and extent of firearms-related criminal activity to facilitate optimal leveraging and allocation of resources. The following examples demonstrate some of the contributions of the district's research partner:

- The research partner worked with the Miami-Dade State Attorney (SA) to create an internal tracking system for firearms charges on a weekly basis—no small task considering that in 2005 Miami-Dade County had 6,579 arrests involving firearms charges.
- In Broward County, the research partner worked with the Sheriff's Office to obtain data on all individuals booked into the jail. In 2004, Broward County had 1,006 arrests, and in the first quarter of 2005, it had 340 arrests all involving firearms charges.

## SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

- In Palm Beach County, the research partner worked with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission to assist them in identifying firearms incidents throughout the area. (In 2004 Palm Beach County had 724 reported firearms incidents.) The Commission is also working with PSN and a large task force of law enforcement, prevention and correctional organizations to present a plan to the county for funding a comprehensive violence reduction effort.
- As a direct result of PSN funding, from November 2004 to March 2005, a Miami Dade PSN task force of six officers from three police departments performed high visibility enforcement activities twice a week. During these 40 plus shifts, they concentrated on cross-jurisdictional hot spots and crime trends, conducted over 355 field interviews, made over 49 arrests directly and seized 10 firearms. Working in partnership with a large police operation in their target area, they assisted in making an additional 79 arrests and seizing four additional firearms. While most of the cases are still pending, six of the individuals arrested were career criminals and are being prosecuted federally.
- They have also instituted law enforcement-related media campaigns in the northern counties and in the Miami-Dade County regions. The Southern District has initiated as part of their PSN patrols a reentry strategy of follow-up visits to recently released ex-offenders, who have relocated to Weed and Seed/Hot Spot Neighborhoods. They have also recently completed the first two phases of an extensive multi-jurisdictional joint investigation impacting Miami's Liberty City area.

On the prevention and intervention side, district task forces are actively implementing reentry-related strategies. The PSN research partner tracks and maps reentry statistics on a quarterly basis for the entire district. In 2005, over 7,500 individuals re-entered the Southern District of Florida. They hosted two district-wide reentry summits that received national attention and pulled the district into partnerships with several organizations, including the Governor's Statewide Ex-Offender Reentry Task Force. They also co-hosted a meeting with the Drug Czar, John P. Walters, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and his staff with local corrections officials and inmates to outline reentry obstacles and substance abuse issues.

In the northern counties region, the St. Lucie County Public Defender's Office has teamed with local entitlement agencies and several faith-based ministries in an effort to educate their communities about the importance of community involvement in solving the recidivism problem. As a starting point, the team worked with the PSN research partner to gain an understanding of the individuals re-entering the four counties. The information gleaned is being used to develop and guide programs to support reentry efforts.

In the Broward County region, the team sponsored development and publication of a reentry resource guide (hard copy and on line) for use by service providers whose work impacts re-entrants. They also briefly sponsored an ex-offender liaison to assist new re-entrants coming into their 'hot spot' communities, with referrals to agencies and organizations set up to meet their immediate transitional needs. They sponsored anti-gun-violence and gun safety presentations in

hot spot area middle schools, and they co-sponsored a number of summer camp activities, including making gun violence reduction and gun safety presentations. These CARGO-type events have taken place primarily in Miami-Dade and Broward County but have also, less frequently, been held in each of their task force areas. Over 2,600 people have participated in these events. They also cosponsored a district-wide series of gun safety presentations and gun lock distributions with Project ChildSafe in May 2005.

In North Miami-Dade County, they have sponsored youth life skills training through the Hosanna Family Foundation for 61 young people, and through the Elijah Project they have completed similar training for another 84 young people (all of whom live in the “hotspot” neighborhoods). Each year, more than 75 youthful offenders charged with adult crimes are released from the Turner Guilford and Knight Correctional Facility (TGK). Through the RESPECT program, the PSN-sponsored Weed and Seed initiative works with law enforcement to preserve public safety while also assisting youthful offenders in making a positive transition to a productive life. Additionally, they are coordinating their after-school program efforts with the North Miami Beach PANZOU project, an anti-gang violence initiative, and they co-sponsored an employment training program for ex-offenders in the North Miami Beach hot spot area.

In South Miami-Dade County (the Homestead/Florida City area), the team has co-sponsored computer assembly and operations skills training (along with tutoring and life skills training), which graduated a class of 32 students and has graduated a second locally-sponsored class of about the same number of young people.

Other activities in South Miami-Dade included gun violence awareness presentations within the community at various functions and neighborhood events.

The district believes that its research-based enforcement and prevention efforts are worthy of continued support and are necessary to make Southern District communities safer.

### **MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA**

The Middle District of Georgia maintained the spirit of the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Gun Violence Reduction Initiative by instituting several unique and successful enforcement and outreach strategies. In January 2005, the PSN Task Force launched Operation Elimi-Con, to host all of the information collected on listed offenders—rap sheet summaries, digital booking photos, prison histories, last known address, warrant status, etc. The criteria for inclusion on the list were an arrest for any offense in the past year, three or more lifetime arrests for one of 20 “violent” offenses identified by the PSN Task Force (two arrests had to occur in the past five years), and one or more lifetime convictions for a violent offense. The list of 235 offenders accounted for only 1% of the individuals arrested in 2003, but they had accumulated 4,285 arrests in their criminal careers—an average of 18 each. The typical offender was age 35 and had been active in crime for 15 years. Sixty-five percent of them had served time in a Georgia prison. The offender information is continually updated, from running manual rap sheet checks for new arrest activity to accessing continually updated correctional records. To access the site, law enforcement, courts, and correctional representatives complete an application and are issued a user name and

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

password. Today the website has 344 users from 17 agencies.

Each offender has his own “web page” which provides users with information concerning his criminal record, most recent photograph, alias, last known address, propensity for violence and other vital information. Law enforcement officers can log onto the secured website and print out each offender’s “web page” during roll call. Officers can use a “Notes” Section to exchange intelligence information with other officers to assist in monitoring and enforcement duties. Each officer can receive a map identifying the last known address of each offender by police precinct. The PSN Task Force has provided training for over 300 police officers, sheriff’s deputies, probation officers and parole officers on how to access and utilize information from the website. The response from law enforcement has been overwhelming enthusiasm for the initiative.

As part of its community outreach effort, the PSN Task Force for the Middle District of Georgia approved the use of a PSN school calendar to be distributed to every school child in the Houston County School system. Each opposing page contained a message about gun safety or reducing gun violence, and student drawings that pertained to gun violence, safety and patriotism. The monthly displays contained the PSN logo and provided a contact number for the PSN outreach partner, CrimeStoppers, encouraging the public to report criminals with guns to CrimeStoppers.

Other outreach and prevention efforts geared toward steering youth away from gun violence include participation in the “National Day of Concern”. On October 28, 2005, the Project Sentry Initiative coordinated the “Student Pledge Against

Gun Violence”. Every eighth grade school student in the Bibb County Public School system signed the “Student Pledge Against Gun Violence”. Each student who participated in the activities received a T-shirt which contained the actual pledge as well as the PSN logo and school emblem. Students listened to peers and educators as they spoke about the consequences of gun violence and encouraged each student to live “The Pledge” and reduce gun violence.

Through the PSN Initiative, the Middle District of Georgia has effectively worked to reduce gun violence in the district. The initiative has resulted in a 37% increase in federal firearms indictments in the district from FY 2003 to FY 2005.

## **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA**

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) in the Northern District of Georgia continues to concentrate mostly upon two objectives: identifying the most dangerous felons for their enforcement efforts and evaluating their strategy ensure that it is effective. The Georgia Criminal Information Center has now flagged all the highly dangerous offenders identified by the research partner. These offender records now contain a caution statement, which dispatchers use to alert officers that the offender is on the highly dangerous offender list. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has made strategic use of the list by identifying all the offenders with multiple firearms arrests above a certain number and reviewing past firearms arrest incident reports to determine whether a particular incident merits federal prosecution. From April 4-10, 2005, the U.S. Marshals Service conducted a nationally coordinated fugitive initiative



(Operation FALCON), and the Southeast Regional Fugitive Task Force (SERFTF) participated in it. An ATF agent used the highly dangerous offender data to identify about 30 wanted offenders to be included in Operation FALCON.

The U. S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Northern District of Florida and the Fulton County District Attorney's (DA's) Office continue to coordinate prosecutions. In FY 2005 the USAO filed 129 firearms cases and completed 163 firearms cases. Most of these cases involved defendants committing violent crime in the city of Atlanta, the district's high crime area. The district uses whatever federal criminal statutes may be reasonably available to impact violent crime, particularly crime in the PSN focus neighborhoods. One example is a series of seven indictments against 15 defendants operating a heroin distribution ring in the PSN focus area that were unsealed July 2005.

In addition to federal prosecution efforts, state and local partners are also working to reduce gun violence. The Fulton County DA's Office reported 764 firearm-related indictments filed in 2003. The Fulton County DA's Office reported 877 firearm-related indictments filed in 2004, and over 800 firearm-related indictments filed in 2005.

Violent crime and shootings continue to decline significantly in the PSN focus area and in Atlanta overall. The Atlanta homicide rate decreased 40% from 2003 to 2005, and decreased 20% from 2004 to 2005. Robbery decreased 23% from 2003 to 2005, and it decreased 8% from 2004 to 2005. Firearms crimes decreased 25% from 2003 to 2005, and 11% from 2004 to 2005. Shooting incidents decreased 35% from 2003 to 2005, and 10% from 2004 to 2005;

while shooting victims decreased 34% from 2003 to 2005, and 11% from 2004 to 2005. Meanwhile, firearms seizures are up city-wide, with a 48% increase from 2003 to 2005. In the PSN focus area, total violent crime (homicide, rape, armed robbery, and aggravated assault) decreased 28% from 2003 to 2005, and 22% from 2004 to 2005, while total firearms crime decreased 39% from 2003 to 2005, and 22% from 2004 to 2005.

As an example of the prevention and outreach efforts in their district, the City of Atlanta and Fulton County Juvenile Court created a partnership to provide intensive intervention services to delinquent children to prevent them from returning to the courts. PSN supports this partnership and provides grant funding to it. The collaboration employs intensive surveillance officers and administrative assistants to monitor and refer families to supportive services.

Members of the task force regularly attend community meetings to discuss PSN and its efforts. The media and community outreach partner, Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, works with three of the PSN focus neighborhoods and other partners, like Georgia Tech, to develop effective community leadership within those neighborhoods. These efforts are particularly important to one of the neighborhoods, which has experienced major difficulties in involving community residents in any strategy designed to improve conditions there. This neighborhood partnered with PSN, Georgia Tech, a YMCA, and a major church to host a public safety forum and job fair in the Spring 2005. In September 2005, this neighborhood hosted a prayer vigil attended by about 100 people on a corner usually dominated by drug dealers.

## SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

One of the PSN focus neighborhoods is a Weed and Seed site. This neighborhood is experiencing great positive changes, and its leadership is very supportive of both Weed and Seed and PSN. In August 2005, this neighborhood partnered with another Weed and Seed neighbor to celebrate an extremely successful National Night Out. Also, under the supervision of Weed and Seed, students work with PSN to develop and execute violence reduction strategies in schools located within the PSN focus area.

### **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA**

As Project Ceasefire enters its seventh year in the Southern District of Georgia, they build on their successes from the past. Since February 2000, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Southern District of Georgia has been accepting cases from the Savannah area for prosecution and has worked closely with Crimestoppers of Savannah as their media partner. As the initiative has grown, they have expanded the scope of their prosecutions and their media and community outreach efforts district-wide. They have also added Armstrong Atlantic State University as their training partner, and they have been able to provide valuable training to law enforcement officers from across the State of Georgia. In the last year, under the leadership of United States Attorney (USA) Lisa Godbey Wood, they have worked to focus on specific problems in two of their urban areas, while maintaining the district-wide prosecution and outreach programs. First, in an effort to work more closely with their research partner, Augusta State University, they have undertaken a focused research project aimed at learning specific characteristics of the crime problem in Brunswick/Glynn County, Georgia, while expanding media and community outreach efforts there. Second,

in response to an increase in violent crime in Savannah, Georgia, they have expanded their prosecution guidelines for Savannah to consider any felon in possession of a firearm for prosecution, no matter the nature or the age of the prior conviction. In addition to their prosecutorial efforts, they have awarded PSN funds to the Chatham-Savannah Metropolitan Police Department for use in an innovative project to install surveillance cameras in public spaces of the city.

Brunswick, Georgia is experiencing some of the same issues facing many other small cities in the United States. With a large influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants, the local government and volunteer agencies have struggled to assist a population that is often reluctant to ask for help. Many crime victims, and some perpetrators, come from this group. Additionally, Brunswick continues to face common urban issues such as drug-related violence. The Project Safe Neighborhoods Working Group asked their research partner, Augusta State University, to conduct a focused research project to learn what they could about the characteristics of firearms-related crimes in the area. Members of the USAO and the research partner met with a group of leaders in the Brunswick/Glynn County law enforcement community to identify areas of interest. Since Brunswick is currently participating in the application process to become a Weed and Seed site, their research partner has been able to utilize some of the same focus groups. The research partner is finishing this project in spring, 2006. The results will be passed along to the law enforcement leadership in the Brunswick/Glynn County area.

The PSN Working Group has provided three separate sessions of community training through the COPS program, and in March

2006, they will be providing training to police officers and District Attorneys' (DAs') investigators in an intensive Spanish language course. Finally, Crimestoppers, their media partner, has used outdoor advertising and print media in both English and Spanish to publicize the message, "Hard Time for a Long Time: Felons with Guns Do Time" (or, "Pagas Tiempo por Mucho Tiempo: los Criminales que Poseen Armas de Fuego Pagan Tiempo en la Carcel"). They are hopeful that this combined effort of all the aspects of their program will help Brunswick meet its special set of challenges.

In the last few months of 2005, Savannah, Georgia, experienced a rise in violent crime. Prosecutions in Savannah have been steady since the year 2000, but in early 2006, the USA decided that their office should offer even more help in the form of more expansive case review guidelines. In the past, and in other areas of the district, felons in possession of firearms were considered for prosecution if their felony convictions include at least one especially serious offense (a crime of violence or drug trafficking offense) that is less than 10 years old. Exceptions to this rule may be made in the case of defendants who merit special attention due to particularly bad behavior. In the Savannah area, cases are now considered if the previously convicted felony is of any type and age. As a result, more cases are being presented to the Project Ceasefire case review committee, and more are being accepted for federal prosecution.

The second enhancement to the Savannah portion of Project Ceasefire comes in the form of financial assistance to the local police. Historically, their PSN Working Group began its mission with one of its goals being to provide additional equipment to local police departments across their

district to assist with investigating firearms offenses. In January 2006, the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department (SCMPD) requested, and the Working Group approved PSN grant funds for the purpose of funding a police project to install surveillance cameras in public areas of downtown Savannah. The police successfully employed the cameras during the G8 Summit in June 2004, and those cameras are still installed. Police plan to use PSN funds to purchase additional cameras. They then will use other grant funds to keep all the cameras staffed at all times, with an immediate link to police dispatchers. The system should provide a strong deterrent to crime, and a source of evidence against those who commit crimes despite the deterrent. The USAO is excited about the opportunity to assist the SCMPD with this effort.

Their statistics reflect that prosecutions continue to be a major means of fighting violent crime in South Georgia. They have now considered over six hundred cases for prosecution under Project Ceasefire and indicted over 400 of those cases. It should be noted that over 300 of the indicted defendants have pleaded guilty, and 16 defendants have been convicted in jury trials. The average sentence imposed is 87 months. Approximately 30 cases have been dismissed in favor of state prosecution and only five cases have resulted in an acquittal. As of March 3, 2006, approximately 66 cases were pending in U.S. District Court.

### **GUAM AND NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) are served by one U.S. Attorney (USA). Both Guam and the NMI have enacted and enforced relatively strict local firearms laws. Before Project Safe

## DISTRICT OF HAWAII

Neighborhoods (PSN), local officers were not familiar with federal firearms offenses and were reporting potential federal cases to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Districts of Guam and the NMI too late in the investigation. After PSN, the islands' prosecutors saw an opportunity for a formal program to stitch together law enforcement programs and to collect and share intelligence.

Their PSN logo is "Kolebla" which in Chamorro (the native language for Guam and the NMI) means the brown tree snake—a species that unfortunately has overpopulated Guam and killed most of its birds. The NMI and Hawaii are taking great measures to ensure that the brown tree snake is not introduced on their islands. Just as they are trying to eradicate Guam of the Kolebla, so are they trying to eradicate gun crime in Guam and in the NMI.

Due to the relatively small number of firearms violations in the district, they have not seen a significantly higher volume of gun cases, but the quality of the cases has improved since the implementation of their task force activities. In a recent case, an offender was sentenced in the U.S. District Court to 19½ years imprisonment and ordered to pay restitution to the victims, perform 200 hours of community service upon termination of his sentence and serve a period of five years supervised release. In another case, a federal jury convicted a defendant of a Hobbs Act Robbery Conspiracy, Hobbs Act Robbery, Using and Carrying a Firearm During a Crime of Violence, and being a Felon in Possession of a Firearm for his participation in the armed robbery of a gas station. At the time he committed the robbery, the defendant had over four prior felony convictions and was

serving a period of supervised release on a previous federal firearms conviction.

Guam and the NMI have used their media partners to broadcast to the islands that committing a crime with a gun will guarantee time in prison. The USA is often heard on local radio stations promoting PSN. The USA and media partners can be seen at local malls and village community centers distributing free gun locks and getting the PSN message out to the people. The USAO, together with the ATF and its PSN's media partners have visited every island within their jurisdiction, to include Guam, Saipan, Rota and Tinian. The ATF and the USAO have partnered to train local and federal law enforcement officers.

The USAOs in Guam and the NMI will continue to target career criminals to ensure that the citizens of Guam are safe and secure on the street, in their homes, and in their businesses. Violent crimes will not be tolerated and the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

## DISTRICT OF HAWAII

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) partnerships developed in the District of Hawaii have led to positive results. The primary enforcement focus is firearms violations by felons and career offenders, drug dealers and users, and domestic violence offenders. Various federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors play an important role in the district's enforcement efforts. The major elements of the enforcement strategy, such as the case screening process, an emphasis on robberies, and working with the U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force, have led to increased firearms prosecutions. The district is also involved in community outreach

strategies, including advertising on radio, television and the internet, and working with schools in the district to promote gun violence awareness to juveniles. They have also seen significant decreases in violent crime in Hawaii, including an 8.5 % decrease in the state index crime rate during 2004. It is also significant to note that the robbery rate in Honolulu was at a record low in 2004.

Through PSN, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Hawaii has developed partnerships with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Marshals Service, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Department of the Attorney General (AG), the Department of Public Safety, County Police Departments in four counties, and County Prosecutors' Offices in four counties. Much of the district's success is due to the hard work and close relationship the district has with the Honolulu, Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii, police departments and prosecutors' offices.

As part of that partnership, the agencies screen gun cases for possible federal prosecution, and the appropriate cases are routed to the USAO. The U.S. Attorney (USA) accepts all prosecutable firearms violations where the defendant will likely receive a more appropriate sentence in the federal system, or where there are unique circumstances that make federal prosecution more desirable. Their case-screening process has borne extraordinary results. From FY 2000 to FY 2004, federal firearms prosecutions increased by over 740%. Those statistics represent some of the most significant gun crime offenders in Hawaii.

The district has cross-designated seven Honolulu Police Department Detectives as

part of the Hawaii Violent Incident Crime Task Force to handle robbery and gun crime cases originating in Honolulu. This includes numerous Hobbs Act robbery cases. The U.S. Marshals Service Fugitive Task Force has done an excellent job tracking down individuals who have been indicted under our PSN program. These two groups have greatly enhanced PSN efforts in Honolulu and across the state.

Additionally, through PSN, the District of Hawaii is engaging in community outreach and attempting to raise awareness of PSN issues. The district focuses on youth and juveniles through school programs, posters, handouts and special events. The district also reaches out to the community at large by airing public service advertisements on both radio and television—driving home the message that “Gun Crime Means Hard Time.” The PSN media partner in Hawaii has also launched a PSN website to provide information about the program and assist the public in finding the necessary help to address gun crime issues. For more information on PSN in Hawaii, please visit [www.PSNHawaii.org](http://www.PSNHawaii.org).

### **DISTRICT OF IDAHO**

The District of Idaho continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) by tackling gun violence through aggressive criminal enforcement, coupled with community outreach strategies. In 2005, the district focused on firearms and gangs in Ada and Canyon Counties – Southwest Idaho's two most populous areas – commonly referred to as the Treasure Valley. The Treasure Valley has been hit hard by increasing gang violence. The district created two task forces, consisting of various state, local, and federal law enforcement officials and prosecutors. These task forces – the Gang

## DISTRICT OF IDAHO

Working Group and the Metro Task Force – focus on identifying gang members, violent offenders, and violent organizations, all of whom make up a major component of gun crimes in the state. One of the most appealing aspects of federal prosecution of gang members is their incarceration in prisons outside the State of Idaho, where they cannot continue their involvement in Treasure Valley gangs. These enforcement efforts have led to increased prosecutions, longer sentences for offenders, and have garnered numerous accolades from various constituents and government officials. The following descriptions of PSN enforcement activities demonstrate the success of PSN in Idaho and the importance of its state and local grant assistance.

In early 2005, the district began Phase One of its PSN/Anti-Gang program by creating the Gang Working Group to address violent crime and gang violence in the Treasure Valley. Out of this group, the multi-jurisdictional Metro Task Force was created. The mission of the Metro Task Force is to identify, investigate, and prosecute violent offenders, gang members, and violent organizations throughout the Treasure Valley. It is comprised of agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), county and city police officers, officers with the Idaho Department of Corrections, and federal and local prosecutors. The team began operations in October 2005, and has had impressive results thus far. As of February 23, 2006, the team has made 94 arrests, including gang members who are suspects in a recent homicide in Boise. The Metro Task Force has already received praise from the Mayors of Caldwell and Nampa, the chiefs of police, and sheriffs. Recently, Idaho State Governor Dirk Kempthorne convened a meeting at the state capitol in Boise to

address the increase in gang violence. The meeting began with the Nampa City Police Chief praising the work of the Metro Task Force. This praise was uniformly echoed by all, including mayors and other law enforcement officers. Many of the participants praised the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Idaho for its work in increasing its federal firearms prosecutions and targeting violent offenders. The Governor was so impressed by the call for more federal prosecutions that he asked the district's Criminal Chief, who was present at the meeting, how many Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys (SAUSAs) would be needed to federally prosecute additional cases. This has led to collaboration by local and state officials to support increased federal prosecutions of gang members by funding a SAUSA to help prosecute these cases.

In June and July of 2005, a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) came to the Treasure Valley to work jointly with ATF agents and local police officers to stem drugs and violent crime. This operation was highly successful, resulting in numerous arrests of violent offenders and gang members. These successful partnerships formed the "springboard" for the creation of the Metro Task Force.

Project Sentry AUSA Aaron Lucoff continues to prosecute youth gang members in possession of firearms, and played a vital role in the creation of the Gang Working Group and Metro Task Force. Gun crimes prosecutions have tripled since FY 2001 under the PSN banner and repeat offenders are regularly receiving sentences in excess of 60 months.

In 2006, the district will begin Phase Two of its PSN/Anti-Gang program – working to

unify prevention and outreach efforts. There is discussion of forming an umbrella organization to provide “one-stop shopping” for parents, teachers, and youth who wish to avoid gang lifestyles.

### **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

The U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Central District of Illinois relies on longstanding partnerships with local law enforcement to meet the Central District of Illinois’ diverse crime-fighting challenges. Connected to major Midwestern cities by crisscrossing interstate highways, the district’s principal metropolitan areas provide outposts for gang violence, drug trafficking, and the attendant gun violence historically associated with inner-city neighborhoods. With cooperation, coordination, and education as guiding principles for implementation of the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) strategy, law enforcement focused its efforts on developing strategies to make the most of limited resources.

Working groups of local, state and federal law enforcement officers, known as DRAGUN (DRugs And GUNs) Teams, were established in the district’s principal cities to proactively identify individuals presenting the most serious, imminent threats of violence and to investigate and develop prosecutable cases for their current or uncharged past criminal activity. For example: The leader of a drug trafficking street gang with ties to Chicago gangs was recently sentenced to 16 years in federal prison. Two of his associates are awaiting trial and a third pled guilty. As a result of the investigation, to date, 34 kilos of cocaine have been seized along with firearms and more than \$200,000.

In another federal prosecution, a defendant

was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences for a car-jacking murder. The pistol used in the murder was traced from a legitimate firearms dealer and purchaser through the hands of five previously convicted felons before it was used by the sixth felon in the murder. Of the five felons who illegally possessed the firearm, four have been convicted in federal court, and the federal supervised release of the fifth felon was revoked.

In response to requests for assistance from local law enforcement agencies, the PSN task force allocated grant funds to provide overtime for local officers assigned to the U.S. Marshals Great Lakes Regional Fugitive Task Force to apprehend violent fugitives. Many local jurisdictions lack the necessary funding, manpower and expertise to support intensive efforts to apprehend defendants who pose immediate threats to the public. For example: A local police department requested the task force’s help in locating a fugitive wanted for two murders, including the murder of a rival gang member just five months after the defendant was released from state prison after serving eight years of a 12-year sentence for shooting and paralyzing a juvenile in 1997. The defendant was apprehended in Tennessee.

The task force assisted another local department in apprehending three men wanted for a January 2004 home invasion for drugs and money during which one man was murdered and two other adults were shot and wounded. The murder victim’s two young children, ages 7 and 9, were in the home at the time.

High crime areas in the district’s principal metropolitan areas have been targeted by PSN billboards and public service announcements. PSN grant funds provided for intensive supervision for youth based on aggression replacement training. Grant

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

funds have also been used or allocated for a program using wands for random weapons searches in high schools; for an intervention program targeting youth at high-risk for violent activity; and to develop anti-gun violence programs in schools throughout the district.

### **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

Under Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), the Northern District of Illinois has established a task force of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors. The task force attacks gun violence by concentrating on gangs, chronic offenders, gun trafficking, and on all firearms offenses in focused “hot spot” areas. The Cook County State’s Attorney’s (SA’s) Office reviews gun cases and refers cases to the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Northern District of Illinois for federal prosecution when defendants have a history of violence, gang involvement, drug dealing, or gun use.

PSN is working to improve coordination of resources and information-sharing by law enforcement agencies investigating violent offenders. Officers from multi-jurisdictional investigative teams, known as DRAGUN (DRugs And GUNs) Teams, have been assigned to target the most serious violent criminals in their respective communities.

PSN led to the federal convictions of Gangster Disciples and Vice Lords gang members and a Mississippi firearms dealer, who purchased 83 firearms in Mississippi and brought them to Chicago where they sold the weapons to fellow gang members. Another case involved a federal referral, which resulted in a fifteen year sentence for an armed career criminal for possessing a shotgun and selling a rifle despite the fact that he had four prior burglary convictions.

That offender was one of many sentenced to fifteen or more years in prison for federal firearms violations in the Northern District of Illinois.

The district’s efforts led to the successful federal prosecution of another man, who had previously been convicted of: (1) possessing with intent to distribute crack cocaine, a mixture of heroin and cocaine, and marijuana; (2) possessing firearms in furtherance of or during or in relation to drug trafficking crimes; (3) being a felon in possession of firearms; and (4) manufacturing counterfeit currency.

On January 11, 2004, the man was arrested by Chicago Police Officers of the 5th District Special Operations Squad, after they observed him carrying a concealed weapon in the first floor hallway of a building on the south side of Chicago. When the officers approached, the man turned and fled. The officers arrested him inside an apartment and recovered the following three loaded firearms: (1) Ruger P899, nine millimeter, semi-automatic pistol; (2) Stallard Arms, nine millimeter, semi-automatic pistol; and (3) Lorcin .25 caliber, semi-automatic pistol. The officers also recovered crack cocaine, a mixture of heroin and cocaine, marijuana, and thousands of dollars of counterfeit U.S. currency. The man was convicted in federal court and sentenced to 360 months imprisonment.

The Northern District of Illinois has a very serious problem with gang-related crime. Gangs in Chicago are organized—they are sophisticated, hierarchical, decades-old organizations whose principal activities include execution-style murders and the distribution of drugs on a massive scale. Gangs also control the retail drug trade in Chicago and have a direct link to Mexican cartels. Chicago’s high homicide rate—21



per 100,000 in 2003—is due in large part to gangs: of the 600 murders in Chicago last year, 60% were caused by gangs, according to conservative estimates. Homicides decreased to 448 in 2004 (a rate of 15 per 100,000), and to 447 in 2005.

The district implemented media and community outreach campaigns to educate the public about gun violence and federal firearms laws. In the most violent neighborhoods, the district held frequent meetings that parolees were required to attend. In these meetings, senior law enforcement officials first warned parolees against returning to criminal behavior. The parolees were subsequently addressed by a rehabilitated ex-offender and by social service representatives and offered drug counseling, job training and other support.

### **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Southern District of Illinois has implemented Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) DRAGUN Teams (DRUGS And GUNS) that combine the efficiency of local task forces with the resources of federal agencies to identify the worst offenders and target them for prosecution. The USAO considered geography and existing law enforcement task forces when it divided its 38 counties into 11 regions and assigned DRAGUN Teams to coordinate investigations and prosecutions. The goal of the DRAGUN Team is three-fold: to identify the worst offenders in its region in a "Top Ten List" and develop investigative strategies to apprehend these individuals, to ensure that prosecution occurs in the jurisdiction that will deliver the highest sentence, and to target regional drug trafficking through methamphetamine

(Meth) laboratory clean-ups and focused prosecutions.

The USAO wanted to develop a PSN initiative that would impact every region in its district, rather than limit its efforts to only the higher population counties and subsequently neglect the methamphetamine problems and gun crime experienced in the rural areas. DRAGUN Teams address every region, pooling together local, state, and federal agencies in all 38 counties to form 11 DRAGUN Teams that are assigned to specific areas of the district. Each team is comprised of an Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA); a State Attorney; (SA) agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); sheriffs; local police officers; Illinois state police officers; and other law enforcement officers.

DRAGUN Teams hold regular meetings to share intelligence, discuss cases under investigation, identify the worst offenders on a Top Ten List, target those offenders for arrest and prosecution, and strategize to determine whether state or federal court will secure the greatest sentence for the offender. In addition, DRAGUN teams coordinate investigations and discuss evidentiary concerns and other considerations that may arise.

The PSN DRAGUN team program was launched in September 2002 with its "Partnering against Criminals with Firearms" convention. Overviews on federal and state firearms and drug violations were presented along with promotions of the PSN DRAGUN Team program. Regular meetings of the DRAGUN Teams followed, with team participants developing the team's Top Ten List and moving forward on cases. The

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA

DRAGUN Team program has created an infrastructure for local officers to present cases to the federal and state system.

The USAO has also solidified relationships with DRAGUN Team members by establishing a reporting system that tracks every firearms case and prosecution. The PSN DRAGUN Team program, through the active participation of the parties, had a 66 percent increase in federal firearms cases filed in FY 2005 compared to FY 2004. One successful team prosecution involved a series of 11 indictments that resulted in 11 separate convictions and a total seizure of 52 machine guns, approximately 150 destructive devices, two silencers, and 2,564 rounds of ammunition. In another case, a defendant received a 360 month sentence for drug trafficking offenses which were enhanced because he used a firearm and enlisted the aid of a juvenile while distributing cocaine and marijuana.

In an effort to maximize the PSN and DRAGUN Team effort, the USAO has conducted a dozen training programs, for over 500 officers in the past year, aimed at improving the relationship between local, state, county and federal law enforcement and improving the quality of cases. The training classes have focused on gun recovery, methamphetamine labs and workshops, community policing, Drug Officer Certification programs, and development of gun and drug cases.

As part of the district's prevention and outreach efforts, the Southern District of Illinois has launched a campaign using highway billboard signs, smaller billboards at light rail and bus stations, posters in jail facilities, and placards on the sides of buses to publicize the penalties for gun crimes.

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Program in the Northern District of Indiana is a multi-faceted initiative that attacks the problem of gun crime and related violence in communities throughout its area of responsibility. During the past year, the district has also emphasized combating criminal gang activity that accompanies firearms-related crime. The district's comprehensive effort is focused on four regions, which have coordinated community outreach events, youth violence reduction programs, conference and training events, meeting and technical assistance, technology efforts, and developed local, state and federal partnerships.

Media and Community Outreach Campaigns have been launched in Northwest Indiana (Gary, Hammond, East Chicago), the South Bend/St. Joseph County area, the Fort Wayne /Allen County area, and the Lafayette/Tippecanoe County area. The efforts included billboards, transit bus signs, news releases, community meetings, and similar activities. It is estimated that over a million citizens have been exposed to the message of PSN throughout the district. One avenue for spreading the message has been the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence, which the district PSN initiative has co-sponsored with several jurisdictions during the past two years. Over 20,000 students have actively participated in the effort. The district's PSN website, which is only 18 months old, also receives over 100 hits for information daily and has received over 100,000 since it started.

Law Enforcement/Public Safety Training has been a special focus of the district's PSN Program, and it is estimated that 4,500 criminal justice and education personnel

have received and participated in district PSN efforts. Those efforts have included an annual “Keeping Our Communities Safe” conference for the past three years, which has a PSN focus and provides training in firearms enforcement, gang investigation, youth firearms violence reduction strategies, and evidence technician training. The training already has resulted in increased firearms-related cases, and it has been critical in the solution of several homicides committed with firearms.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Northern District of Indiana has always been very aggressive in prosecuting firearm crime violations. In FY 2005, the district had a record year, with 171 cases being filed against 207 defendants. Also during FY 2005, 153 defendants were found guilty of firearms offenses, and 136 were sent to prison. Of particular interest is the PSN “Project Disarm” Task Force in South Bend/St. Joseph /Elkhart County, which was responsible for the federal indictments of 127 individuals for various firearms violations during its first 18 months of operation. One hundred and 23 of the subjects have been arrested, and 102 have been convicted. The remaining 21 are awaiting trial or hearings to enter guilty pleas. PSN/Project Disarm defendants have also provided critical information that led to the closure of several homicide cases. In 2005, the City of South Bend, Indiana City Council passed a Special Resolution commending all the agencies and the USAO for their valuable efforts in combating firearms violence, and the council pledged its continued support of this important effort.

### **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA**

The Southern District of Indiana is maintaining and improving its Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) efforts by evaluating on-going efforts and creatively fostering new initiatives, while maintaining successful efforts already in place, including offender notification meetings, VIPER lists, Project Sentry, increased federal prosecution of gun crime, training programs for law enforcement officers, and a hands-on community outreach programs.

The district has developed a new strategic response to gun crime called Project Super Achilles. This combined federal, state and local law enforcement initiative is designed to affirmatively act upon the information developed through homicide and aggravated assault reviews. Primarily staffed by officers of the Indianapolis Police Department and agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), investigations are designed to focus upon individuals and groups identified as most likely to be involved in violent crime. Super Achilles began in September of 2004, and in its first month executed search warrants resulting in numerous arrests and the seizure of approximately 36 illegal firearms, ammunition, a bullet proof vest, narcotics, and surveillance equipment. The unit is flexible, working with state and federal prosecutors to assure the best prosecution while adapting its efforts to the nefarious machinations of violent criminals.

Targeted warrant sweeps are conducted with three strategies: (1) Communication to the community and the offender population that violence will not be tolerated and law enforcement agencies are working together to assure that result; 2) Arrest of violent offenders; and 3) Intelligence gathering, with homicide detectives, ATF, and other

## NOTHERN AND SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF IOWA

special units such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Safe Street Task Force, interviewing arrestees prior to transport to lock up.

Researchers from Indiana University, Marion County Justice Agency, and ATF have collaborated on the design and implementation of data collection strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of the district's PSN efforts and to provide data to criminal justice personnel to enhance their response to gun crimes. In addition to participating in incident reviews and crime mapping, this district has been identified nationally for its research efforts pertaining to the evaluation of its "lever-pulling meetings." The district is working on its evaluation employing two strategies: 1) a true experimental design funded by National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and 2) a comprehensive study of probationer recidivism.

Beginning in April 2005, the district ran a 24-week billboard and bus sign campaign tied to Crime Stoppers' TIPS program, specifically referencing gun crime. The campaign positioned English and Spanish billboards in areas with the highest gun crime rates, and they changed locations every four weeks. Estimates are that more than 10,000 impressions were made per day for each billboard. Interior and exterior bus signs on Indianapolis city buses were similarly employed. These efforts have increased the calls reporting gun crimes and assisted in solving the homicide of a young boy murdered as a result of throwing eggs at passing motorists. The campaign is scheduled to include gang crime as well as gun crime in the near future.

Community outreach efforts in the district are multi-faceted and include the development of Educating Kids about Gun Violence (EKG) through the Marion County

Prosecutor's Office and Indiana Department of Education, the utilization of Community Works by a sub-grantee, Christamore House, and juvenile lever-pulling meetings that blend faith-based and law enforcement messages for at risk youth.

### **NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF IOWA**

Several Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) efforts in the Northern and Southern Districts of Iowa are coordinated for uniform application across the state. Two of those programs, one related to prevention and the other to enforcement, warrant particular note.

In the prevention area, the districts developed an informational video featuring John Walsh of "America's Most Wanted" and clips of inmates describing incarceration's impact on them and their families. The six and one-half minute video sets out the categories of prohibited persons and stresses the message of "no friends, no family, no freedom" for gun offenders. This video is shown statewide to all Iowa offenders coming under probation or parole supervision (some 24,000 people in any one year), to all people attending court-ordered batterer's education programs, and to Iowa inmates.

In the enforcement area, both districts participate in the SIFT Program (Search of Information for Firearms Tie-ins). The Iowa Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), the Iowa Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning and Statistical Analysis Center (CJJP), and the Iowa Judicial Branch collaborated to create the SIFT case screening program to review all reported state arrests for possible prosecution under PSN.

Each day, DCI processes the fingerprints of persons arrested by state and local law enforcement agencies for serious crimes. A computer program developed by DPS scans all reported arrests in the state, identifying those involving weapons and other crimes in which a firearm is often involved. CJJP then reviews the individuals' Iowa criminal histories as well as any criminal histories maintained by the FBI or available through the Interstate Identification Index. CJJP also reviews the Iowa Court Information System for any criminal court data relevant to each individual. If an individual appears to fit the criteria established for possible prosecution under PSN, CJJP prepares a criminal history summary, including the recent arrest charges. The summary is then referred to the appropriate district for PSN evaluation.

While the communication and cooperation with state and local law enforcement agencies appears excellent and most PSN cases are communicated to the districts directly by law enforcement, under certain circumstances individuals with prior felony convictions or other qualifying charges can go undetected, thus avoiding the possibility of PSN prosecution. The SIFT Program is designed to detect such cases.

In 2005, CJJP screened an average of about 6,200 arrests per month with a total of 318 referrals being made for the year. To date in 2006, there has been an increase of 8.7% in the number of cases screened and an increase of 9.6% in the number of cases referred. As part of the Department of Justice's Gang Initiative, SIFT referrals also note known gang connections or affiliations of those whose names are referred for prosecution consideration.

### **DISTRICT OF KANSAS**

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) has been a great success in the District of Kansas. From FY 2000 to FY 2004, federal firearms prosecutions increased in the state by over 84%. Each day the worst of the worst is being apprehended, prosecuted, and sentenced to lengthy federal prison sentences.

The linchpin of the program has been the statewide training provided to law enforcement agencies within the district. During the last three years over 1,500 law enforcement officers have been given training on federal firearms laws and the district's PSN effort. Each hour-and-a-half training session provides the officers with a general background on both the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Kansas and the PSN program, as well as explaining the most commonly used federal firearms laws and federal sentencing structure.

The District of Kansas has three PSN task forces serving each of the district's three major metropolitan areas. The largest and newest task force sits in Wichita and serves the 68 county area that comprises most of Western and Southern Kansas. The Wichita task force consists of five Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Agents, a Wichita Police Officer, a Sedgwick County Deputy, and six part time Agents from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation. The Topeka task force is made up of three ATF Agents, a Topeka Police Officer, and a Shawnee County Deputy. The Kansas City task force is made up of two ATF Agents and three Kansas City, Kansas, police officers. Each task force has been supported by PSN and ATF funds and has benefited from strong cooperation between federal, state, and local agencies.

## EASTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY

U.S. Attorney (USA) Eric Melgren had this to say about the Kansas PSN effort: “There have been federal laws on the books for years that prohibit felons from possessing firearms and give judges the authority to come down hard on criminals who carry guns when they commit crimes. In the past, violations of these laws were not always aggressively prosecuted. The mission of our PSN effort is to investigate and prosecute violations of federal gun laws, by exposing the worst gun offenders to long federal sentences, and to make our neighborhoods safer.”

The PSN program, through Project ChildSafe, has provided gun safety kits in Kansas. These safety kits include a free gun lock and safety education materials, and are available at local law enforcement agencies in all 105 Kansas counties.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY**

The Eastern District of Kentucky continues its dedication to the reduction of gun violence by: (1) expanding the “Project Cease-Fire” prosecution initiative to its northern and southern State partners; (2) focusing on gang prosecutions and other anti-gang activities; (3) incorporating state probation and parole resources; (4) increasing training for law enforcement about firearms laws and gang issues; and (5) expanding Project Sentry and community outreach efforts.

Over 200 cases were screened through Project Cease-Fire in the district in 2005. One noteworthy case, indicative of the expanded prosecution initiative, involved a man who was charged with federal firearms offenses after Kentucky State Police officers responded to a domestic disturbance at his

home in January 2004. The individual was referred through Project Cease-Fire to the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Eastern District of Kentucky, after police found him in possession of marijuana, drug paraphernalia, and a .380 caliber pistol—despite the fact that he is a felon with convictions in several states. That offender received 17 years in federal prison.

The Eastern District of Kentucky USAO and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) are working to fully incorporate U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) into the district’s gun violence reduction and anti-gang violence efforts.

In conjunction with the district’s Victim-Witness staff, Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) partners distributed PSN materials to thousands of people at the Kentucky State Fair. Materials focused on domestic violence issues and informational posters highlighting methamphetamine and related violent crime were given away. A PT Cruiser was wrapped with the gun violence reduction message for statewide juvenile education events.

Through PSN, hundreds of officers and prosecutors received training in 2005 sponsored by ATF and Project Cease-Fire. One training session focused on federal firearms laws and how to identify armed criminals. ATF also conducted training at police stations district-wide. Finally, in November 2005, gang training was held for local, state, and federal law enforcement officials and prosecutors.

In May 2005, Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs), local law enforcement partners, and ATF together made presentations to

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY

students at 12 high schools about the Second Amendment, federal and state firearms laws, and gun safety. The University of Kentucky, an initiative partner, sponsored Safe Schools Week through the Kentucky Center for School Safety. Outreach efforts included statewide pledges against gun violence and the development of web sites and informational materials discussing gun safety and school safety. Newspaper inserts included letters from the governor and the United States Attorney about gun safety. As part of safe schools week, a contest was hosted for students to create bookmarks highlighting the gun violence reduction message. In October 2005, the district hosted a PSN Halloween party for children in a high risk neighborhood, giving law enforcement officers and kids an opportunity for positive interaction. The northern and southern offices, in partnership with local law enforcement agencies, participated in “Shop with a Cop” programs in December 2005. PSN materials were distributed to the adults at both of these community outreach events.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY**

Since its inception, the goal of the Western District of Kentucky’s “Project Backfire” has been to deliver the unmistakable message to firearm offenders: “A gun crime gets you jail time—Believe it.” Project Backfire continues to encourage extensive coordination between federal, state, and local law enforcement officials and prosecutors. The district has experienced an increase in the number of defendants charged with firearms offenses and success in several significant cases against armed criminals.

In 2004, an experienced former state prosecutor was appointed as the district’s Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN)

coordinator. A few months later, a second experienced former state prosecutor joined the office, and U.S. Attorney (USA) David Huber entrusted to those two Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) the responsibility for reviewing and streamlining Project Backfire.

During 2004 and 2005, the office shifted the focus of Project Backfire from “shadowing” gun cases in state court to assuring that federal law enforcement agents, particularly those from ATF, work closely with local law enforcement, to proactively target cases suitable for federal prosecution earlier in the criminal justice process. In order to accomplish that goal, the USA designated four AUSAs to handle firearms prosecutions under Project Backfire. The four AUSAs are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to field calls from ATF agents or local officers concerning firearms cases. The district also aggressively sought to educate local law enforcement officers and probation and parole officers about the PSN program and federal gun laws to help them deal more effectively with repeat violent offenders. AUSAs presented “roll call” training sessions with local officers to provide them with basic training on federal firearms laws and to distribute contact information for AUSAs and ATF agents. An AUSA also provided a two-hour block of instruction on federal court procedures and federal firearms laws to local police recruits as part of their academy training; and in September 2005 an AUSA presented a program on Project Backfire to the annual Kentucky State Police Commander’s Conference. The Commander’s Conference was attended by the Commander and Command Staff from each State Police Post, as well as the State Police Commissioner and the Command Staff from State Police headquarters in Frankfort, Kentucky. The presentation demonstrated the advantages of federal prosecution in many cases involving

## EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

firearms offenses. The district has also formalized partnerships with local law enforcement agencies and state prosecutors in the western portion of the state outside of Louisville in order to more aggressively pursue firearms offenses in those areas.

From 2004 to 2005, the office prosecuted 129 cases of illegal firearms possession or use, involving 187 defendants. A significant number of these prosecutions arose out of the Project Backfire initiative. The number of defendants prosecuted for firearms offenses in the previous two-year period, totaled 141 defendants. Thus, during the most recent two year period, the number of illegal firearm defendants has increased almost 25% from the previous two-year period.

Because of the partnerships created by Project Backfire, the district has experienced various prosecution success stories. One defendant was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment after being convicted at trial on March 23, 2005, of drug trafficking and firearms offenses. Officers entered an apartment to find approximately 30 grams of crack cocaine, drug packaging materials, more than \$2,000 in cash and three SKS assault rifle magazines. In a related search warrant at another location, police recovered 160 grams of crack cocaine, an SKS assault rifle, a shotgun, a .357 caliber handgun, and assorted ammunition. The defendant previously had been convicted of a felony drug trafficking offense. Another defendant was convicted by a jury in January 2005 and sentenced to 37 years in prison for possessing with the intent to distribute crack cocaine, possessing a handgun as a convicted felon, and using a firearm during the commission of a federal drug trafficking crime. Both federal prosecutions were a result of coordination between ATF, Louisville Metropolitan Police Department

Officers, and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Western District of Kentucky.

In March 2005, the USAO began participating in the RSVP program (Reducing Serious Violence Partnership), an offender notification program. The goal of the RSVP program is to warn selected groups of at-risk parolees and probationers of the consequences of continuing a pattern of criminal behavior and to present them with options that will help them to avoid returning to a criminal lifestyle and its likely consequences: a return to prison or becoming the victim of a violent crime. An AUSA informs the group of possible federal penalties for drug and firearm offenses. An Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney from Jefferson County also informs the group of the consequences of the Kentucky Persistent Felon law. The offenders are then introduced to representatives of social and faith-based agencies that offer assistance in housing, education, employment, and substance abuse counseling. RSVP offender notification meetings are conducted every other month.

## **EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA**

The Eastern District of Louisiana has been involved in many Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) projects. Since its inception, the Operation Scarecrow task force has produced 23 indictments against straw purchasers and the convicted felons who ultimately possessed the guns.

The Historical Cold Case Task Force had successfully created a new database to store all information relating to all unsolved homicides in the New Orleans area. This task force partnered with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the New Orleans Police



Department and was committed to solving these cold cases. The database includes suspects' names, last known whereabouts, witness information, etc., to create leads and link information about all homicides. Hurricane Katrina destroyed much of this information, and the Homicide Unit at NOPD is not committed to restoring as much of this information as possible.

The Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office created a task force to focus on two major hotspots in their area where gun crime has risen. Since its inception and before Hurricane Katrina, there were 343 arrests, 224 of which were felony arrests, and over 30 firearms seized. Since the storm, the task force has been focusing on different areas where their violent crime has risen.

The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Eastern District of Louisiana sponsored two report writing seminars that reached over 200 local law enforcement officers. The USAO sponsored additional training on federal gun prosecution criteria for police district commanders from the New Orleans Police Department and Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office. The USAO spearheaded a New Orleans Police Foundation, which funded the production and filming of a training video and included information to help officers understand how to properly investigate federal gun cases. The video was distributed to all police districts and played at roll calls.

The district's partnership with CrimeStoppers has enabled it to implement a Safe School Hotline in Orleans Parish public middle and high schools. The hotline helps to reduce and solve crime, and it educates callers about gun violence. As of January 2005, the program was presented to over 15,000 students and approximately 500 teachers, administrators, and school security

officers. In addition, the district and the ATF met with the Juvenile Division of the New Orleans District Attorney's Office to discuss Project Sentry juvenile case acceptance criteria and reach an informal acceptance agreement.

The district's public service announcements (PSAs) are aired late night and early morning to reach its targeted young audience. For example, the 'Don't Lie for the Other Guy' public service announcements aimed at straw purchasers run during the local morning and evening newscasts.

The Director of the New Orleans Sports Foundation sponsored over 300 middle and high school students to attend a college bowl game. Two seminars were held before the game—one about conflict resolution and the other about college eligibility requirements.

The district's partnership with "Cops for Kids," sponsored by the New Orleans Police Foundation, ran a summer program for eight weeks that reached 400 children from the New Orleans area housing developments.

Continuing the USAO's three year relationship with B.W. Cooper Housing Development, the Office has had two meetings with their Resident Management Council since Hurricane Katrina to assist them however possible to repopulate their development. All of their residents evacuated to other parts of the United States, and many wish to return. The office is working with the Resident Management Council to put them in touch with all city leaders and representatives and create a resource guide that will inform their residents about safety in returning, job opportunities, open schools, and open city government offices. The USAO will continue its community outreach

## MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

commitment to B.W. Cooper during this repopulation and after.

### **MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA**

The Middle District of Louisiana's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program is again up and running after suffering the effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which impacted the district in the late summer of 2005. For many years, the Middle District of Louisiana has had a strong commitment to ensure that criminals who illegally use or possess firearms are held accountable. Starting with Project Triggerlock, then Project Exile, through the current Project Safe Neighborhoods and Project Sentry, the Middle District of Louisiana has always been on the forefront of this important endeavor.

In fiscal year 2005, the Middle District saw a 51% increase in Title 18, Sections 922 and 924, prosecutions over fiscal year 2004. During the early part of 2005, the U.S. Attorney (USA) for the Middle District of Louisiana held a series of meetings with both large and small law enforcement agencies within the district to invigorate the PSN program. Part of the outreach was to solicit from state and federal law enforcement partners the identities of the "worst of the worst" criminals operating in their respective jurisdictions so that, in conjunction with its research partner, the Middle District of Louisiana could develop additional enforcement strategies to meet specific needs in specific geographic areas.

In the aftermath of the two hurricanes that disrupted ordinary business for the Middle District U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO), as well as many of its client agencies, the USAO has led the way in refocusing enforcement efforts on its gun, drug, and gang prosecution efforts. In response, the

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has designated Baton Rouge to be the recipient of a VCIT (Violent Crime Impact Team), which will operate with other federal agencies, as well as state and local law enforcement partners, to leverage resources and technology, and to continue to disrupt, arrest, and prosecute the worst of the worst offenders in specific areas identified within the metropolitan Baton Rouge area. In addition to the ATF's effort, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has reconstituted its Safe Streets Task Force, which is currently working with rural law enforcement agencies within the district in pursuit of gun, drug, and gang offenders.

One of the realities of the aftermath of the hurricanes is a significant population shift from the metropolitan New Orleans area (Eastern District of Louisiana) to the Baton Rouge metropolitan area. Estimates are anywhere from a 25%-50% increase in population, practically overnight. The USAO and its federal, state, and local partners are proud of their efforts to not only keep the Project Exile program up and running, but to invigorate it to handle the expected increase in investigations and referrals as the district adjusts its investigative strategies to deal with new challenges brought on by the large influx of new residents.

The Middle District has always had and continues to have strong outreach efforts in the community. The outreach efforts consist of Project Sentry which includes: (1) a multi-agency, high intensity supervision program for juvenile probationers with instant or pending firearm, violence, or drug-related offenses called Operation Eiger; (2) a targeted enforcement program called Operation Passage, which focuses on safety for children as they go to and from school in high crime neighborhoods and at

after-school events in hot spot areas known for gun violence and violent crime; (3) gun violence reduction clinics and crime prevention programs for youths in Operation Eiger; and (4) expansion of caseload management for highest risk youths. These elements are among the strategies in the district's comprehensive gun violence reduction framework that have garnered strong support across community sectors.

Outreach efforts also include participating with community and faith-based organizations that sponsor a variety of events. The USAO has partnered with the Baton Rouge Partnership for the Prevention of Juvenile Gun Violence, which emphasizes a multi-agency illegal gun suppression program aimed at reducing access to illegal guns by youths between the ages of twelve and twenty-one. Among the events hosted by PSN local partners are a Back to School Violence Prevention Workshop; a mentoring program for at-risk youths; parenting workshops and summer camps, which include education focused on drug and alcohol prevention; and a larger scale celebration held for inner-city youths and their parents, which included information kits containing brochures on personal, home, and neighborhood safety, anger management, conflict resolution, anti-drug strategies, and statistics on the public cost of violence. At this event, youth participants were encouraged to sign gun safety pledges and pledges rejecting various types of risky behavior.

One of the most successful parts of the PSN program has been the media campaign. Through the efforts of the Baton Rouge Criminal Justice Foundation, funds were made available to support the production and airing of various television commercials, radio spots, and newspaper ads. The advertising campaign also includes

the use of billboards, posters, bulletins, and other printed media messages receiving an estimated 140,000 exposures per day. Approximately 70% of the cost of production and placement was donated by media outlets and advertising firms. The campaign features messages crafted specifically for multi-level target audiences and includes more than 3,300 public service announcements broadcast on five television stations and eight radio stations reaching an estimated audience of 430,000 citizens. The Middle District's media outreach program is pleased to report that for every one dollar spent by the media outreach consultant on the campaign, local media donated \$3.15 in related services. The PSN public service message has been broadcast so extensively into the most troubled areas that many offenders, when arrested, ask the arresting agency or officer that they not be "exiled." In the Middle District of Louisiana, the message has gone forth clearly—if you possess an illegal gun, you will be prosecuted and you will go to jail.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA**

The Western District of Louisiana comprises 42 parishes and has a population of 2,062,898. Since 2002, U.S. Attorney (USA) Donald W. Washington has been developing the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative in regional task forces located in the major cities of the five judicial divisions of the district: Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria, Lake Charles, and Lafayette. The leadership and management of the PSN Task Force is handled by a group that includes the USA, four Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs, two of which are supervisors and a third is the PSN Coordinator), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agents, a fiduciary agent, and the Media/Outreach and Research/Crime Analyst Partners. This

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management-level group develops policy and strategy for implementation of the program in the district, and focuses on the strategic use of resources for law enforcement operations, data collection and analysis, methods to measure gun violence, public awareness and outreach, and the success of the initiative. The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Western District of Louisiana also has a PSN leadership team which meets approximately weekly.

The size of the district encourages project managers to adopt some practical measures, such as occasionally having telephone conferences and e-mailing partners in lieu of site visits. It is also important to develop and maintain key local PSN contacts. The regional task forces work best where prosecutors, especially AUSAs, develop good local contacts by regularly working with agents and other partners on critical components of the initiative, such as case screening, training local police, participating in community outreach, or prosecuting firearms cases.

In 2002, the task force selected the University of Louisiana at Monroe as the research partner to communicate evaluation findings on key data and to help the task force revise and improve its strategy and determine whether the PSN program is having its intended impact. Gun trace analysis and other data evaluations by the research partner have supported significant increases in law enforcement and prosecutorial activity in the Western District of Louisiana since the inception of the PSN program. In fact, federal firearms prosecutions increased by over 257% between fiscal years 2000 and 2005. Data were analyzed from the five urban areas of the regional task forces, but two areas—Lake Charles and Shreveport—stand out as

having had exceptional gun-crime enforcement activity. The number and rate of homicides in both urban areas remained below the ten year average for those offenses in each respective site. The ten year average for homicides in Shreveport was 52.18 per year (average rate of 17.7 per 100,000); there was an average of 37.5 (approximately 13.18 per 100,000) during the years 2001-2004. Thus, the number of homicides decreased, on average, by 28.13%, and the per capita homicide rate decreased by approximately 24.5%.

In 2002, the task force also selected the University of Louisiana at Lafayette to be its media/outreach Partner. The media strategies target three audiences, the general public, the criminal element, and the police, with television public service announcements (PSAs) with local-angled market tags from the Ad Council and locally produced PSAs in each of the five TV markets. The criminal element is reached by billboards with a message of "Gun Crimes = Jail Time", fact cards that give the basics of federal gun possession laws, and TV spots with a tough-on-gun crime message. The USAO has also distributed a newsletter to police personnel throughout the district, and has a website that includes newsletters, as well as facts about gun crime, historical press releases, and links to other sites. In May 2005, the media partner completed a post-campaign telephone survey conducted within the five major cities of the district. The surveys indicated a gain of 13 percentage points in the public's knowledge of PSN, and an eight percentage point gain in people understanding that it's a federal crime for a felon to possess a firearm.

In 2004 and 2005, 44 defendants in firearms cases prosecuted federally received sentences of more than ten years. The Lake Charles Police Department has a full-time

gun crime task force. The Monroe Police Department and the Monroe-Lammyville Downtown Weed and Seed Steering Committee have a successful gun violence reduction program that emphasizes strong peer mediation as an intervention and prevention strategy for at-risk youths, and features a youth education and a referral system for students to attend conflict resolution workshops. The Caddo Parish Juvenile Court and various volunteer organizations partnered to reduce juvenile gun violence with an after-school intervention program for juveniles. The Shreveport Housing Authority has “Operation Drop It Like It’s Hot”, a youth outreach/mentoring program that operates in the Authority’s seven inner city HUD-subsidized housing sites. The Lafayette Consolidated Government, in association with the Lafayette Parish School System and the 15th Judicial District Court, has an in-school gun violence education program that offers students an alternative to suspension or expulsion through conflict resolution workshops. The Ouachita Parish Sheriff’s Office has a PSN program called “Weapons Watch”, which runs “saturation patrols” in high crime areas, and has an outreach program that includes community meetings, public service announcements, and a 24-hour crime prevention hotline.

### **DISTRICT OF MAINE**

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Maine combines an aggressive enforcement strategy—particularly in the area of domestic violence—with an extensive community outreach campaign aimed at prevention through education about the consequences of gun crime. PSN Maine’s efforts are directed by a task force, which includes representatives from federal, state, and local law enforcement, domestic

violence organizations, sporting groups, schools, FFLs, and the private sector.

PSN Maine supports two violent crimes task forces, the Central Maine Violent Crime Task Force in Lewiston (formed in 1995) and the Eastern Maine Violent Crime Task Force in Bangor (formed in 1997). Since the creation of these task forces, the number of federal firearms prosecutions has increased by over 340 percent, including an increase in the number of juvenile prosecutions. The District of Maine continues to be among those districts leading the country in the number of prosecutions of federal firearms laws related to domestic violence, 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8) and (g)(9). With the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) at the helm and through a network of PSN contacts in all of Maine’s district attorneys’ offices and many state and local law enforcement agencies, the enforcement of gun violence and illegal gun possession laws is a coordinated, district-wide effort.

PSN Maine’s emphasis on domestic violence is also evidenced in a variety of outreach efforts. Working with the Maine Judicial Domestic Violence Advisory Committee, the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the District of Maine participated in changing the language on the state Protection Form Abuse Order (PFA) form to ensure that it satisfies the requirements of federal firearm statutes. Additionally, the USAO worked with its research partner to examine the relationship between guns and domestic violence and released a brief entitled “Domestic Violence & Firearms,” which revealed that the threatened use of a firearm far exceeds the number of violent crimes committed with a gun in Maine each year. PSN Maine also launched a media campaign consisting of

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radio and print ads aimed at domestic abusers.

With a grant from PSN Maine, the Maine Chiefs of Police developed a web-based PSN/firearm training module that provided a creative and affordable way to reach state and local law enforcement officers despite the geographical challenges inherent in a state as large as Maine. This training is mandatory, and it supplements PSN Maine's successful efforts to include a section on federal firearms and domestic violence laws in the mandatory 16-week law enforcement training program for all new full-time state and local law enforcement officers at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy.

PSN Maine's mission of prevention through education has been furthered through its offender intervention program which includes live presentations to Maine prisoners and the introduction of a mandatory release form outlining the consequences of illegal gun possession. The success of these efforts determined the need to produce an offender intervention video to be shown to all of Maine's inmates prior to release.

PSN Maine has also engaged in numerous youth and school-related outreach efforts. In November 2004, with the support of the President of the Maine Principals Association, PSN Maine sponsored a youth summit which brought together high school sophomores to learn about state and federal firearm laws, discuss issues related to school gun violence and serve as Project Sentry Contacts until graduation. PSN Maine also funded several proposals from organizations doing work related to the mission of Project Sentry. The focus of such programs includes youth television programming, bullying intervention programs, a Kids-At-Risk Conference that showcased multi-

disciplinary approaches to the problem of gun violence, and a "Play-in-a-Box" youth action kit focused on school gun violence issues.

## **DISTRICT OF MARYLAND**

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program in Maryland continues to show positive results through its enforcement, prevention, and outreach activities. Enforcement efforts focus on developing and implementing violent crime and anti-gang activity strategies throughout the district. Such initiatives include the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Violent Crime Impact Team (VCIT) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) units that provide operational support to the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore Project Exile, and the Public Housing Safety Initiative to help minimize violent crime through targeted enforcement. In addition, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland strategy addresses gang-related issues in Baltimore City by treating each case as a potential means for targeting an organization. Prevention and outreach activities include the Wicomico Exile initiative and print and media campaigns that have engaged community support and response. Other innovative initiatives such as Exile Tipline allow residents to anonymously report information about drug and gun offenses. The Firearms Interdiction Street Team (FIST) works together full-time, continuously screening ATF gun trace forms and related police reports and conducting further investigations to determine the appropriate jurisdiction for each case. The following detailed descriptions of PSN enforcement and outreach activities demonstrate the success of PSN in Maryland and the importance of its state and local grant assistance. In 2005,

the district's Southern Division, which serves Prince George's, Montgomery, Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's Counties, filed 36 indictments charging a total of 45 defendants with firearms offenses. Firearms indictments represented approximately 21% of the total number of indictments filed in the Southern Division for 2005, and approximately 13% of the defendants charged in the Southern Division in 2005 were charged with firearms offenses.

In 2005, the district's Northern Division, which includes Baltimore City and the state's other counties, filed 148 indictments charging a total of 171 defendants with firearms offenses. Approximately 70% of those indictments and more than 70% of those defendants represented Baltimore City cases. Firearms indictments represented approximately 40% of the total number of indictments filed in the Northern Division for 2005, and approximately 32% of the defendants charged in the Northern Division in 2005 were charged with firearms offenses.

As part of the Baltimore Exile program, the Violent Repeat Offenders (VRO) team works proactively to identify the community's most violent offenders and to devise strategies for getting them off the streets as quickly and effectively as possible. Under this initiative, the Baltimore Police Department provides the USAO and the State's Attorney's Office for Baltimore City with a list of some of the most violent individuals in the city—individuals who belong to violent gangs and organizations operating in Baltimore and individuals who have been charged with, or are suspects in, shootings and murders. Some of these individuals have pending state gun, drug, or violent crime cases. Many are in violation of the terms of their parole or probation. Others have no pending charges but have

lengthy and disturbing criminal histories. The Baltimore Police Department provides background materials regarding each VRO, including police reports, search warrants, and parole/probation information. Representatives of the USAO, the State's Attorney's (SA's) Office, the Baltimore Police Department, Maryland Parole/Probation, ATF, HIDTA, DEA, FBI, and ICE devise a strategy for getting each of the VROs off the streets for as long as possible. The team then meets regularly to monitor the progress of each investigation of an existing VRO target and to determine the most effective strategy for arresting and detaining newly identified VROs engaging in criminal activity. A similar program is now being implemented in Prince George's County.

As a result of the desire to coordinate all of the firearm enforcement activities under the umbrella of a coordinated firearms prosecution strategy, the district has integrated other programmatic activities of the office into its overall PSN strategy. For instance, in June 2005, the district was selected to receive DOJ/HUD Public Housing Safety Initiative (PHSI) funds. The strategy pursued under the initiative would be integrated into the overall PSN-related gun crime enforcement studies of the office. In addition, the district has received more active support from ATF and DEA and has provided investigative support to the PHSI strategy in Baltimore. Through the use of VCIT and MET units, the district has been able to provide significant operational support to the Baltimore Police Department. In addition to its involvement with the PHSI, ATF and DEA have worked with the Baltimore Exile initiative and partnered with the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office and the Baltimore Police Department to minimize violent crime through targeted enforcement.

## DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

Gang violence in Baltimore City revolves around the illegal drug trade, with gangs ranging in size and sophistication from highly organized drug gangs that establish importation routes and geographic areas of control, to the less organized, loosely aligned, and shifting alliances of local dealers. The USAO strategy addressing these gangs in Baltimore City is to treat each case as a potential means for targeting an organization. Thus, otherwise seemingly routine felon-in-possession cases can provide a means for law enforcement to begin to penetrate larger organizations. Treating each case as having the potential for such expansion is the centerpiece of federal anti-gang strategy in Baltimore.

The district currently is in the process of re-establishing a comprehensive media campaign to support its PSN-related activities in Baltimore and Prince George's County. Along with Wicomico Exile, these campaigns include billboards, bus placards, and subway signs that convey the message of "hard time for gun crime" to potential felons in possession. The Baltimore Exile initiative is working with local TV media partners to educate the public about the Baltimore PSN initiative.

The PSN initiative has a comprehensive outreach and education program for area high school students. The Wicomico Exile initiative has also engaged the community by hosting a series of community forums focused on garnering community support in the effort to implement the Exile initiative. Baltimore Exile will continue to utilize its Weed and Seed to promote the initiative and work with the Baltimore Police Department, to continue its effort to expand and promote the establishment of Neighborhood Watch Programs. An Exile Tipline has been established to make it easier for residents to

report information about drugs and guns anonymously. In addition, Baltimore Exile will continue to operate Call-Ins with at-risk offenders in order to communicate the prevention message about the consequences of committing offenses. The Prince George's Exile initiative will pursue similar outreach activities and will incorporate street worker outreach to Latino Youth who are involved in gang activity and violence.

## **DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Massachusetts continues to demonstrate its commitment to the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) strategy through aggressive enforcement efforts and creative approaches to community outreach and crime prevention. The development of close relationships with state prosecutors and law enforcement has successfully impacted the district's PSN target areas, which include chronic offenders, drugs, and gangs. The PSN Coordinator continues to work with state prosecution partners and task forces to strengthen investigative strategies through case referrals and a comprehensive statistics collection system. Training has been conducted with representatives of several PSN cities and focused on gang-involved youths. Project Sentry efforts have included a focus on at-risk youths through panel discussions at schools and participation in a prisoner reentry program run by the Department of Youth Services in Boston. Through the Ceasefire Program at the Phoenix School in Brockton, the district participated in a panel discussion with a small group of high school youths, the District Attorney (DA), an Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA), and the father of a murdered son. The following detailed descriptions of these PSN enforcement and outreach activities demonstrate the success



of PSN in Massachusetts and the importance of its state and local grant assistance:

- The Plymouth, Hampden, Middlesex, and Bristol District Attorneys' Offices are the key state prosecution partners actively engaged in PSN gun violence reduction efforts. The Bristol District Attorney's Office has been particularly active in referring state gun arrests for potential federal prosecution. The PSN Coordinator continues to work with state prosecution partners to collect state firearm indictment statistics. A more efficient and shared case management system has been developed for all DA's Offices as a means of collecting and providing reports, as well. Additionally, the close relationship between the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Massachusetts and local PSN prosecutors has resulted in successful local initiatives such as parole/probation ride-alongs, among others, and has successfully integrated the PSN initiative with Weed & Seed.
- The NIBIN program within the PSN target cities has been very successful. Collaboration with the PSN police departments has increased the collection of ballistics evidence, including shell casings left at the scene of shots fired. The Massachusetts State Police and the Boston Ballistics Unit have been supportive in their efforts to produce information in a timely fashion.
- Training focusing on gang-involved youth was conducted with representatives of several PSN cities.

Leaders of organizations who work with gang-related issues in Boston shared expertise with others involved in similar work in other cities.

- The most significant accomplishment has been improved collaboration between local, state, and federal law enforcement, particularly in the city of New Bedford. Presently, there are consistent monthly meetings to identify impact players, discuss investigative strategies, and share general information amongst the partners. For instance, a four-month investigation of one identified repeat offender identified by the PSN partners resulted in a joint search warrant and the target's arrest on firearms related charges. In the city of Brockton, the joint task force identified seven impact players. The investigations resulted in a number of arrests, federal firearms trafficking charges, and a significant reduction of crime in the target area.
- Project Sentry efforts include a Ceasefire Program at the Phoenix School in Brockton—an alternative school attended by many at-risk youths. Approximately every three months, the district participates in a panel discussion with a small group of high school youths. In one instance, a panel presentation included the DA, an AUSA, and the father of a murdered son who was in a gang. The district also participates in a prisoner reentry program run by the Department of Youth Services (DYS) in Boston. DYS identifies high-risk young people who are committed to juvenile facilities and involves them in specific

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programming aimed at reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

- The district effectively utilized its Weed & Seed partnerships to engage local communities through evening meetings and faith-based partnerships. One of the most significant accomplishments was the PSN Outreach Campaign focus groups with local communities. The initiative's pro bono ad agency traveled to local PSN communities and met with residents, business owners, faith-based partners, and juvenile Ceasefire panels to determine the most effective message. It was determined that although the message needed to be direct and strong, it also needed to be sensitive to the local residents's concerns.
- The PSN media campaign includes billboards, palm cards, posters, and flyers stating the penalties under federal, state, and juvenile law for illegal firearm possession. Radio ads designed by young people are planned to expand in PSN target cities. The district's media outreach partner was able to obtain professional advertising services and billboard space in several PSN target cities. The district conducted a Gang and Violence Reduction conference in conjunction with its LECC. The day-long conference was open to all Massachusetts law enforcement and prosecution agencies (local, state, and federal) and included panel discussions on topics such as strategic use of information, gang intelligence and information, MS-13, the faith-based role, joint task force initiatives, the prosecutor's

perspective, and funding opportunities. Over 350 law enforcement and prosecution personnel attended the event.

## **EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN**

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program in the Eastern District of Michigan incorporates a successful gun case referral system, where local and federal prosecutors screen gun cases to determine the most appropriate jurisdiction for prosecution. This joint screening system has resulted in a 99% increase in the number of federal firearms cases prosecuted by the district since PSN's inception in FY 2001. Cases that are prosecuted federally take serious violent offenders off the street and give them substantially higher sentences than they would have received in state courts. An example of this exemplary collaboration was demonstrated when a defendant was arrested by the local sheriff's department after a search warrant was executed at his residence. In October 2005, the defendant was sentenced to 144 months in federal prison for charges including felon in possession of a firearm, possession with intent to distribute marijuana, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking crime.

The Eastern District of Michigan has an extensive outreach program that uses network and cable TV, radio, billboards, and posters to reinforce the PSN message. The PSN media partner has developed several different campaigns over the last few years. The first campaign was a call to action to youths, parents, and other adults to report illegal guns and gun crime. In 2005, the district revamped its media campaign and produced two new public service announcements (PSAs): "Save Their Lives" and "Help Us Help You". In addition, the

media partner created brochures, calendars, and magnets that are handed out to the community with these messages and that promote our tip line, 1-800 ATF-GUNS.

The PSN program hosted a community town hall meeting in Highland Park, Michigan—an original PSN target area. Federal, state, and local law enforcement and government representatives reported on the progress of the PSN program in Highland Park.

Success was evident: In addition to the reduction in the number of homicides in the area (from 23 in 2003 to six in 2005), the PSN program helped form 30 new block clubs and the Highland Park citizen CB patrol logged over 3,000 miles (2,384 man-hours) in the nearly 18 months since the last town hall meeting.

In October 2005, PSN participated in the “Safe City Detroit Summit: Taking Action for Community Health and Safety from Gun Violence through Collaborations that Work”. An Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) was a member of the panel with other PSN partners discussing law enforcement strategies, partnerships, and coordination efforts.

The Eastern District of Michigan has started another round of “Face to Face” meetings, where the U.S. Attorney (USA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office, Michigan Department of Corrections, and a new partner, Wings of Faith, meet with individuals on probation and/or parole for gun offenses in the City of Detroit. The meetings are being held at the Detroit Police precincts. The program conveys a strong enforcement message about the consequences of possessing/using a firearm and a positive message about jobs, housing opportunities, and other social reentry programs.

Project Sentry is one of the district’s most successful programs. It seeks to educate fifth through eighth grade students about the consequences of gun violence and to provide them with nonviolent tools for resolving conflicts. The program is presented over a period of three consecutive days at local schools in our Weed and Seed sites. Project Sentry is much more than a series of lectures. It encourages interaction through the use of skits, visuals, and real-life testimonials. The program is being expanded to include high schools and churches outside the Weed and Seed sites. In addition, all seven Weed and Seed sites have “Chess, The Game of Life”, a program that uses chess to teach life skills to students. Other Project Sentry events have included a Project Sentry BBQ kick-off in Highland Park and a Project Sentry back-to-school rally.

The district is most proud of its DEFY (Drug Enforcement for Youth) program. It is a six-day summer program for youths between the ages of 9-12. The camp teaches young people to develop physical fitness, self-esteem, drug awareness, conflict resolution, and life skills, and it educates them about the medical and personal consequences of gun violence. The youths participate in classroom activities, workshops, swimming, calisthenics, sports, and other activities. The program is run by the USAO through its seven Weed & Seed sites. Other participants include the Detroit Police Department, U.S. Probations Office, military personnel, and federal, local, state and county law enforcement representatives.

PSN has partnered with Detroit Community Justice Partnership to promote a prevention program called Parent University. Parent University emphasizes the belief that parents are the first line of defense in raising

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resilient children who turn away from drugs, alcohol, and violence. Parents receive instructions on conflict resolution and ways to better strengthen their own lives through financial planning and education.

For more information on the PSN program in the Eastern District of Michigan, visit [www.PSNworks.org](http://www.PSNworks.org).

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN**

The Western District of Michigan has enjoyed continued success since the implementation of the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program within the district. The multi-agency approach and communications shared between federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies is viewed as one of the strongest aspects of the program. Quarterly task force meetings are well-attended, and the number of participants continues to grow. Training has been provided at the meetings on a range of subjects, including forensics with an emphasis on firearm, DNA, and fingerprint analysis. Success stories are a regular agenda item, and they are shared between members to emphasize the collaborative effort.

A direct result of the multi-agency approach is shown by the increase in case referrals. Case referrals from local prosecutors and law enforcement are evaluated by a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agent to ensure that the elements of the crimes are met and that there is a federal jurisdictional nexus. ATF agents meet regularly with the PSN Coordinator to screen and accept appropriate cases for federal prosecution. Each case is reviewed under the federal sentencing guidelines to ensure that a significant penalty is available. The primary incentive for federal

prosecution is the enhanced sentencing options, which are not available in the state trial court system. The district's goal is to prioritize the prosecution of violent repeat offenders.

Feedback from task force members indicates that the law enforcement community throughout the district is quite familiar with the PSN initiative and its components. Training is provided to local law enforcement agencies, probation, and parole offices by the ATF and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Western District of Michigan, as needed.

A one-day conference, entitled, Guns, Drugs, and Violent Crime: A United Defense, was recently hosted by the Grand Rapids Weed & Seed in conjunction with Grand Valley State University and the USAO. The conference offered information on a variety of topics, including current and local trends relating to the identification, investigation, and prosecution of violent crimes involving domestic violence, guns, and drugs within the local communities. The conference was attended by task force representatives, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, community organizations, neighborhood associations, and educators involved in violent crime prevention and reduction. The conference was viewed by attendees as highly informative and provided networking opportunities for those involved.

Community outreach efforts have focused on former offenders through offender notification meetings. Offenders attended the meetings, which included presentations by the PSN Coordinator, ATF agents, the Chief Federal Probation Officer, a representative from local law enforcement, a local minister, representatives from neighborhood organizations, and two prior

offenders who have turned their lives around. The meetings provided an opportunity for the offenders to learn about federal firearms statutes and the consequences of violating them, but it also provided several presentations designed to encourage and support the offenders' successful reintegration into society. The initial responses from the offenders who attended the meetings have been very positive. The district intends to expand this program to other high-crime areas and anticipates tracking the offenders to determine future recidivism. Opportunities such as this have also afforded the task force an opportunity to form new partnerships with faith-based and community service organizations within the district.

### **DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA**

Minnesota continues to demonstrate its commitment to the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) strategy with aggressive enforcement efforts and creative approaches to outreach and prevention. Federal, state, and local task forces have implemented crime reduction strategies in principal PSN target areas, with a focus on the Red Lake Indian Reservation and the White Earth, Leech Lake, and Little Earth regions. These efforts have included partnerships with the Weed and Seed, Paul Bunyan, and Safe Trails' task forces, among others. In addition to the development of mentoring programs for young prosecutors, the Minnesota County Attorneys Association, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) have conducted training sessions for various prosecution offices on state and federal gun laws. The State Bureau of

Criminal Apprehension has also expanded its investigative efforts by assigning an additional National Guard officer to work with the State Department of Corrections. Several prevention and outreach efforts, including the development of PSN public service announcements, regular meetings, and leadership initiatives with Red Lake Indian Reservation community members have created awareness about violence prevention problems and solutions.

The following detailed descriptions of PSN enforcement and outreach activities demonstrate the success of PSN in Minnesota and the importance of its state and local grant assistance:

- With the inclusion of the State Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, additional investigators have been assigned to PSN cases, and arrangements for a local National Guard officer to assist the State Department of Corrections investigator are currently underway. The National Guard will assist in the investigation of illegal dealing by prisoners and obtaining intelligence by monitoring prisoner phone conversations. A ballistics database at the state level has been financed as well.
- PSN has partnered with the Weed and Seed, Paul Bunyan, Safe Trails, and other task forces, to ensure that resources are available to fight against violent crime. Additional investigators have been financed and resident surveys have been conducted in the target areas.
- The Minnesota County Attorneys Association was contracted by the PSN task force to develop a

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mentoring program and gun-prosecution training for young county prosecutors. Additional training has been conducted by FBI and ATF to law enforcement, as well. This has included the distribution of a short roll-call video and workbook for Minnesota law enforcement and prosecution offices on state and federal gun laws.

- In addition to the general PSN public service announcements, a contract with a small local production company was developed with the students at Red Lake High School to produce a 30-second public service announcement to air in Native American communities. Also, the Center for Reducing Rural Violence, contracted through the PSN task force, has been working with community groups within the Red Lake Indian Reservation. Each community group meets every two weeks to discuss what they can do to make their community safer. The sessions are facilitated by a staff member of the Center, and community members are being trained to manage future meetings.
- The Center for Reducing Rural Violence and the White Bison Native leadership program have been working on leadership skills training with many residents of the Red Lake Indian Community. Currently, approximately 30 people attend each of the four community meetings that addresses issues including better street lighting and clean-up events. Although oftentimes Native Americans are hesitant to openly converse with people outside the reservation, many community

residents have now become comfortable with people from the Center for Reducing Rural Violence. Consequently, members are more willing to discuss community problems and solutions.

### **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI**

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) in Northern Mississippi is concentrated in two separate initiatives, each named for the city in which it is sited: Clarksdale Safe Neighborhoods, launched in 2002 in a city of 20,000 on Highway 61 in the northern Delta area; and Greenville Safe Neighborhoods, launched in 2004 in a city of 43,000 on the Mississippi River. The PSN Task Force includes the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Marshals Service, Mississippi Highway Patrol, Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, Mississippi Bureau of Investigations, Mississippi Department of Corrections and the police departments and prosecutors' offices of Clarksdale, Greenville, and other local governments. The task force focuses its efforts on combating violent gun crimes, illegal sale and possession of firearms, chronic offenders, gangs and drug trafficking. The task force reviews firearms-related cases to determine whether state or federal prosecution will be more effective in individual cases.

The district's PSN efforts led to a surge in federal firearms prosecutions which increased from FY 2000 to FY 2004 by 177%. After PSN's start in Clarksdale in 2002, violent gun crimes dropped from 131 incidents in 2001 to 49 in 2003. Violent gun crime has stabilized near that drastically

reduced level, with 54 violent gun crimes occurring in 2004 and 55 in 2005. There were 58% fewer violent gun crimes in Clarksdale in 2005 than in 2001. Several notorious street gangs with ties to Chicago have been dismantled and their leaders incarcerated. In Greenville, where PSN started in August 2004, violent gun crime has already plummeted, with violent gun crimes dropping from 261 in 2003, to 172 in 2004, to 119 in 2005. There were 54% fewer violent gun crimes in Greenville in 2005 than in 2001.

In Greenville, there have been 79 PSN-related federal prosecutions since 2004 and many more in state court. Since 2002, there have been 108 PSN-related prosecutions in federal court from Clarksdale and Coahoma County and many more in state court. The following are some notable examples: A gang leader who had nine mistrials in state court was convicted in federal court of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Another gang leader was convicted in federal court on gun and drug charges and sentenced to 155 years in prison. A Friars Point shooter who wounded six people in a shooting rampage, including five law enforcement officers, was convicted in state court by the District Attorney (DA) and an Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) detailed to state court for that case. The adult who bought the gun for the shooter was prosecuted and convicted in federal court. Three notorious gang leaders were convicted in federal court on gun charges and in state court on murder charges in connection with the brutal slaying of a witness.

For its efforts in reducing violent gun crime, the Clarksdale Police Department was honored with the Best Local Police Department Involvement Award at the 2004 PSN National Conference in Kansas City, Missouri. The Clarksdale Police

Department and Mayor Henry Espy also received the Executive Office for United States Attorneys Director's Award in 2003.

Through the district's PSN training initiative, the entire Greenville Police Department (90 people) and others from surrounding towns have been trained on firearms investigations. Hundreds of law enforcement officers have received the Characteristics of Armed Gunmen training course, which has been presented in the district three times since 2003. In addition, local firearms dealers have received two training sessions on the 'Don't Lie For The Other Guy' program and security of gun dealers' premises. Other firearms trafficking and gun investigation training sessions also have been held. The district is in the process of developing offender reentry and notification training programs aimed at changing the behavior of offenders inside and outside the penitentiary. These training programs are for offenders soon to be released and those already released from prison. The theme of the training will be geared toward refraining from becoming a repeat perpetrator/victim of gun crime and avoiding gang re-involvement. Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) has been implemented in the Clarksdale Public Schools, and is in the works in Greenville schools.

Significant prevention efforts have been made in Clarksdale, Greenville, and throughout the district by advertising on radio, television, billboards, and bumper stickers, as well as through civic club talks and meetings with ministers, school officials, and business leaders, to spread the message that "Gun Crime = Jail Time." Large public kick-off rallies were held immediately after major arrest round-ups to launch the Safe Neighborhoods initiatives. In Clarksdale, 500 citizens turned out on a

## SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI

rainy May weeknight in 2002 to voice their determination to rid their community of the violence that plagued them for so long. In Greenville, 1000 people braved a hot August afternoon in 2004 to take a stand against gun violence. A widely acclaimed documentary training and outreach video entitled "The Clarksdale Story" has been produced locally through a PSN grant and will be a featured presentation in the upcoming PSN National Conference. The video recently was aired on Justice Television Network.

### **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI**

The Southern District of Mississippi Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) target area includes the metropolitan area of Jackson, the state capital. The partnership includes significant law enforcement and community representatives, including state and local police, the Mayor, District Attorney (DA), County Attorney, Sheriff, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Marshal, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Mississippi Department of Corrections, state and federal probation, school superintendent, clergy, and other business and civic leaders, as well as Weed and Seed, Reentry and the Anti-Gang Initiative. As a result of the district's cooperative partnership efforts, PSN has been successful in prosecuting several major offenders as described below.

- Jackson Police Department officers arrested a felon on a misdemeanor warrant. After finding crystal methamphetamine in the offender's hand and a pistol in his pocket, the Department referred the case to the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for

the Southern District of Mississippi for federal prosecution. The felon, who qualified as an "Armed Career Criminal," pled guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and was sentenced in June 2005 to more than 16 years in prison.

- A felon who was released on parole after a murder conviction was caught in possession of an SKS rifle during a multiple shooting in what was allegedly a gang rivalry. The case was tried in federal court, and the guilty verdict on a charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm triggered a revocation of his state parole.
- An offender who had previously been convicted of four armed robberies was found in possession of a firearm and body armor. After being found guilty of these offenses in federal court, he faces no less than 15 years imprisonment in his upcoming sentencing.

In a most successful practice, PSN partnered with the Mississippi Department of Corrections Reentry Program to educate and remind offenders of state and federal firearms laws. This program is funded by a Department of Justice (DOJ) grant to the state. Through the partnership, representatives of the USAO accompany reentry personnel to the prison and make presentations to all state inmates being released from custody regarding the penalties for violating the gun laws and the comprehensive impact of PSN initiatives. Feedback has been extremely positive. The presentation is also made to inmates at the federal prison facility in this district on a quarterly basis.



The district has been re-energized and expects to see a tremendous impact on its PSN initiative with the implementation of a new gun enforcement team that will focus solely on gun crimes and felons in possession of firearms in the target area. It is modeled after the Violent Crime Impact Team and led by ATF. The team is comprised of nine local police officers, a Mississippi Highway Patrol Officer, and a member of the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics. The team is currently undergoing extensive training in firearms laws, firearms identification, search and seizure, report writing, and other critical areas. They will begin active patrol in April 2006 and resulting data on crime will be collected and analyzed. At the same time, PSN has led the move to train ballistic experts to serve in the target area and conduct comprehensive gun tracing.

The district's Project Sentry efforts were highlighted by a March 2005 "Say No to Gun Violence" rally, which was conducted by the Jackson Urban League. This organization was the recipient of the PSN juvenile grant and is working in designated schools to educate young people about the terrible consequences gun violence has on families and communities. In addition, representatives of the USAO make presentations to school and community organizations.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI**

The lead law enforcement agency in the anti-gang strategy for the Eastern District of Missouri target area is the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD). In an attempt to address rampant gang violence in the target area, the SLMPD implemented a "directed patrol" model whereby all specialized units are scheduled to patrol these neighborhoods on a rotating

basis. For approximately the last six months, commanders have attended a bi-weekly Violent Crime Task Force meeting to exchange gang intelligence and develop strategies for the target area. Local and federal prosecutors attend these meetings, and federal agencies are invited. The SLMPD also staffs a Gang Intelligence Unit, which consists of nine detectives. The SLMPD assigned a three-officer Gang Task Force to patrol a district in the target area.

The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Eastern District of Missouri shifted the focus of its "Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Case Review" to cases involving gang members. Two Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) review the SLMPD nightly criminal activity reports to identify crimes committed by gang members in the target area. Once a potential federal case is identified, the AUSA notifies the SLMPD officer assigned to the USAO, who collects all relevant reports and contacts the arresting officers.

In addition to focusing on prosecution, the Eastern District of Missouri is working to prevent gun crime. The Project Ceasefire initiative implemented a robust public outreach campaign tailored to deter middle and high school students from becoming involved in gun violence. One component of the outreach campaign involves a collaborative effort among family court, law enforcement, and juvenile probation officers in St. Louis. At-risk juveniles who are under court supervision are given a curfew and are required to participate in the NIGHTWATCH program. The program involves random home visits from police officers and juvenile probation officers, who confirm that the juveniles are complying with their curfews. If a youth breaks curfew, sanctions include closer supervision, increased academic work, and community

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service. If curfew is violated three or more times, the juvenile is required to return to court and is subject to more severe punishment. From October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2004, an average of 876 visits were conducted each month, and a total of 10,510 home visits were paid to juvenile probationers during the year. Monthly visits ranged from a low of 331 to a high of 1,113. The average compliance rate was 88%, with the range of compliance from a low of 85% to a high of 93%. These are impressive figures—the sheer number of visits to juveniles provides evidence of a large volume of supervision of juveniles identified by the court and police as needing additional attention.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI**

The Western District of Missouri remains committed to expanding its efforts in both the law enforcement and community outreach aspects of the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program. The district has engaged in vigorous enforcement of firearms laws and has expanded its efforts to communicate to the community in general and to a core audience of convicted felons.

With respect to enforcement efforts, the Western District of Missouri had 341 firearms cases prosecuted during FY 2005. Many of these prosecutions were carried out through the district's screening process for all arrests where firearms are recovered. Arrests by uniformed officers are immediately referred to PSN-funded detectives for review. Defendants selected for federal prosecution under the PSN program are charged and detained in federal court. Thus, many defendants are held in custody from the moment of their arrest until their discharge from a federal correctional institution.

The defendants prosecuted under this program generally have committed multiple serious offenses. The 669 defendants who have been sentenced pursuant to the program have been convicted previously of committing 2,214 felonies—728 of these felonies were categorized as crimes of violence, 29 were homicides, 177 were assaults, 144 were robberies, and 289 were burglaries. In addition, there were 282 narcotics distribution offenses among these defendants and 164 prior weapons offenses.

With respect to prevention and outreach, the district has implemented a number of strategies. The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Western District of Missouri has initiated an aggressive advertising campaign to inform the convicted felons of the severe federal penalties associated with illegally possessing firearms. The campaign has included television and radio ads, print ads, mailers targeted to at-risk offenders, and billboards with the logo "Felons with guns burn five years." In addition, Project Sentry sponsored a billboard contest in public schools across Kansas City, where students were challenged to submit artwork promoting a gun violence reduction message. The submissions of the three winners were placed on billboards in various areas throughout the city.

In a further outreach effort, law enforcement officers and federal prosecutors participate in meetings with felons as they are paroled or begin serving a period of supervised release to inform them of the grave consequences of carrying a firearm and the aggressive nature of the district's illegal firearms initiative. These meetings also introduce service providers to help the offenders ease their transition to society.

Finally, the district has started a Prisoner Reentry Coordinator program to partner

with the various groups—both faith-based and secular—that work in the field. One of the projects initiated under this program is a proposal to train offenders in the construction trades by building houses for Habitat for Humanity. This program teaches offenders a trade, thus helping to ensure their employability, while at the same time helping to expand the supply of housing for the poor. The USAO hopes that this pilot project will provide a way out of the cycle of crime and prosecution in which many of these offenders find themselves.

### **DISTRICT OF MONTANA**

The District of Montana's initiative, Montana Exile: Catch and No Release, uses federal firearms laws to target chronic offenders in local communities. Montana has struggled with its notoriety for short sentences and early paroles. However, with the small number of crimes involving guns, Montana has used federal resources and statutes to address the crime that does occur. While this initiative has an aggressive outreach and training component, its emphasis lies with turning gun cases over to the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Montana. Catch and No Release uses federal firearms laws to prosecute more cases federally, particularly when state laws result in significantly lower sentences. As a result of the increase in the number of federal prosecutions, more repeat felons are off the streets, leaving communities safer.

The USAO supplements its prosecution efforts with a vigorous training operation. The U.S. Attorney (USA) and Criminal Chief travel the state to visit the local police departments and sheriff's offices, attending several shift briefings throughout the day to reach all officers.

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) started with Montana's largest cities—Billings, Great Falls, Helena, and Missoula—by educating local officers about firearms laws and the reality that chronic offenders are responsible for the majority of crime. In one case, for example, a defendant in Helena possessed a loaded handgun despite having at least two prior felony convictions, one out of Colorado and one out of California.

In another case, Lewis and Clark County deputies were called to an assault report during the early morning hours of May 3, 2003. The report stated that the caller's friend had been assaulted, so deputies drove to the residence to check on the welfare of the victim. As the deputies approached, they observed a man walking away from the residence with his hand inside his coat, apparently trying to hide something. The deputies ordered the defendant to remove his hand and place both hands in the air. The defendant turned around and headed back toward the residence. A deputy observed a handgun butt sticking out of the defendant's coat pocket. The deputies took control of the defendant's hands and removed the handgun, which was loaded. The deputies also recovered 77 rounds of ammunition from the defendant's pocket. The defendant was sentenced to 41 months in prison and three years of supervised release.

In another case, a defendant possessed a .45-caliber pistol in Helena. A friend of the defendant loaned him the handgun because people were after the defendant for drug money. When the defendant did not return the handgun to the friend, the friend called the police. The defendant returned the handgun to the Helena Police Department and provided a written statement. He was a twice-convicted felon. At the time of the offense, the defendant was under the supervision in relation to a North Carolina

## DISTRICT OF NEBRASKA

sentence. The defendant was sentenced to 37 months imprisonment and three years supervised release.

The District of Montana's collaborative efforts have brought impressive success to Catch and No Release. This collaboration is compounded by the personal involvement and strong commitment of USA Bill Mercer and the three PSN prosecutors positioned throughout the state. The creativity, commitment, and aggressiveness of PSN have delivered compelling results, highlighting the way crime can effectively be reduced by enforcing firearms laws.

### **DISTRICT OF NEBRASKA**

In 2000, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Nebraska unveiled Omaha's "Project Impact," an initiative to combat youth gun violence that received Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) funds for operational activities and for the development of a comprehensive offender database system. The JABG funding source limited the target population to juveniles in Omaha. In 2002, the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program officially replaced Project Impact and broadened the focus from "youth gun violence in Omaha" to "gun violence in Nebraska."

PSN is a proactive strategy in Omaha that focuses on gun, gang, and drug-related crimes. PSN in Lincoln developed a strong partnership of probation and law enforcement officers, who focus on violent offenders in targeted neighborhoods. The remainder of the district benefits from the promise of the U.S. Attorney (USA) to prosecute cases that meet federal guidelines. The initiative's expansion and the addition of the PSN funding has greatly enhanced district enforcement strategies in Omaha,

which include offender notification meetings; Nightlight operations, which are police-probation home visits; and Cease-fire operations, which are deployment of police and probation/parole officers to areas experiencing a rise in gun violence.

The USA's Law Enforcement Community Coordination Unit and the North and South Omaha Weed and Seed Projects are the foundation for prevention efforts, and they organize events such as neighborhood clean-ups, neighborhood safety block parties, school events, and art contests. An enhanced media campaign and the distribution of gunlocks through Project ChildSafe strengthen prevention, awareness, and community engagement throughout the district.

The USAO's Guns, Gangs, and Drugs (GGD) meetings are a crucial tool for PSN in Omaha. These monthly meetings are attended by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies; the Gang, Narcotics, Robbery and Homicide Units of the Omaha Police Department; and Omaha County and City Prosecutors. Gun and drug cases are presented by the officers and assigned on the spot to specific federal prosecutors or to the county or city prosecutors. Updates on previously indicted cases are also provided to the attendees.

In addition to the GGD meetings, the USAO developed a Firearms Case Screening Team, comprised of the PSN Coordinator, designated Omaha Police Managers, County and City Prosecutors, and the USA's Criminal and Drug Chiefs. The PSN Coordinator reviews every gun case from the Omaha Police Department through "Overnight" reports. An e-mail is sent to the team with the facts of the case and information regarding gang affiliation and criminal record. This greatly streamlines case intake, provides immediate attention to

egregious gun cases, and guards against cases falling through the cracks.

A partnership was created with the Omaha Public Schools to present a series of Offender Notification Meetings to students in the alternative schools. Law enforcement officers and prosecutors talk about accountability and the consequences of unlawful behavior. Speakers from the Boy's and Girl's Club then present the "opportunity side" to the students, offering significantly reduced club membership fees and help in obtaining GEDs and job placement.

The PSN research partners from the University of Nebraska at Omaha work closely with the USAO, Omaha Police Department, and the Lincoln Police Department in ongoing problem analysis and impact assessment. The research partners attend every operation and meeting in Omaha and Lincoln and have played a pivotal role in the decision-making process.

### **DISTRICT OF NEVADA**

There are two highly successful Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Task Force programs in the District of Nevada—one in southern Nevada (Las Vegas) and the other in northern Nevada (Reno). In Las Vegas, the task force is comprised of state, local, and federal law enforcement partners, who conduct weekly reviews of arrests involving violent or recidivist offenders who illegally carry guns or use them to commit crimes. Weekly meetings with these partners have improved the quality of investigations that involve firearms and the morale of local law enforcement officers. As a consequence, the office has noticed an increase in the quality and number of cases that have been referred to the task force for consideration.

From 2002 to 2005, PSN Task Force members in the southern Nevada PSN program screened 2,163 cases for prosecution. During that same four-year period, federal prosecutors in Las Vegas obtained 569 indictments charging persons with federal firearms offenses. This average of over 142 indictments per year in Las Vegas is the highest number ever recorded by the District of Nevada, and is approximately two to three times the number of indictments returned in the years prior to the inception of the PSN Task Force in southern Nevada. During the same period, federal prosecutors in Reno obtained 174 indictments against individuals for federal firearm offenses. From January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2005, 223 defendants were sentenced for federal gun crimes in the United States District Court in Las Vegas, and in Reno, 36 defendants were sentenced for federal gun crimes. Approximately 40% received prison sentences of at least five years, and approximately 75% received sentences of imprisonment of at least three years.

The following are examples of the district's notable PSN cases:

In April 2005, a man from Henderson, Nevada, was sentenced to 188 months in federal prison for his guilty plea of being a felon in possession of a firearm. In November 2004, he barricaded himself into a residence for over 24 hours with numerous firearms, dynamite, and knives. The man had several prior felony convictions for aggravated assault, kidnapping, and armed robbery.

In February 2005, another offender was sentenced to 65 months in federal prison for his guilty plea of being a felon in possession of a firearm. In 1988, he had been convicted in state court in Reno of First Degree

## DISTRICT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Murder for killing a local pharmacist and sentenced to 15 years to life. Soon after he was paroled, this offender was apprehended and charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm.

According to the latest Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Report (Preliminary Semi-Annual Report January-June 2005), violent crime offenses reported by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department decreased from 4,727 in 2004, to 4,410 (approximately 6.5%), despite the population increases. According to an excerpt from a January 24, 2005, story in the *Las Vegas Sun*, North Las Vegas Police announced on January 24, 2005, that violent crime was down, and that the number of murders, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults per population has decreased by 31% over the past two years. The City of North Las Vegas's population has soared by 9.2% in 2005, to reach 180,219 people.

The PSN Coordinators in Reno and Las Vegas have been working to improve and expand the outreach portion of PSN. In northern Nevada, the coordinator has instructed on PSN at the Nevada State District Attorney's Association Meeting and at meetings of state and tribal judges at the National Judicial College. He also presented PSN information to gun dealers at a conference in Reno, and to the Reno Weed and Seed Steering Committee. Both PSN Coordinators also instructed on PSN at the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) "Hitting the Mark" Conference in Las Vegas in 2005.

### **DISTRICT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**

As part of the District of New Hampshire's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) enforcement effort, a cross-designated Special Assistant U.S. Attorney (SAUSA)

and Assistant Hillsborough County Attorney started working with an investigator in February of 2004. The investigator is a Deputy Hillsborough County Sheriff, who is awaiting appointment as a Special Agent of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). As a team, they have been pursuing gun cases in state and federal court, depending on which offers the more appropriate result.

The SAUSA and the investigator have traveled throughout New Hampshire, making presentations to local police departments on federal firearms laws. To date, they have made presentations to 42 different police departments.

Also as part of the PSN initiative, the district's PSN Coordinator and other task force members drafted an "Acknowledgment of Status as a Prohibited Person (Felon) Under Federal Firearms Law" form, which has been adopted by the New Hampshire Department of Corrections Probation/Parole Office and is now signed by every eligible offender and kept in their files.

### **DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

The District of New Jersey's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program has undertaken a multi-faceted approach to stem the tide of gang and gun violence. In doing so, the district has focused on (1) prosecuting gang leaders and perpetrators of gang violence through racketeering and continuing criminal enterprise laws; (2) building gun trafficking cases in order to stem the flow of illegally purchased firearms into New Jersey; (3) aggressively targeting felons in possession of handguns and career offenders; (4) preventing the spread of gang membership in young people through partnerships with law enforcement agencies

and community leaders; and (5) forging critical partnerships with state and local law enforcement to share intelligence and pool resources in order to more effectively coordinate the overall battle against violent crime.

As part of his commitment to PSN, U.S. Attorney (USA) Christopher J. Christie created a Violent Crimes Unit to address New Jersey's growing and pervasive violent crime problem. This unit consists of ten Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs), including former members of the Organized Crime Strike Force and local prosecutors experienced in racketeering, wiretaps, narcotics, and violent crime prosecutions. The Violent Crimes Unit has vigorously pursued gangs and their leadership using the RICO and continuing criminal enterprise statutes enacted to fight traditional organized crime, with the specific purpose of dismantling these enterprises. Because investigations have revealed that gang members are involved in the interstate transportation of illegal handguns and in the drug trade, the Violent Crimes Unit has increased its efforts to not only arrest felons in possession of guns and persons possessing guns and drugs within the district, but also to prosecute those involved in the interstate trafficking networks. In one of the first cases of its type, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of New Jersey secured an indictment against a gun dealer in another state for conspiring to unlawfully transport and resell guns in New Jersey. In that case, dozens of the illegally-purchased firearms ended up in the hands of one particularly violent Bloods set in New Jersey.

Another critical component of New Jersey's PSN program is marshaling the resources of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in New Jersey, which has resulted

in an unprecedented level of cooperation in the last several years. The most recent manifestation of this cooperation is the newly-formed Essex Federal Gang Suppression Partnership, whose partners include the USAO, the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, the Essex County Sheriff, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the U.S. Marshals Service, the N.J. State Police, and the Newark Police Department. This task force, which currently consists of approximately 15 co-located local and federal investigators, is working with dedicated county and federal prosecutors to target individual gang sets and to help reclaim neighborhoods from the grip of violent drug-traffickers. The USAO is poised to prosecute cases arising out of these investigations, through both its OCDETF and Violent Crimes Units.

The district's Safer Cities Initiatives in Camden and greater-Newark focus on preventing violent crime in those areas, and continue to be a critical part of PSN in the District of New Jersey. These programs are unique collaborations among the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University, New Jersey's Parole and Probation Departments, the USAO, Newark and Camden Police Departments, the State Attorney General's (AG) Office, the Essex and Camden County Prosecutors' Offices, community and faith-based groups, social service and treatment providers, private organizations, the business community, and other law enforcement agencies. These initiatives focus on the aggressive prosecution of gun violations and the notification and supervision of individuals who are at risk of committing or becoming victims of violent crime.

## DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO

The project began by collecting and analyzing crime and violence data from diverse sources, including Newark homicide records. Using this data, individuals in danger of becoming victims or perpetrators of violent crime are identified and invited to participate in individualized rehabilitation programs to reintroduce them into the community as they come out of prison. A support network of people from the above agencies customizes a “program of care” for each participant. If participants succeed in completing the program they graduate and are released from probation. If, however, a participant commits a crime again, the repercussions include harsher penalties and federal prosecution where appropriate.

As the district’s PSN initiative has focused on street gangs, so too has its training initiatives, which have increased dramatically in the last year. The USAO for the District of New Jersey has continued to disseminate the message that now more than ever, New Jersey law enforcement must coordinate its responses to the threats posed by street gangs. Before the district can eradicate the gang problem, the law enforcement community collectively must understand the extent of the problem and take stock of the arsenal of weapons that can be employed to combat gang violence. Nearly a dozen training sessions have been attended by hundreds of seasoned gang investigators, veteran police officers, and federal agents. The focus of these training workshops includes the investigation and prosecution of violent enterprises, identification of the extent of New Jersey’s gang problem, discussions about specific gangs that have infiltrated communities, and highlighting the importance of law enforcement cooperation.

While New Jersey’s PSN initiatives strike at gangs that are already established and

dangerous, the USAO and other law enforcement agencies are starkly aware that to successfully battle gang violence, they must go directly to the vulnerable youth recruited into and growing up as members of gangs. Through programs such as Project Phoenix, the Paterson and Mercer County Village Initiatives, GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training), and Council for Unity, the district’s Project Sentry efforts aim to reduce and replace the need for gangs in the lives of young people. Programs such as Project Phoenix and GREAT empower young people to take control of their lives by teaching them how to safely resist gangs and the lure of gang life. Council for Unity replaces the gang entirely, offering young people membership in a positive group, where they can attain the sense of respect and family so often sought through gang membership. The Paterson and Mercer County Village Initiatives provide individualized attention to youth offenders and their families in an effort to prevent recidivism and dissuade gang membership. By using juvenile prevention programs to combat gang and gun violence where it begins, and by prosecuting and dismantling gangs as enterprises, the district is hopeful that New Jersey’s PSN and Project Sentry efforts will truly provide safer neighborhoods in New Jersey’s communities.

## **DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO**

U.S. Attorney (USA) David Iglesias and his Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Coordinator, Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) Rinaldo Armijo, lead a comprehensive PSN Task Force that oversees and conducts an aggressive strategy to reduce gun violence in New Mexico. Through bi-weekly coordination meetings with members that include over 50 local, tribal, state, and federal law



enforcement agencies and community-based organizations, the task force exemplifies the PSN partnership strategy, which is the cornerstone of New Mexico's successful program.

The task force has pursued an approach using increased arrests, increased firearm seizures, successful armed felon prosecutions, longer sentences, probation/parole revocations, and youth-oriented gun violence-related consequences education. As a result, the task force's ultimate goal of reducing the violent crime rate in New Mexico has been achieved, as evidenced by the decrease in the UCR violent crime rate from 1200 to 900 incidents per 100,000 during calendar year 2004.

Using best practices and current research data, the task force has refined five coordinated initiatives to address New Mexico's gun-crime problem. The initiatives are the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives's (ATF's) VCIT (Violent Crime Impact Team) program, which focuses on federal prosecutions of armed felons; VIPER, a photo array of high interest offenders; Turning Point, a high-risk probationer intervention, Targeted Patrols, which are coordinated with Weed and Seed neighborhoods' Gun Violence and Gang Reduction special emphasis programs; and Project Sentry programs that include local youth-involved prosecutions, and comprehensive youth gun violence prevention and safety awareness program. These initiatives are also designed to capitalize on existing partnerships established through other local crime prevention programs and organizations, such as Weed and Seed, New Mexico Gang and Terrorism Task Force, New Mexico National Guard Counter Drug Support Task

Force, the New Mexico Sheriffs and Police Association, the University of New Mexico Institute for Social Research, and the Albuquerque and Las Cruces public school systems.

Here are the dramatic and encouraging results of this strategy:

- PSN coordination has assisted the Albuquerque Police Department and the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office, in achieving a homicide crime solution rate of 74% for 2005.
- In 2005, 151 defendants were prosecuted and 304 firearms were seized.
- Between 2001-2005, an average of 103 defendants were charged under 18 U.S.C. section 922(g)(1) and U.S.C section 924(a)(2) compared to an average of 67 defendants charged under the same statute in 1996-2000, an increase of 54%.
- Between 2001 and 2005, the average sentence of defendants was 75 months compared to an average of 40 months in 1996-2000, an increase of 35 months.
- Preliminary studies indicate that parole revocations and arrests have decreased due to the heightened awareness created by PSN. There is strong evidence that the Turning Point intervention strategy has decreased recidivism among the 200 violent at-risk probationers targeted to date for the program.
- Over 1500 middle and high school students have benefited from the school-based instruction and learning component, which is presented in two different sessions. The first session presents the Gun Violence Media

## **EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

Literacy curriculum which seeks to help students develop critical thinking skills specific to gun violence in the media. The second session presents the Options, Choices, and Consequences gun violence reduction curriculum to educate students about the realistic medical and legal consequences of using or possessing illegal guns.

The task force has also developed a very aggressive statewide multi-lingual public relations awareness campaign. The campaign is delivered via electronic and print media outlets and has featured bilingual Spanish and English interviews with the USA, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of New Mexico staff, and supportive community members; newspaper op-ed column contributions; and locally produced customized bilingual and culturally sensitive radio public service announcements. Community outreach is also supported by PSN presentations made at statewide conferences and meetings, and by promotional brochures, posters, and billboards.

Finally, in 2005, the U.S. Attorney's Office continued to apply lessons learned from the Albuquerque PSN Task Force to aggressively expand PSN in the District of New Mexico. To this end, the U.S. Attorney has leveraged Weed and Seed and other crime fighting coalitions to establish successful task forces in the city of Las Cruces in southern New Mexico and the City of Espanola in northern New Mexico.

## **EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

In the Eastern District of New York, with a population of nearly 8 million people in three of the five New York City boroughs and Long Island, illegal use of firearms

continues to be a serious threat to public safety. The district's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) strategy, designed through a strong partnership with the Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Long Island district attorneys, is comprehensive in coordinating enforcement and prevention initiatives. The district's PSN enforcement strategy against violent gangs builds upon a generation of experience combating traditional organized crime and emerging criminal enterprises in New York City.

Federal prosecutors work in close collaboration with specially-assigned investigators of the New York Police Department and Nassau and Suffolk County Police Departments, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Leads developed at the local level are shared with federal agencies and state and federal prosecutors determine where prosecution will best meet objectives. Including local law enforcement at early stages of federal investigations has been crucial in identifying gangs and using federal racketeering, narcotics and money laundering statutes to eliminate their leadership.

State and federal prosecutors working together are far more effective in gaining essential intelligence and evidence through cooperation agreements with arrested gang members. The threat of federal prosecution with racketeering, narcotics, firearms and immigration statutes is significant leverage against gang members.

Operation Street Sweeper resulted in a federal indictment of 15 MS-13 leaders on charges related to three murders, numerous assaults, and firearms violations. In a related investigation, another 15 MS-13

leaders were subsequently indicted on federal charges involving two murders and conspiracies. Significantly, of the five murder charges pending against MS-13 leaders, three of the victims were witnesses who were killed to prevent them from testifying and to intimidate anyone else from cooperating with law enforcement against MS-13 members. The district has also charged MS-13 members with racketeering in the attempted murder of two men shot in separate drive-by shootings. The two main defendants in this indictment recently were sentenced to 60-year and 63-year sentences.

The PSN comprehensive approach draws upon the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Eastern District of New York's experience with Weed and Seed and the Public Housing Safety Initiative. The office participates in prevention and intervention programs, and incorporates the research partnership component to provide data-driven assessments of the district's work. The district's show-case program in early intervention is the School Violence Prevention Initiative, which is currently underway in five school districts in Long Island. Launched in partnership with the Nassau County District Attorney's (DA) Office, the Urban Institute, and the five school districts, this violence prevention initiative incorporates the Second Step and Peacemakers programs. This initiative educates young people about anger management and conflict resolution at the middle school level. The close collaboration of the Urban Institute brings a vital research-based orientation and ensures outcome-data integrity to this initiative inside public schools.

## **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

The Northern District of New York maintains an aggressive Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative within the 32 upstate counties that comprise the district. Special emphasis is given to the two most populated areas that include four PSN Task Forces in the Capitol District counties of Albany, Schenectady, Rennsalar, and Onondaga. Each of the PSN Task Forces has a process in place to review all state gun cases for possible federal prosecution. This system has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of state cases being prosecuted in federal court. The district has also joined with the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services Operation IMPACT. This state initiative, patterned after PSN, focuses additional state resources on guns, gang, and drug crimes.

With a significant part of gun crime being related to drugs and gangs, in January 2003, the U.S. Attorney (USA) for the Northern District of New York established the Syracuse Violent Gang Task Force. The task force is comprised of members from Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Syracuse Police Department, and Onondaga County Sheriff's Department. Funding from PSN is used to support task force operations. A similar gang task force has been established in the Capitol District area to address a growing gang violence problem within Albany/Rennsalar and Schenectady counties.

The Syracuse Gang Task Force conducted its initial investigation into a violent Syracuse gang known as Boot Camp. Following a six month investigation, 26 members of Boot Camp were indicted in

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

June 2003 on federal racketeering charges. As a result of that investigation and prosecution, all gang members were convicted of RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) offenses and are currently serving lengthy terms in federal prison. The Boot Camp gang leader—the only defendant who elected to proceed to trial—was sentenced to a term of 40 years incarceration following his conviction on RICO charges.

In the year that followed the Boot Camp prosecution, Syracuse Police determined that in the territory occupied by the gang, calls for police service dropped 48%, the number of criminal charges filed dropped 51%, calls to police about drugs decreased by 63% and the number of weapons charges decreased by 35%. These statistics clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of bringing federal RICO prosecutions against street gangs.

The Gang Task Force next conducted an investigation into another notorious Syracuse gang known as Elk Block. In August 2005, 16 members of the Elk Block gang were indicted on federal RICO charges. To date, six members have pled guilty.

In response to growing community concerns about gang and gun violence, Syracuse community leaders established the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (VIPP). This program is funded in part by PSN funds. It provides intense outreach, case management, mental health care, and referral services for individuals between the ages of 12 and 30 who are at risk of being victims and/or perpetrators of youth gang-related violence. VIPP employs case management and mental health services to address both the environmental factors and personal challenges faced by these high-risk

individuals. Most have been referred to VIPP from county probation and law enforcement agencies.

Since its inception in October of 2003, VIPP has collected outcome data on its effectiveness in addressing the gang and youth violence problem. In its second annual report released in October of 2005, VIPP reported its achievements in meeting its four goals:

**Goal 1:** 70% of program participants will not re-offend, i.e. perpetrate or participate in any acts of violence - 87.6% remain free of any acts of violence.

**Goal 2:** 70% of program participants will not become victims of violence - 92.4% were not victimized by violence.

**Goal 3:** 50% of program participants will have a positive experience - 40% were employed, and 63.4% referred to community resource network.

**Goal 4:** Forty individuals and families will participate in mental health services - 215 individuals and their families benefited from individual, family and group psychotherapy, representing a 198% increase in the number of clients receiving mental health care.

This past year, VIPP served a total of 290 individuals and families. In its second year of operation, VIPP has found that pairing mental health therapists and case managers has proven to be a powerful combination and an efficient intervention strategy in this community-based initiative. There currently is a wait list of 50 high risk individuals seeking admission into this program.

In conjunction with the district's PSN initiative and New York State's Operation IMPACT, Assistant U.S. Attorneys

(AUSAs) have been conducting half-day training sessions for local law enforcement officials and probation and parole officers. These trainings include an in-depth comparison of New York State and federal firearms laws and a description of the similarities and differences between state and federal laws relating to search warrants, bail, detention, and sentencing. The AUSA involved with the gang RICO prosecutions has also lectured nationally on gang investigations and prosecutions.

### **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

The Southern District of New York's Project Safe Neighborhoods task force focuses its efforts primarily on gangs and drug trafficking. The task force also targets violent gun-related offenses, illegal possession of firearms by convicted felons and other prohibited persons, gun trafficking, and any firearm offenses in given high-crime "hot spots" in the district. As an example of the cooperation within the task force, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Southern District of New York, New York Police Department, and the Bronx and Westchester District Attorney's (DA) Offices review firearms-related arrests and determine whether state or federal prosecution will be more effective in individual cases.

The USAO has used federal firearms laws in its fight against violent street gangs. For example, the district prosecuted two members of rival Bronx crack cocaine distribution organizations under federal firearms laws. Both were later charged with additional murders and narcotics related offenses, and the investigation led to the convictions of 11 members of the conspiracy and the effective dismantling of the criminal organization.

A felon-in-possession case led to the October 2004 conviction of three men for their roles in an interstate crack cocaine distribution ring that stretched from New York to Virginia, and then to South Carolina. The offenders were responsible for, among other things, the stripping, beating, shooting, and murder of an associate who lost a quantity of crack cocaine he had been instructed to sell. The victim's body was stuffed into a trash can and dumped along an interstate highway. One of the offenders faces life in prison. The other two face sentences of 25 years to life.

The Southern District of New York has implemented a community outreach campaign to engage the community and educate citizens about the dangers of gun violence and the penalties for federal firearms offenses. The district places public service messages on television, posters, flyers, bus shelters, and billboards to spread the message that "Gun Crime = Hard Time". PSN grants also support youth anti-gang initiatives implemented by the Bronx YMCA and Pathways for Youth at summer youth camps.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

The Western District of New York's gun violence reduction effort in Rochester continues to be a model program. In 1998, the city had the highest per capita murder rate in the state. In response, local and federal law enforcement agencies joined together to examine the problem and find a way to reduce gun violence. With funding for gun prosecutors at the state and federal level, the number of prosecutions increased and the average federal sentence stands at 78.5 months. The state sentences rose from under one year to 40 months.

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

In the fall of 2001, the Rochester Police Department (RPD), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) assigned personnel to specifically target the most violent perpetrators in the city for federal prosecutions in order to remove those individuals from the streets. One of the first targets was believed to have been responsible for several gun-related assaults and homicides in the City of Rochester. The offender quickly agreed to enter a guilty plea in exchange for his cooperation concerning other drug traffickers and violent crime perpetrators in the City of Rochester. Additional prosecutions were then brought against a group of gang members for kidnapping, narcotics trafficking, and committing home invasions. Convicted after a month long trial, one of those offenders received a life-plus-55-year sentence.

Following that prosecution, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies began targeting entire gangs when one member was responsible for a homicide. The law enforcement effort was complemented by a set of notification meetings that called in members of the gangs to deliver the message that homicides would result in increased law enforcement attention to the entire gang. The successful prosecutions of two gangs were held up as examples. Additional gangs were added to subsequent presentations as law enforcement followed through on its promise and targeted the gangs involved in homicides. Also included in the call-ins were representatives from social services and Pathways to Peace, an outreach program that provides alternatives to gang membership. In 2004, the number of homicides dropped from 57 to 35. The program was viewed as a success and continued in 2005. In Buffalo, aspects of

the Rochester program were adopted, and one gang was successfully targeted and used as the example for a call-in session in December 2005.

The key component to the success of Project Exile and the outreach program has been the establishment of the Project Exile Advisory Board, which meets monthly and brings together government, business, and community leaders. The successful cooperation among the Advisory Board has led to the removal of hundreds of illegal guns from the streets of the community and helped lengthen sentences in state court. It also has led to stronger prosecutions and networking with other programs and events, including Peace Feast, RAIN, and Families and Friends of Murdered Victims. The board has developed a monthly community newsletter to spread information about the gun violence reduction efforts.

In Rochester, Pathways to Peace continues to do street-level outreach and intervention. Referrals have also increased from law enforcement and schools. In Buffalo, the district has initiated an effort to reach out to the community with a gun violence reduction message and is attempting to secure media and community partners to deliver the message. Several community groups, such as MAD DADs and Project Peace, are actively delivering a gun violence reduction message.

The mass media campaigns for the Project Exile program have included television and radio public service announcements and print advertisements in weekly newspapers. The community awareness campaign included the slogan "You + An Illegal Gun = Federal Prison". Measured in terms of cooperative law enforcement action, community response, and prosecutions, the program was extremely successful. In 2005,

a new media campaign urged lawful gun owners to be responsible for their weapons, and the public service announcements for “Lock It Up” began in February 2006. In Buffalo, the messages will include one that targets the at-risk community and stresses direct law enforcement and gun crime reduction.

There have been several community outreach presentations made to service and fraternal organizations, such as Kiwanis Clubs and Rotary Clubs, as well as participation in various community events.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Western District of New York continued its significant role in Save Our Streets Task Force Buffalo. Through this initiative, community organizations, social service providers, and criminal justice agencies work together with Buffalo city residents to regain control and revitalize crime-ridden and drug plagued neighborhoods. Some efforts of this initiative included Landlord Training Seminars and Clean Sweep.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA**

Since January 2002, the Eastern District of North Carolina (EDNC) Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program has grown to include seven designated PSN sites, each with its own task force and a designated PSN Community Resource Coordinator on site. The district sites’ monthly meetings have proven instrumental in developing new and existing programs. This multi-site approach allows each site to create a strategy to address specific local needs and problems. As a result, the district has seen a dramatic increase in the prosecution of firearms cases and a related reduction in violent crime. This approach also allows each site to build its own task force and

strategically develop partnerships and networks that are stronger and more effective than federal prosecution alone.

Since the implementation of PSN, prosecutions for federal gun and violent crimes in the district have increased by 236%, and convictions for those offenses have increased by 197%. Over 1,250 defendants have been or currently are being prosecuted under the PSN initiative. Throughout the district, the violent crime rate was down 11% from 2001 to 2005. From 2002 to 2004, gun-related violence dropped in four of our PSN sites. For example, since 2001, gun-related violence is down 18% in Wilmington and 27% in Cumberland County. During the same time, guns seizures have increased 50% in Raleigh and 77% in Wilmington.

While the prosecutions go up and the crime rate goes down, perhaps the most palpable highlight in the district are the partnerships and collaborative efforts being made at the various sites. Five of the PSN sites hold regular call-in meetings for at-risk probationers. To date, over 300 probationers have attended a Call-In meeting, and 80% of those attending have requested some form of assistance. Raleigh’s PSN site developed a Life Skills Program to teach money management, banking practices, and healthful living skills in conjunction with a six week course for Fork Lift Operating licensing. All but two probationers who have signed up for this course have completed the program. In Greenville, the call-in format was adapted to target at-risk youth and gang-related issues. To counter gang-related activity, Greenville has held seven juvenile call-ins in the past 11 months, targeting the juveniles, their parents, siblings, grandparents, teachers, social workers, law enforcement officials, and the faith-based community. These

## MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

juvenile call-ins are held in partnership with the Mediation Center at Eastern Carolina University. As a result of this aggressive effort, Greenville has seen a 16.2% decrease in youth violence in the targeted areas.

In May 2004, a Wake County Warrant Enforcement initiative was executed by the U.S. Marshals Service. Over 90 federal, state, and local law enforcement officers participated, resulting in the arrest of 97 defendants over the course of the three day sweep. For ten days in March 2005, a similar initiative was conducted in Cumberland County, during which 105 defendants were arrested. The district is planning Warrant Enforcement initiatives for Wilmington and Greenville.

The district continues to hold regular training opportunities for task force members to network and learn new strategies and techniques for combating firearms violence. A particularly successful event was the first Triangle Area Gang Awareness Training Conference, held in July 2005, in which over 200 local law enforcement officers participated. In August 2004, the first district-wide conference was held with over 225 attendees, and most recently in November 2005, the district partnered with the Middle and Western Districts of North Carolina to host the first statewide conference entitled PSN-Guns, Gangs, Gone! A Proven Strategy for Violence Reduction in North Carolina. The conference attracted over 325 attendees.

While the district is engaged in several outreach endeavors throughout its various sites, the district-wide participation in the National Day of Concern on October 19, 2005, was perhaps one of the best coordinated efforts. Over 24,000 middle and high school students signed the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence at 18 different

schools throughout the district. In exchange for their signature, each student received a purple wristband which stated: STOP the GUN VIOLENCE. The effort benefited from a media presence and from local dignitaries, who attended school assemblies throughout the day.

In Cumberland and Pitt Counties, the respective PSN task forces have conducted over ten neighborhood canvasses in the past year. These canvasses occur on the Saturday before a call-in and include local task force officers, community service providers, and residents, who go door-to-door in targeted neighborhoods introducing themselves and answering questions. To date, over 1,800 homes and businesses have been contacted.

### **MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA**

The Greensboro Violent Crime Task Force has incorporated every component of the PSN strategic plan and improved law enforcement partnerships in Greensboro, which has resulted in the homicide rate dropping from 41 in 2003, to 16 in 2004.

Through its various partnerships, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Middle District of North Carolina has identified specific issues to address, including emerging gangs/groups, domestic violence, methamphetamine use, and street crime driven by narcotics sales. Using the PSN model and portions of its strategic plan, the USAO partnered with the High Point Police Department in the West End Initiative to address narcotics-driven street crime and related gun and violent crime. As a result, the West End area of High Point has experienced a 39% Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Part I violent crime reduction since its inception in May of 2004. Winston-



Salem has been working on the New Hope Project, which used a similar strategy to address its most prolific crime area. After one year, violent crime is down 25% in the targeted area.

Greensboro, High Point, and Winston-Salem developed Project CORE, a reentry pilot project for youths returning from juvenile training school. It is Sentry at its finest and will allow the MDNC to sustain violent crime reductions in the years to come by reducing the numbers of chronic offenders.

Offender notification meetings have been successful in Salisbury. At follow-up notifications that occur six months after the original notification meeting, former offenders go through a formal ceremony and receive certificates for remaining crime-free for six months. Thirty-seven individuals have been notified, and 35 remained crime-free during the follow-up period. Salisbury continues to push the envelope by including juveniles and their parents in notification sessions, trying to prevent emerging youth from graduating to the adult arena. The MDNC has held over 160 offender notifications meetings over the past several years and data consistently show that the recidivism rates of these offenders are significantly lower than other similarly situated individuals. Notification is the heart of the MDNC PSN intervention strategy.

Long-term sustained reductions of violent crime rates are found throughout the MDNC. Since 2000, Winston-Salem has experienced 47% reductions in Part I UCR violent crimes, the highest UCR reductions per capita in the state of North Carolina during that time period. In High Point, since 2001, Part I UCR violent crime is down 42%. In both cities, the additional reductions in targeted geographical “hot spots” through innovative street narcotics

initiatives in West End ( High Point Part I down 39%) and New Hope (Winston-Salem Part I down 25%) are more meaningful because they have accomplished more reductions inside cities where dramatic reductions in violent crime have already occurred. Durham historically has one of the highest per capita Part I crime rates in the state. In 2004 and 2005, the area has seen a 22% reduction in Part I violent crime rates, despite the emergence of a mature gang dynamic.

Durham has used a youth community outreach worker to identify people who are at risk of joining gangs, and those who wish to leave gangs. Project STRIKE (Striving To Regain Individuality Knowledge and Excellence) has been spearheaded by the Chief of Police, the City Manager, and the Mayor by providing city jobs for former gang members. It is an “out of the box” intervention that was made possible by the PSN partnership and thought process.

Local task force members make presentations to various community groups, including local government agencies, Neighborhood Watch groups, faith-based groups, and advocacy organizations like the NAACP. Project SAFE Salisbury developed a Gang 101 pamphlet to educate school and other service providers about emerging issues.

Hoops and Hope is a comprehensive anti-gang and illegal gun prevention program that involves eight cities, including all six PSN sites in the MDNC. Using a 90-game basketball season to get at-risk youth involved, it successfully engaged 90 youths in 2005, and is expected to engage over 150 youths in 2006 with its anti-gang and illegal gun message that is part of the initiative’s efforts to keep kids in school through spring. It involves homework assistance, etiquette

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

training, and a host of life skills classes, along with the weekend basketball games.

The MDNC hosted the first ever state-wide PSN conference, entitled “Guns, Gangs...Gone”, in Winston-Salem in November 2005. The conference combined PSN training funds from all three federal districts, and the Attorney General gave a keynote address during the second day of the conference. Over 300 attendees came from across North Carolina to share and learn about best practices statewide.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA**

The following statistics are a direct result of positive Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) efforts in two Charlotte neighborhoods. In Belmont, North Carolina, violent offenses have dropped from 15 in April 2003 to 13 in March 2004. Belmont violent arrests have decreased from an overall high of eight in March 2004 to one in January 2005. In Villa Heights, violent offenses have decreased from 12 in July 2003 to six in January 2005, and violent arrests have gone down from five in February 2003 to three in January 2005. Since the beginning of the PSN initiative, gun crime and violent crime has also decreased 53% in Parkwood.

The Crime Analysis/Research Grantee at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte prepares reports on gun and violent crime data, which the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Western District of North Carolina then uses to evaluate and make any necessary modifications to our PSN strategy.

During 2005, the USAO also conducted numerous law enforcement training events known as “Road Shows”. Topics included federal firearms laws, gang identifiers, and methamphetamine use.

The Western District of North Carolina has engaged in numerous community and school outreach efforts. Some of those efforts have included: presentations by ex-offenders in middle schools throughout the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system; the Bridge Job Program and the Energy Committed to Offenders Program (ECO), which help ex-offenders obtain education and employment; The Walk-Thru program, which informs residents about PSN in Shelby neighborhoods; and various media efforts, including billboards, posters, and radio ads.

Another noteworthy effort in the district is the Parkwood Plan for Charlotte’s Parkwood Corridor. The plan is a three-phase system for preventing firearms violence at the community level. Phase One involves a door-to-door campaign. Phase Two involves community cleanups and public events. It also involves community meetings with store owners and other interested parties to discuss the community’s needs. Phase Three involves a landlord involvement/nuisance abatement campaign to help improve tenant living conditions.

### **DISTRICT OF NORTH DAKOTA**

North Dakota continues to be active in both its Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) enforcement and outreach efforts. The district places emphasis on partnerships, and the task force includes various federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, prosecutors’ offices, and the state’s Indian Affairs Commission. Their efforts have led to a significant increase in firearms prosecutions, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the District of North Dakota believes it will continue to see increases in the future. The district is also active in engaging community members. For

example, the task force has utilized billboards, television, and other advertising media to promote gun crime reduction. The following detailed descriptions of PSN enforcement and outreach activities demonstrate the success of PSN in North Dakota and the importance of its state and local grant assistance.

In the District of North Dakota, the PSN task force includes the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigations, the Bismarck Police Department, the Cass Sheriff's Office and State's Attorney, the Grand Forks State's Attorney's (SA) Office, and the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission. The task force focuses its efforts on violent firearms offenses, illegal possession of firearms by convicted felons and other prohibited persons, and on chronic offenders. The task force reviews firearms arrests to determine whether state or federal prosecution will be more effective in individual cases.

The district's PSN efforts led to more than double the number of federal firearms defendants in 2002 compared to 2001, and a 20% increase from FY 2000 to FY 2004. The number of federal firearms cases filed by the district then increased more than 62% from FY 2004 to FY 2005.

Recognizing that arrests and prosecutions alone will not effectively combat gun violence, the District of North Dakota has implemented community outreach campaigns to engage the communities and educate citizens about the dangers of gun violence and the penalties for federal firearms offenses. The PSN task force has used posters, flyers, ads on television and radio, and billboards to bring the "Gun Crime Means Hard Time" message to the

community's young people, parents, and criminals.

### **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO**

The United States Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Northern District of Ohio incorporates Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) methodologies and strategies into its strategic plan to reduce firearms crime within the district.

The Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force (NOVFTF) has undermined the ability of gangs to conceal fugitives from prosecution. Organized by the United States Marshals Service and comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement, the NOVFTF has arrested over 6,612 fugitives, including 133 homicide suspects, and in the process has seized more unlawful firearms than any other similar task force.

As part of its PSN partnerships and strategies, the Northern District of Ohio devised a comprehensive plan to target violent crime in Youngstown. Between 1998 and 2000, Mahoning County, in which Youngstown is the largest city, had a per capita firearms-related homicide rate three times higher than any other county in the jurisdiction, with 50 homicides per 100,000 people. From July to September 2003, the Violence and Gun Crime Interdiction Program (V.G.R.I.P.) resulted in over 369 arrests. During this same time period, only one homicide occurred, which represented a significant decline from the same period in previous years. The V.G.R.I.P. cases in federal court resulted in an average sentence of 59.6 months. For 2003, there were 55 federal prosecutions of firearm offenders from Youngstown, an increase of 290% from 2002. The PSN media and research partners assisted in the effort by devising a strategy that placed V.G.R.I.P. billboards

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

within 3000 feet of 61% of the known gun offenders in the Youngstown area.

The partnerships between the USAO, county prosecutors, and federal and local law enforcement proved to be highly successful in combating firearms violence. Beginning in 2002, the partnerships between federal and county prosecutors resulted in over 2,700 firearms and gang-related prosecutions. In 2005, there were 220 firearm prosecutions from the target cities with an average sentence of 74.8 months imprisonment. In 2005, federal prosecutions of violent firearm offenders from the target cities were up 19.5% over 2004—42% over 2003, and 88% over 2002. Between 2003 and 2005, three PSN Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) indicted 559 firearms cases. Overall, the number of federal gun convictions has tripled since 2001.

Fugitive Safe Surrender was an innovative and nationally-recognized program designed to reduce the presence of fugitives and gangs. As a new alliance of public, private, nonprofit, faith-based, and law enforcement agencies, Fugitive Safe Surrender gave fugitives, many of whom had gang affiliations, a four-day period in August 2005, when they could surrender in a safe environment. A six-week media and community outreach campaign preceded the surrender days. Ultimately, a staggering 842 fugitives surrendered. After the surrender period, the Fugitive Task Force conducted fugitive sweeps and arrested an additional 65 fugitives.

The district's youth gun violence prevention strategies are being implemented district-wide and involve community outreach, faith-based initiatives, and school programming. The USAO is working with Rural Opportunities to provide family-oriented gun-violence prevention services in

eight rural counties. The district has partnered with InterAct Cleveland, a faith-based initiative, to organize Cleveland area youth to develop multimedia projects to encourage their peers and parents to forego gun crime and support other avenues of conflict resolution. Another PSN partner, Youth4Youth, organizes student-run teams in Lorain County high schools and middle schools to create gun-free schools and a safe and positive educational environment. Summit County Juvenile Court, the Summit County Sheriff and the Akron Public Schools are also working with the USAO to take the message of gun crime prevention to 23 public middle schools, serving over 14,800 students.

Finally, using PSN grant funds, the Youngstown and Cleveland Public Schools and the Cuyahoga County and Mahoning County Juvenile Courts have implemented a program to place juvenile court probation officers in schools. This program allows closer coordination between school administrators, teachers, parents, and juvenile justice professionals to prevent access to firearms by violent youthful offenders, to ensure compliance with court ordered conditions of supervision, and to promote the safety of students and teachers.

## **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO**

Project Disarm is the firearm crime reduction program for the Southern District of Ohio. Project Disarm uses task forces of local and federal law enforcement agents in Cincinnati, Dayton, and Columbus to investigate and prosecute firearms offenses against those individuals who are considered the "worst of the worst."

In response to statistics that showed an overall reduction in violent crime but an increase in homicide, data was studied to

discern the most effective way to deal with the increase in firearm-related deaths. Based on the crime statistics available, it was not surprising to learn that the average violent offender was under 28 years of age, and the majority of murders were drug-related. Project Disarm has since been refocused to prosecute the younger offender with a history of violence and drug offenses. In Cincinnati, there are several cases now pending where the defendant is an Armed Career Offender candidate despite being under the age of 22.

Ohio is also a source state for firearms. As such, another focus of the district's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) efforts has been the prosecution of the straw purchaser and unlicensed flea market gun dealers. To date, straw purchasers have been convicted and imprisoned for supplying guns to individuals in New York, Boston, and Canada. Multiple flea markets have also been investigated, and eight individuals are being prosecuted from three different markets throughout the district.

Finally, Project Disarm has worked extensively with the local communities to break the cycle of violence. Dayton launched a summer gun crime reduction program. The district is most proud of the formation in Cincinnati of the first Crimestoppers high school program in the state. The outreach program has been very active in the schools and recently held a contest to produce a "Crimestoppers anthem." The young men and women involved in the contest ranged from high school age to elementary school age. The kids wrote and produced their own original works with the help of school staff.

## **EASTERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA**

The task force's initial plan was to formulate and execute an investigative and prosecutorial model that could fit the specific needs of agents, prosecutors, and judges. After tremendous success at the local level, the task force expanded that model throughout the Eastern District of Oklahoma. What has transpired is a mobilized, enthusiastic, and proactive law enforcement entity that shares information and works well together. There are ten elected District Attorneys (DAs), and each district provides the task force with three names (for a total of 30) for a "Dirty Thirty" or "Top Thirty" list of the most dangerous offenders in the area. The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) effort has achieved historical success because of the support of hard-working Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) and DAs, and the task force is now consistently taking down some of the most violent and lethal individuals in the state.

In late 2004, the USAO and its research partners hosted a district-wide training to introduce the PSN initiative. All of the DAs, city police officers, sheriffs, task force officers, and probation officers in the district were invited to attend. The USAO outlined the federal system and PSN goals and shared success stories achieved by local officers, agents, and area prosecutors. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) outlined gun tracing, and the USAO educated those unfamiliar with federal prosecutions on what to expect and on the types of cases the PSN task force could assist with. The district is planning a conference for PSN training for mid-2006.

The Project Sentry coordinator for the Eastern District of Oklahoma is working to develop a message for recreational shooters

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA

to assure them that PSN preserves and honors second amendment rights by punishing those that use firearms illegally, and by minimizing the threat arising from illegal guns in the hands of those who would target children. To this end, the coordinator has begun educating law enforcement officers and local school administrators about Project Sentry. This effort has involved a series of meetings with educators and leaders in the law enforcement community. The meetings will be followed by a process of cataloguing the efforts of educators and law enforcement leaders to plan for targeted school anti-violence events and employ threat assessment tools as a preventative measure.

A Project ChildSafe representative issued over 1,500 free gun locks and gun safety educational material to area law enforcement agencies in Sequoyah County.

### **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA**

The well-established cooperative effort of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies continues to address the violent crime in the Northern District of Oklahoma. This has been accomplished in various ways. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Tulsa Police Department, the Tulsa County Sheriff's Office, and other local and state agencies have provided exceptional manpower for this effort, with ATF also contributing financial resources to assist with these investigations. The U.S Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Northern District of Oklahoma recognized a Tulsa County Sheriff's Deputy who is assigned to ATF as a task force officer to assist in the investigation and prosecution of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) cases for outstanding service. Additionally, the USAO works in

cooperation with the Tulsa County District Attorney's Office and other district attorney's offices to address violent crime. The violent criminal population of the Northern District of Oklahoma continues to include multiple loose-knit, relatively unsophisticated gangs and gun traffickers. Additionally, an emerging gang violence problem is occurring in a particular geographic area of the City of Tulsa. A cooperative effort of federal law enforcement agencies and local and state agencies to address gang homicides has resulted in the identification of a large number of violent offenders, many of whom have charges filed or pending.

Gang-related murders have accounted for a relatively large percentage of all murders in the Tulsa area since 2002. The percentage appears to be dramatically increasing, as seven of the fifteen murders committed in January and February of 2006 were gang-related. Initially, law enforcement reacted by executing numerous search warrants and conducting short-term investigations.

In October 2004, the USAO, ATF, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) presented training for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, Probation, and Parole. The training presented a general survey of federal firearms laws. A presentation on RICO investigations and prosecutions was given to local law enforcement and prosecutors.

There has been a marked increase in the number of federal PSN indictments since 2001. There was also an increase in the number of indictments from the first half of 2004 to the last half. As part of a joint effort between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to address gang homicides, a list of targets was compiled as of February 2004. As of February 9, 2005,

charges were either pending or had been filed against approximately 70% of the targets.

School and youth “speak-outs” have become a popular and effective tool over the last year. Officials have spoken at several middle, junior high, and high schools, sometimes to audiences of between 500 and 1,000 students. From January to October 2005, presentations were made to 8,011 people. PSN partners, including the Community Outreach director (an individual who is a former federal convict and now works with a community outreach program through the Tulsa Police Department), have made dozens of gun and gang violence presentations at schools, juvenile court, the juvenile detention facility, and other places.

The State Department of Corrections, Probation, and Parole indicated that supervision of offenders has noticeably improved following offender notification sessions. One noteworthy success story from these meetings involves a state offender, who attended the initial offender notification meeting, reported to Workforce Tulsa the following day, enrolled in Tulsa Community College, and eventually gained permanent employment.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA**

Through its Project Exile initiative, the Western District of Oklahoma has formed strategic partnerships to identify and prosecute criminals that present the gravest danger to society. For example, the Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center has completed an extensive crime mapping project by compiling statistics and locating gun crime “hot spots” that help focus law enforcement efforts. The U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Western District of

Oklahoma has also partnered with Oklahoma City Crimestoppers to develop a media campaign to warn felons about the consequences of being caught with a firearm.

Weed and Seed is an important partner in Project Exile. The USAO works with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections to “call-in” individuals on parole and living in a Weed and Seed area and prosecutes all gun crimes committed in the Weed and Seed area. Weed and Seed partners help to spread the word about Project Exile in the Weed and Seed area.

Finally, the Project Sentry programs have proven to be a very successful part of our Project Exile initiative. THRIVE (Truancy Habits Reduced Increasing Valuable Education) is a truancy reduction program. It provides two deputy sheriffs to work with youths and families through the county truancy docket and to escort truant youths to the THRIVE center. At the center, the youths are lectured about gun crime reduction and the risks associated with gang activity, and illegal drug use. They view the “dead book” showing crime scenes and autopsy photographs of former THRIVE center truants that failed to heed the warnings about violent behaviors. Overall, Project Exile has been widely praised by the public and members of the law enforcement community.

### **DISTRICT OF OREGON**

The District of Oregon continues to demonstrate its commitment to the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative by tackling gun violence with aggressive enforcement efforts by police, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and federal and state prosecutors, along with extensive prevention and

## DISTRICT OF OREGON

outreach efforts. Oregon's PSN Executive Committee coordinates and funds a comprehensive prevention strategy to reduce gun violence that includes parole and probation officers with specialized gang and domestic violence caseloads, extensive community and school outreach, and juvenile gun prosecution—all supported by the district's media and research components.

Federal firearms prosecutions have increased substantially using a strengthened and steady referral process from state prosecutors, police, and parole officers. The priority of that casework is given to Armed Career Criminal (ACC), gang, and domestic violence-based firearms cases. The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the district of Oregon conducted extensive training throughout the district which enhanced the referral process. The district held a PSN conference in May 2005 entitled "Building Partnerships to Reduce Gun Violence." The conference brought together 100 law enforcement, probation, and community outreach workers from all over Oregon for a multi-dimensional conference and focused on ACC cases, gang cases, domestic violence enforcement tools and strategies, and community outreach methods.

Eighty firearms cases were opened in the Portland office during 2005. PSN and Sentry goals are consistently addressed in regular training to law enforcement and prosecutors throughout the state, as well as in the PSN newsletter, which is distributed to every police agency and prosecutor's office in the district. Additionally, the specially-designated juvenile gun prosecutor in the Multnomah County District Attorney's (DA's) Office began his funded efforts in September 2003 and has filed a total of 131 cases involving illegal gun possession by juveniles in that time period.

The district has also formulated an anti-gang strategy and with the support of the PSN Executive Committee created a Metro Gang Task Force, which includes officers from six local police agencies, ATF and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

All prevention and outreach efforts are coordinated through an Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA)-chaired Grantee Subcommittee, a group that has met regularly to share information and ensure a coordinated effort. In one of the district's prevention efforts, the Portland Police Bureau Domestic Violence Reduction Unit (DVRU) worked with the PSN research team from Portland State University to develop new methods for assessing lethality risk from reports of domestic violence. Two Executive Committee-funded PSN probation officers seized an extensive number of illegal firearms from individuals being supervised in Multnomah County on a specialized domestic violence caseload. Also, the district's media campaign involved significant efforts to educate the public about ways to report gun crime and illegal gun possession. In another prevention effort, probation officers conducted a required summer youth employment and life skills program for the most serious juvenile offenders, many with gang affiliations, which resulted in 100% prevention of recidivism during the course of the program.

Outreach efforts include a significant TV, radio, and print media campaign, involving public service messages (PSAs), the first Spanish language domestic violence PSA in the country, and the creation and maintenance of the PSN Oregon website, [www.PSNOregon.org](http://www.PSNOregon.org). The district conducted a jail poster campaign with deterrence message posters reaching local prisoners. PSN-funded efforts included



numerous community and school programs, youth forums, parent information sessions, and community surveys. Community outreach strategies focused on three areas in the Portland metro area: North/Northeast Portland, East Portland, and Gresham/Rockwood. In the North/Northeast and East Portland areas, program managers from the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement created community action teams to address local concerns and problems. They held youth forums, parent information sessions, and conducted community surveys. The teams have also worked with the Media Subcommittee to assist with public information efforts. The East Portland group created and disseminated a brochure and video. In the Gresham/Rockwood area, one deputy DA partnered with El Programa Hispano to conduct focus groups and information exchanges with middle and high school students and their parents on federal and state firearms laws and the importance of reporting gun crimes.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

U.S. Attorney (USA) Patrick L. Meehan has a message for violent gangs and drug traffickers operating in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties – Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) works and is shifting into high gear. Since its implementation in the district in 2002, the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and its local and federal law enforcement partners have established joint task forces in Reading, Lancaster, and the Lehigh Valley, which includes the cities of Easton, Bethlehem, and Allentown, to combat violent gangs operating in these

cities. These task forces were organized around the core principle that firearms-related violence will be reduced where there is strategic cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement. Nowhere has this been demonstrated more than in Lancaster County, where federal agents and Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) have teamed with local police and prosecutors to create a potent weapon against gangs and the attendant firearms-related violence.

The federal indictment of the Fifty Million Soldiers gang is emblematic of the extraordinary success of the Lancaster PSN Task Force. The gang, headed by members transplanted from New York City, used violence and mayhem to dominate the crack cocaine markets in the City of Lancaster and the surrounding area. Local police working with federal agents assigned to the task force shared intelligence about the Fifty Million Soldiers gang. AUSA Mark Miller and Special AUSA Kenneth Brown, a Lancaster County prosecutor detailed to the USAO, targeted lower-level members of the gang for prosecution in federal court. According to Lancaster County District Attorney (DA) Donald R. Totaro, some of the gang members immediately began to cooperate with investigators when faced with long federal prison sentences. The information from the cooperators, coupled with other evidence obtained by task force investigators, provided overwhelming evidence of a violent gang with roots in many states. The indictment charged 13 gang members with using straw purchasers to buy firearms in South Carolina. According to the indictment, gang members traveled to New York City where they exchanged the firearms for drugs. The gang then sold the drugs on street corners in Lancaster City, while using deadly force to shoot and kill competitors who attempted to

## MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

sell on their turf, or who made the fatal mistake of stealing their drugs and cash proceeds.

The Fifty Million Soldiers prosecution is only the most recent example of many federal investigations resulting in successful prosecutions brought by the Lancaster PSN Task Force. The success of the Lancaster PSN Task Force's efforts since 2002 is borne out by statistics. Since its inception, 74 Lancaster defendants have been charged federally, 44 of whom have been sentenced in federal court, and the remaining 30 are awaiting sentencing or trial. Largely because of this effort, homicides have declined 88%, armed robberies have declined approximately 40%, and aggravated assaults with firearms have declined approximately 50%.

The USAO actively promotes the successful approach of the Lancaster PSN Task Force in other cities in the district. In Philadelphia, AUSAs and federal law enforcement agents are now assigned to work with detectives and local prosecutors in each of the six Philadelphia police detective divisions to identify and target groups of violent offenders operating there. By targeting violent offenders based on police intelligence, the USAO is presenting a focused approach to violent crime in the City of Philadelphia.

The robust efforts in Lancaster, Philadelphia, and other Eastern District cities are supplemented through the USAO's innovative PSN Mapping and Analysis Program, which has been used to provide: (1) a district-wide mapping capability to track violent crimes and drug offenses, and (2) an intelligence communication system for use by all law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in the district. By linking law enforcement agencies in the district through

the PSN Mapping program, the USAO is facilitating an intelligence-based, regional approach against gang and firearms crime occurring in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

### **MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

The district's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative established bilateral partnerships with all of the interested District Attorney's (DA's) Offices located throughout the jurisdiction to improve working relations, coordinate efforts, and enhance the quality and quantity of firearms referrals. On a continuing basis, the district works jointly with the DA and the state and local law enforcement agencies in each county to create a viable firearms task force. Within each county, a designated Assistant District Attorney (ADA) screens firearms incidents for cases meriting referral for federal prosecution. Referrals are made on a real-time basis, and cases are jointly investigated and prosecuted by the most appropriate jurisdiction. In general, defendants who qualify as Armed Career Criminals (ACCs) or who use firearms during the course of a drug trafficking crime will be prosecuted federally.

As a result of one of these joint task force initiatives, authorities in Dauphin County were able to solve a series of firearms burglaries that were fueling a dangerous black market in stolen guns. This task force investigation led to the arrest of individuals involved in these burglaries within 24 hours of the commission of the last firearms theft. As a result of this teamwork, within one month of the crime, four men were indicted and charged federally with possession of stolen firearms, theft of firearms, conspiracy to sell stolen firearms, felon-in-possession, and use of a firearm in a crime of violence.

Each defendant faces up to 42 years in prison as a result of these efforts. The Middle District of Pennsylvania's PSN task force has also disrupted drug gang wars in one central Pennsylvania community, Lebanon County, by successfully prosecuting more than a dozen individuals involved in violent gang activity. The task force also addresses some of the district's most dangerous non-gang offenders: Working in conjunction with the local DA in Dauphin County, the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Middle District of Pennsylvania is pursuing firearms charges relating to the attempted murder of a local police officer by an escaped prisoner. With the implementation of PSN, there was a 159% increase in federal prosecutions of firearms offenses between FY 2000 and FY 2004 in the district. Within the last fiscal year, the district has increased its prosecution of federal firearms offenses by over 106%.

Historically, the district has emphasized joint training with state and local police as a leading element to its integrated strategy aimed at combating firearms violence. Key elements in the district's training and outreach include student pledge programs and law enforcement training. Annual student firearms pledge programs are held throughout the district, which each year lead to tens of thousands of pledges that students will refrain from firearms violence. The district also hosted more than 20 training programs in recent years for law enforcement, many covering the PSN initiative.

Dauphin County DA Edward M. Marsico lauded the success of the federal and state partnership: "In Dauphin County, specifically Harrisburg, over 35 defendants have been indicted in federal court where they face significantly more jail time than in

the state system. Our goal is to reduce violent crime and to stop individuals from illegally using firearms. It is very simple, if you are illegally carrying a firearm, you are going to jail for a long time." (USAO Press Release: "Project Safe Neighborhoods Succeeds in Fighting Gun Crime in Dauphin County", Dec. 22, 2003.)

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

In the Western District of Pennsylvania, the collaborative approach of the U.S. Attorney's Office's (USAO's) task force of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and community members has resulted in extraordinary success. Federal firearm prosecutions in the district have increased nearly fivefold from 24 in FY 2000 to 118 in FY 2004. As of September 2005, firearms prosecutions have increased by more than 100% during the lifetime of the PSN program. Ninety-eight percent of these cases have resulted in prison terms, with 56% yielding jail terms exceeding five years. Most significantly, however, the number of homicides has dropped from 125 in 2003 to 61 in 2005.

The district has used Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) funds to support police violent crime forensic labs, firearms investigation training for local police, and overtime funding to increase the police profile in high crime areas and to allow local officers to be detailed to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

Beyond empirical measures of success, anecdotal evidence demonstrates that this district's initiative is having a concrete, positive impact on the communities it serves. Prosecutors and police agencies report that felons and drug traffickers

## DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO

arrested for firearm offenses have stated that they fear federal prosecution because of the high rate of conviction and certainty of enhanced prison time. Morale among local police agencies and prosecutors actively participating in this program is extremely high, because those agencies can see the immediate benefits they are deriving from PSN.

Working with its PSN fiscal agent, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the district has distributed its grant funds to community-driven violent crime reduction initiatives throughout the region. This funding has allowed non-profit community organizations to create solutions to gun violence that are tailored-made for their particular neighborhoods. The USAO and Weed and Seed personnel have supported education-based youth firearms reduction initiatives through its Adopt-A-School and Gang-Free School programs. These programs have reached more than 21,000 teens during the past four years.

### **DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO**

Since the implementation of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), violent crime rates have dropped significantly in the District of Puerto Rico. From 2002 to 2005, Puerto Rico experienced a 29.4% decrease in violent crime. Additionally, federal prosecutions have increased, with case information for the September 2005 reporting period showing that the district handled 32 PSN-related cases and 82 defendants, which represents a 60% increase in cases submitted and a 140% increase in defendants charged since the previous reporting period.

The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Puerto Rico has supplemented its enforcement efforts by working with its

Community Outreach Partner, "Alianza para un Puerto Rico sin Drogas" (Alliance for a Drug-Free Puerto Rico), which is dedicated to preventing drug use and trafficking among children. They run workshops for children and have worked hard to get their message out through public information and media campaigns. Also, under Project Sentry, juveniles who are charged with gun crimes that involve drug trafficking or violence are prosecuted federally.

The USAO has recently been working with the Puerto Rico Department of Education to coordinate the district's outreach activities.

### **DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND**

The District of Rhode Island continues to demonstrate its commitment to the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative with aggressive enforcement efforts and creative approaches to outreach and prevention. The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Rhode Island prosecutes every proveable federal firearms violation from within the target area—the City of Providence. As a result, the number of federal gun prosecutions in Providence has quadrupled since 2002 and in Providence, gun-related crime decreased significantly in 2003 and 2004.

Prosecution efforts have been combined with expanded outreach and prevention efforts. Through the "lever-pulling" program, the U.S. Attorney (USA) and the PSN Coordinator routinely visit middle schools and high schools to explain the consequences of gun violence and illegal gun possession. The PSN Coordinator also visits the state prison to educate inmates about to be released about federal firearms laws. These lever-pulling sessions have been expanded to the state juvenile detention facility.

Other outreach and prevention efforts include the development of the “Streetworkers” program, a network of violence intervention workers who counsel young people at the neighborhood level and a gun violence reduction poster contest designed to engage young people. In addition, the PSN Coordinator and other members of the office have joined local law enforcement at numerous community meetings to listen and respond to the concerns of residents of Providence’s high crime neighborhoods.

PSN grants have supported two state prosecutors who are assigned to the task force and devoted to reducing gun crime in Rhode Island. One of the prosecutors works with an Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) to review firearms-related arrests and determine whether state or federal prosecution will be more effective in individual cases. The second prosecutor leads community prosecution efforts in Providence’s Mt. Hope and Upper South Side neighborhoods.

The district’s PSN Coordinator has conducted “investigatory stop” Fourth Amendment training sessions for Providence Police and other Rhode Island police departments. Some of these training sessions have also included discussions about gang issues and crowd control.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the PSN message is being heard. In one case, when Providence Police Department officers apprehended a man who had fled from them, the man screamed several times, “Am I going federal?” The officers then recovered a .45 caliber revolver from the car the offender had been driving. He pled guilty in May 2005 to being a felon in possession of a firearm and was sentenced as an Armed Career Criminal to 15 years in federal

prison. USA Robert Corrente said, “No case better demonstrates the district’s efforts in Project Safe Neighborhoods than this one. . . . It is clear that the message is out there—if you are a felon carrying a gun, you will be prosecuted federally, you will go to prison for a significant amount of time, and that prison will be a long way from home.”

Statistics indicate a significant decrease in gun-related crime and reported incidents from 2003 and 2004. This includes: robbery with a firearm, down 37.2%; assault with a firearm, down 25.7%; shots fired, down 43.6%; person with a gun, down 29.6%. Police attribute this sharp decline to their emphasis on community policing and their partnership with the USAO in prosecuting more firearms cases on the federal level. The USAO and its partners collaborated on the “All About Gun Safety” newspaper insert that advertised a billboard design contest in which the winning gun safety poster was displayed on a Rhode Island billboard. The USAO and Hasbro Children’s Hospital sponsored an additional gun safety billboard design contest that engaged young people to spread the gun crime reduction message to their neighborhoods. The district placed public service outreach message “Gun Crime = Hard Time” on television, posters, flyers, newspapers, and billboards.

## DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

### **DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

Through unprecedented cooperation at all levels of law enforcement, the number of federal firearm prosecutions in South Carolina have increased dramatically since the inception of Project Ceasefire, the District of South Carolina's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative.

Throughout South Carolina, many repeat violent offenders caught with firearms or ammunition have been convicted and incarcerated for long periods in federal prison. Ceasefire has been successful, and the cooperation and coordination between law enforcement agencies across the entire state have been unprecedented.

Ceasefire concentrates on violent recidivists through "2211" criteria, which was established to target the "worst of the worst" felons for federal firearm prosecution. The "2211" criteria refers to felons who have two or more prior violent felony convictions or two or more prior serious drug convictions, or one of each. In light of the alarming statewide domestic violence statistics, the district is also directing efforts toward those persons caught with a firearm who have qualifying criminal domestic violence convictions.

In addition to prosecution, a primary focus of Project Ceasefire is training local law enforcement officers about the difference between state and federal firearm statutes, the elements of a federal case, and tracing of firearms. In September 2005, Ceasefire sponsored a "Guns and Gangs" training seminar, featuring speakers from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) MS-13 National Gang Task Force. Officers from 59 law enforcement agencies across the state attended that two day training seminar.

Additionally, since the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services (SCDPPPS) supervises a large number of felons who fall within Ceasefire criteria, a partnership was forged, and each of their 450 agents received Ceasefire training. The district also developed a laminated "Debriefing Questions" form, which is a guide to remind officers when debriefing suspects to ask about firearms, drugs, gangs, burglaries, and other crimes.

Ceasefire's training initiative has generated an enormous increase in case referrals from local law enforcement to the ATF and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of South Carolina. Since the inception of Ceasefire in 2002, over 1,000 federal firearm cases have been prosecuted in the district. In 2005, over 66% federal firearm offenders were sentenced to imprisonment for 61 months or more. Ceasefire has also awarded the Richland County Sheriff's Department a PSN grant, which was used to hire a full-time firearms investigator. The Richland County Sheriff's Department recorded a 25% decrease in the number of firearm incidents reported during the first quarter of 2004 and an 18% decrease in the second quarter.

The USAO continues to work with local law enforcement to ensure that all recovered firearms are traced through the ATF. Through tracing, ATF has uncovered many interstate firearm trafficking conspiracies, which remains a problem along the I-95 corridor, known as the Iron Pipeline. The USAO, along with members of USAOs in seven other east coast districts, formed an "Iron Pipeline Working Group", which focuses on sharing information in firearms trafficking cases. The office has prosecuted several firearm trafficking organizations, including two that were trafficking firearms from South Carolina to New York in

exchange for narcotics, and one that trafficked firearms from South Carolina to gang members in Boston (the leader of which was convicted at trial and sentenced to 292 months imprisonment). Another trafficking case resulted in the successful prosecution of thirteen individuals, including the South Carolina straw purchasers and the Brooklyn, New York trafficker, who is awaiting sentencing.

The Project Sentry division of Ceasefire remains active with an annual logo contest held each April, where students from schools across the state submit posters incorporating the theme “Preventing Gun Violence in Your School”. The winners are chosen by “The Insiders”, a group of reformed incarcerated juveniles, who are transported across the state to speak with students. One winner is chosen from each of four age categories, and then one is chosen as the overall winner. All winners receive a \$100 savings bond. The winning logo is then placed on all Sentry brochures for that year. Every October, Sentry participates in the annual National Day of Concern about Young People and Gun Violence ([www.pledge.org](http://www.pledge.org)), where students around the country pledge to end gun violence. Sentry, through the district’s PSN media/outreach grantee, prints pledge certificates containing the names of the schools and the sponsoring local law enforcement agency, along with the Ceasefire/Sentry name. The pledges are distributed to students throughout the state, who voluntarily sign them. On pledge day, several Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) and agents from ATF and FBI, conduct school presentations.

The district’s research partner, the South Carolina Department of Public Service Statistical Analysis Center, assists Ceasefire in various ways. It collects statewide

firearm data, which is then shared with ATF in an effort to identify potential cases. The research partner also conducts crime mapping of areas with the highest reports of firearm incidents, which allows the local agencies to coordinate their patrols accordingly. It also conducts a survey with offenders currently on state probation to determine whether they are aware of Ceasefire and federal firearm laws and penalties. The survey audience was chosen as a result of an earlier PSN research project, which found that of the 4,355 offenders in South Carolina that met the “2211” criteria, approximately 36% of them are currently under the supervision of the SCDPPS.

Finally, the district’s ShotSpotter systems are still active. ShotSpotter is a system of electronic gunfire detection sensors that notify 911 dispatches upon detecting a gunshot. The systems, which can determine the location of the gunshot to within 40 feet, are monitored by one of the PSN partners, the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLETC).

The South Carolina Law Enforcement Officers’ Association, the PSN media partner, continues to assist in the statewide distribution of PSN public service announcements through television, radio, and billboard campaigns. The district also translated Ceasefire brochures and posters into Spanish, and they are now available to local law enforcement. A toll-free gun hotline (1-877-GUNS-411) continues to be manned as part of Ceasefire. Community outreach initiatives also include distribution of Project ChildSafe free gunlocks to community groups and schools, and making presentations to various neighborhood groups, citizen police academies, and service organizations.

## DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA

### **DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA**

The District of South Dakota continues to demonstrate its commitment to the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative by equipping law enforcement officers with comprehensive training and resources, and by engaging in extensive school outreach efforts. As part of its enforcement efforts, the district provides training sessions on federal firearms laws for non-federal law enforcement officers in the state. The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of South Dakota is also in the process of developing a pilot project for crime mapping on the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation. In addition to these efforts, the USAO has spearheaded a school and youth outreach effort, which includes partnering with the Sioux Falls Police Department to host a School Safety Conference for School Resource Officers, making presentations to middle and high school students on gun crime reduction, and developing a youth leadership course to educate juvenile inmates about making good choices in the future.

The following detailed descriptions of the above-mentioned PSN enforcement and outreach activities demonstrate the success of PSN in South Dakota and the importance of state and local grant assistance:

- The district conducts training sessions on federal firearms laws for non-federal law enforcement officers in the state. According to pre- and post-testing surveys, officers' knowledge of the laws increased on average from a score of 51.8% to 87.6%.
- The USAO is in the process of working with its research partner to meet with authorities on the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation to develop a pilot project for

crime mapping. It is believed that the level of violent crime on many American Indian Reservations is under-reported. By selecting one reservation, the district is interested in seeing whether the development of a more accurate reporting system and the use of crime mapping lead to reduced violent crime.

- The USAO has partnered with the Sioux Falls Police Department to host a School Safety Conference for School Resource Officers, school principals and administrators, and law enforcement officers throughout the state. With the help of the Sioux Falls PD, over 200 people from five states attended the conference. The conference covered areas including school shootings, crisis response plans, Indian country issues, and the psychology of victims and witnesses to disasters.

The training consultant that provides the law enforcement training also makes presentations to middle and high school students throughout the state. To supplement the educational materials developed by the consultant, the gun violence reduction message is introduced to teenagers with an eight-minute video. The consultant then presents information on gun crime, which is specifically geared towards the audience. In preparation for those presentations, two focus groups consisting of teenage American Indians were shown the video in late June to gauge response. The remarks from the focus groups indicated that most of the students agreed that they felt safe in their communities and that the video provided valuable information. During the 2004-2005 school year, presentations were made to well over 2,000 juveniles.



- Additionally, a youth leadership development course has been developed entitled the North Star Leadership Course. The course is targeted to juveniles that are already in the juvenile justice system and have been identified as at-risk to commit violent crimes in the future. The purpose is to train these at-risk juveniles to think about the long-term consequences of violent criminal behavior and to establish positive goals for their life. The course takes 10 to 12 students at a time and is taught by a training coordinator, as well as volunteers from the community. Topics include job searches and interviews, completing education, money management, and ethics. The course has been conducted in six different cities so far, and the correctional officers who supervise the participants have made positive comments about the course.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE**

The Eastern District of Tennessee (EDTN) spans from the Virginia/North Carolina border down to Georgia and has three metropolitan areas: Knoxville, Chattanooga, and the Tri-Cities area (Johnson City, Bristol, and Kingsport). Of the three federal judicial districts in Tennessee, the Eastern District is geographically the largest (41 of 95 counties) and also the most populous (over 2.5 million people). Within the district there are 15 state judicial districts and district attorney generals, 41 county sheriffs, and 117 chiefs of police.

The district has been fully committed to the implementation of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) and has experienced exceptional results. For example, over the last two years there has been a nearly 20 percent reduction in violent crime in the two major metropolitan areas of Knoxville and Chattanooga.

Within the EDTN, implementation of PSN has revolved around nine components. The first component is case screening. Every month, state and federal prosecutors meet with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agents and local police officers to review every crime in which firearms were seized or used to ensure that the case is prosecuted in the forum where the offender will receive the most appropriate sentence.

The second component is the Serious Offender List (SOL). On a monthly basis, representatives of police departments, district attorneys' offices, ATF, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Probation, Tennessee Probation and Parole, and sheriffs' departments meet. A list of the most violent offenders meeting certain objective criteria is maintained. Once an offender is placed on the SOL, both the district attorneys general and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the EDTN commit to expediting and seeking an appropriate sentence in any case involving that offender. During the monthly meetings, law enforcement intelligence information is shared among the participants and an informational sheet is created about each individual for distribution to patrol officers and investigators.

The third component involves the use of rapid response teams. In order to expeditiously and efficiently initiate federal

## EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

prosecution in appropriate cases, ATF agents are available to respond on a 24/7 basis to gun crime scenes. ATF agents work closely with local homicide and violent crime investigators. While police investigators focus on state criminal offenses, ATF agents conduct a parallel federal investigation focusing on potential federal firearms offenses.

The fourth component is training. In the EDTN, the USAO and ATF have undertaken aggressive training programs. Every year, agents and prosecutors team up to conduct hundreds of hours of training on search and seizure, constitutional law, Miranda, firearms identification, firearms tracing, evidence handling, and federal firearms laws. In addition, ATF, University of Tennessee Law Enforcement Innovation Center, Knox County Sheriff's Department, and the USAO have cosponsored other one-time PSN training opportunities, including an officer survival school and the PSN Enforcement Training, which included an executive session (for chiefs, sheriffs, and district attorneys general) and line-officer/investigator training sessions on characteristics of armed persons, locating hidden compartments, and interviewing firearms violators.

The fifth component involves periodic warrant sweeps. Modeled after a successful program in Indianapolis, Indiana, the Knox County Sheriff's Department established teams of officers and agents from the U.S. Marshals Service, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, ATF, FBI, Knoxville Police Department, and state and federal probation and parole. Warrants on offenders with the most serious histories were then distributed to teams. In early morning sweeps, more than sixty officers arrested dozens of offenders. The initiative has been well received by the community and media.

The sixth component is media and public awareness. The media has become an active partner in PSN within the EDTN. Lamar Advertising has been a leader in this area donating billboards with an estimated value of more than \$120,000. These billboards have displayed the local PSN slogans all of which also include the phrase "Gun Crime Means Hard Time" and the PSN logo. Similarly, the University of Tennessee's Law Enforcement Innovation Center, working through university production facilities, has created individualized end segments, or trailers, with local district attorneys general, chiefs of police, and sheriffs speaking after the national ad. These national ads with the local trailers were released to the area media, and appeared for several months. Finally, the Knoxville Police Department obtained a twelve-foot trailer with PSN markings which is placed in high visibility locations around the district.

The seventh component is the crime suppression initiative. Periodically and at unannounced times, teams of law enforcement officials including police officers, deputy sheriffs, state probation officers, fire inspectors, and highway patrol officers saturate geographic areas where violent crime rates are the highest and during periods when gun crime occurs most frequently. Through increased law enforcement presence, violent criminals who would otherwise be active in the area are deterred from engaging in illegal behavior.

The eighth component is education. While many of the other components of our initiative have resulted in reductions in violent gun crime, sustaining those reductions is equally important. The cornerstone to sustaining those reductions is youth education. Working through the

Knoxville Police Department school resource officers, a pilot program has been implemented in an alternative school focusing on the children at greatest risk. The program is currently being expanded into one of the two largest inner-city high schools.

The ninth component is community outreach. This component is also viewed as critical to long-term sustainability of the violent crime reductions. A PSN prosecutor participates regularly with community leaders in meetings in the geographic area which has experienced the highest rate of violent gun crime. Through those outreach efforts, the community has become aware of the goals of PSN, and positive interactions have developed.

#### **MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE**

The Middle District of Tennessee's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative is locally known as HEAT (Help Eliminate Armed Thugs). The district's initiative expanded in July 2005 to include six detectives from the Metro Nashville Police Department (one from each precinct) to work PSN cases. The HEAT program is making a difference. The district increased its criminal prosecutions by 154% between 2001 and 2004. Since the early fall of 2002, in Davidson County alone, the HEAT program has accepted approximately 260 cases for prosecution. From January to September 2005, approximately 1,213 recovered guns and 1,069 suspects were processed through the HEAT program. "Through its state, local and federal partnership, the district is not only seeing increased sentences on the federal level, but also at the state level, where prosecutors are able to secure longer sentences on defendants who are seeking to avoid federal prosecution," said United States Attorney

(USA) Jim Vines.

The HEAT partnership has taken serious violent offenders off the streets, and particularly in public housing facilities, of the Middle District of Tennessee. In one case, one 32-year-old man was convicted by a federal jury in January 2006, of possessing almost one ounce of powder and crack cocaine with intent to distribute it and carrying a loaded semi-automatic handgun in relation to that offense. He was arrested by Metro Nashville Police Officer Sharraff Mallery in the University Court Apartments area of Nashville. When the man was taken into custody and fully searched, Officer Mallery recovered three plastic baggies containing different forms of cocaine, over \$200 in cash, a cell phone, and additional empty plastic bags. The man admitted that he had been selling drugs in the University Court area for about six months, and explained that the firearm found in his possession was for his protection. The man was recently sentenced to 15 years in federal prison for his crimes, which lead to the following statement by U.S. Attorney Jim Vines:

"[The offender] is the very example of the kind of offender properly targeted for federal prosecution as part of Project Safe Neighborhoods. . . . Though it is accurate to describe [the offender] as a comparatively small time street dealer, he is a repeat offender who chooses to prey upon the areas of our community which are the most vulnerable to, and plagued by, drug activity. As if that is not harmful enough, he chooses to arm himself, while engaged in that illegal activity, with a firearm he can't legally have at all as a convicted felon. Repeat offenders like [this one] who do not get the message after repeat appearances in our state courts need to know that the U.S. Attorney's Office is on the lookout for them, and that they are

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

subject to very significant penalties in federal court. Unlike the state system, federal sentences do not allow for parole. The jail sentence imposed in federal court is the jail sentence that will be served.”

In July 2005, the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Middle District of Tennessee provided instruction to approximately 100 local police officers on federal firearms laws, investigations, and prosecutions. Also, the Gatlinburg Law Enforcement Conference in May 2005 was largely organized by the USAO’s Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee and offered training sessions for hundreds of law enforcement officers focused on guns and gangs. The district’s PSN task force plans to offer training on a continuous basis to local law enforcement officers on Fourth Amendment issues, federal firearms laws, investigations and prosecutions, case preparation, report writing, and courtroom presentation. The task force also plans to continue with roll call presentations and updates for officers.

In August 2005, the Metro Nashville Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) announced a hotline for local middle and high school students to call to report guns in schools (232-AGUN). Under the program, callers can remain anonymous and collect a \$500 reward for information leading to the recovery of guns in schools. The police department committed approximately 70 officers to ensuring the safety of students in the school system. The ATF also developed a poster warning of the consequences of bringing guns to school.

The PSN Task Force—largely through the efforts of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee and its PSN Project Coordinator—held a public event in one of

the target areas in August 2005, which was aptly named “Unity in the Community”. Residents from the community, city government leaders, faith leaders, religious and civic groups, and law enforcement officials gathered to share information and ideas, celebrate the existing resources in the community, and reinforce the message that gun violence must be stopped. The event was well-attended and received news coverage from the local media.

As part of the comprehensive effort to stop gun violence, the task force is in the process of coordinating with local civic groups to develop youth tutoring and mentoring programs in target areas, utilizing existing community resources in an effort to provide opportunities for at-risk youths to participate in such activities as art productions, dances, sports, writing activities, and job training.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE**

The Western District of Tennessee’s Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Fugitive Task Force, manned by local and federal law enforcement officers, was created when the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives’s (ATF’s) local field office was unable to keep up with the service of the number of arrest warrants resulting from the significant increase in federal firearms indictments in the district. This task force, spearheaded by the U.S. Marshal and the Memphis Police Dept. Lieutenant supervising the PSN unit, inherited a backlog of 80 unserved warrants. Not only has the task force served 601 PSN arrest warrants between October 2002 and February 2006, but there currently are only four PSN fugitives remaining at large. In addition, through the innovative use of cellular phone records and cellular tower information obtained via federal court order, the PSN Fugitive Task Force has aided local

homicide and robbery bureaus in locating and arresting rapists, robbers, and killers, including an individual who brutally murdered and raped a local disc jockey after forcing his way into her downtown apartment and a group of individuals responsible for home intrusion robberies involving over 200 Hispanic victims in three different cities and two judicial districts.

Blue CRUSH (Criminal Reduction Utilizing Statistical History) is a Memphis Police Department-driven initiative that builds on the success of the PSN Unit and utilizes new technology to create multi-layer, interactive maps of crime hot-spots based on data from the previous week's arrests and incidents. With a few clicks of the mouse, investigators can use this system to evaluate crime patterns throughout the city, or in a single city block. Investigators can generate maps of crime patterns based on criminal offense, time of the day, day of the week, or various victim and offender characteristics. These maps are used to specifically focus investigative resources in order to take back neighborhoods one street at a time. Under the Blue CRUSH umbrella, existing police resources – including the multi-agency PSN Unit – have been co-located and are coordinating operations with a newly formed Criminal Apprehension Team, to identify and arrest gang members, drug dealers, and violent offenders. The Memphis Police Department works hand in hand with the District Attorney's (DA's) Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Western District of Tennessee to ensure that Blue CRUSH defendants are prosecuted in the most appropriate venue. A coordinated media campaign educates the community and magnifies the deterrent effect of Blue CRUSH enforcement operations.

Initial successes of Blue CRUSH include a 91% decrease in Hispanic robbery victims in

Memphis in October 2005. A dramatic increase in robberies of Hispanic individuals was detected by local officers and analyzed by the PSN Research Partner, who determined the robberies were occurring in specific apartment complexes at specific times on specific days. Most alarming was the fact that robberies of Hispanic victims had sky-rocketed from an average of 14 per week to 81 robberies per week. A Blue CRUSH operation and coordinated media campaign focused on this crime pattern for 30 days. During that time, PSN officers worked side by side with the other Blue CRUSH units in undercover operations and overtime details, and served Hispanic victims with court subpoenas and provided transportation to and from court. After 30 days and 32 arrests, robberies of Hispanic victims in the city plummeted from 81 per week to eight, and a significant number of Traveling Vice Lords and Unknown Vice Lords were in jail. This reduction in Hispanic robberies has now been maintained for four months.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program in the Eastern District of Texas illustrates the successful partnering of local, state and federal law enforcement with each other and with the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO). These successes are evidenced by the dramatic increases in the prosecution of federal firearm crimes in this district. The Eastern District of Texas boasts an impressive 188% increase in the number of federal firearm cases filed since the inception of this initiative, and a 198% increase in the number of defendants prosecuted. These successes are due in large part to the Eastern District of Texas's aggressive outreach and training campaign.

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

The outreach and training campaign has been instrumental in promoting personal relationships between state and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors and their federal counterparts. Periodic training sessions in all divisions of this district are conducted jointly by Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agents and Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) to both local and state agencies promoting awareness of the federal laws and assistance available from ATF agents in their own communities. These presentations are enhanced by the dispersal of various handouts including posters, pamphlets, fact sheets, and business cards. Additionally, this outreach and training program is not limited to law enforcement but is also frequently presented throughout the general community, with presentations being made to civic organizations and other community organizations. These training sessions and resulting enhanced relationships are a direct correlation to the number and types of cases being referred by local and state law enforcement to ATF.

The media outreach campaign has been an extraordinary partnership and a model for cooperation and team effort between the four districts in Texas. This coordinated effort is designed to achieve “economies of scale” and result in a large volume of high quality media in the form of posters, flyers, pamphlets, reference cards, and billboards, as well as video and audio commercials, at the lowest possible cost. Three of the districts in Texas pooled their media grant funding to coordinate a joint mass media campaign that provided almost statewide radio and television coverage of the localized PSN public service announcements. A partnership with the Texas Association of Broadcasters (TAB) enabled the districts to participate in a Non-Commercial Sustaining Announcements

(NCSA) program, whereby donated air time was provided by participating radio and television stations to air the PSN public service announcements. By pooling the media money and partnering with TAB, the districts were guaranteed a three-to-one return ratio on the \$240,000 allocated for this campaign. The campaign surpassed all expectations and provided an almost 12-to-1 return ratio with over \$2.8 million in donated air time. Another component of the media outreach effort was a statewide billboard campaign, in which all four districts participated. In an effort to leverage the funds allocated for the billboards, an advertising agency was hired to strategically place billboards in high crime zip codes. The advertising agency provided additional billboards at no additional cost.

## **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative in the Northern District of Texas focuses on Dallas and the West Texas divisions. The Dallas division office established two sub-committees: one for law enforcement, and the other focusing on community issues. The law enforcement component focuses on law enforcement strategies in the City of Dallas and is made up of law enforcement officials from the Dallas Police Department; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA); Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Northern District of Texas. The PSN strategies in the district have been successful.

Data compiled and analyzed by the research partner indicate that reported gun crime is

down citywide in Dallas, as compared to the inception of the program. It also is noteworthy that the rate of reported gun crime is down even more in the targeted neighborhoods of South and Southeast Dallas. The rate of decrease in reported crime in the targeted neighborhoods was over 26% in the South and over 16% in the Southeast, which exceeds the almost 15% decrease achieved citywide. The frequency of gun-related crime perpetrated by parolees is also down across the board, and the number of prosecutions is up remarkably at the prosecutor's offices, as is the number of cases closed through arrest by the U.S. Marshals Service. Additionally, the number of gun confiscations is up to the highest level since the inception of the initiative, and the incidence of rape, robbery, murder, and aggravated assault is down over the life of the program.

The PSN initiative in the West Texas divisions focuses on aggressive enforcement and prosecution of firearms crimes with the goal of reducing the number of those crimes and violent crimes. The initiative also utilizes training programs for state and local law enforcement officials. Since August 1, 2003, the Lubbock Division has been coordinating with the Lubbock County District Attorney's (DA's) Office to screen firearms cases. This screening procedure has resulted in the referral of 53 firearms cases for further investigation of potential federal firearms charges. Of those 53 cases, 24 have resulted in the filing of federal firearms charges and significantly higher state prison sentences. This emphasis on firearms offenses continues to translate into a remarkable increase in the number of cases involving firearms that are prosecuted in the district divisions. A comparison between the six-month period ending June 2005, and the six-month period ending June 2004, revealed a 47% increase in the number of

cases involving firearms prosecuted in federal court.

The district has provided numerous training opportunities since the inception of PSN. In September 2004, for example, the USAO conducted a two-day Gun Violence training for law enforcement officers, victim service providers, and probation and parole officers. Nearly 200 individuals attended the training. The attendees reported that the training was valuable in their jobs and requested more of this type of training.

The district's PSN community component is made up of Weed and Seed partnerships, the Dallas Independent School District, the Dallas Police Department, and the USAO. The community component devised a three-prong approach to combat gun, gang, and violent crimes: First, law enforcement creates a safe atmosphere for youths through apprehension and investigation of the criminal element in the target area. Second, the schools establish programs to deter truancy, gang activity, and crimes that involve guns and drugs. Third, community service providers and Weed and Seed target areas coordinate and complement out-of-school programs to prevent truancy, gun, gang, and violent crimes.

The Fort Worth Division continues to partner with the long-established "Safe City" campaign, which is managed by law enforcement executives in the city of Fort Worth and the Safe City Commission. The community outreach component of this three-prong approach complements efforts within the school system as well as the law enforcement strategies. Weed and Seed sites are used whenever possible to help coordinate the community outreach aspect of the strategy.

## SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

Since October 2003, the Northern District of Texas PSN team has conducted a Prisoner Reentry Education Program in Dallas. Since October 2003, the Dallas Division office has presented a monthly one-hour PowerPoint presentation to approximately 400 recently released probationers and parolees in the city of Dallas. The U.S. Attorney (USA); U.S. Marshal; Special Agents in Charge for the FBI, ATF, and DEA; the Police Chief and Sheriff; and the Directors for Probation and Parole also participate in this one-hour presentation. The presentation has two purposes. The first is to inform recently released probationers and parolees about the coordinated effort between federal, state, and local authorities to prosecute gun offenders to the fullest extent of the law. To demonstrate this coordinated effort, each law enforcement official speaks for two to three minutes on their agency's commitment to PSN. The presentation's second purpose is to inform them about the legal consequences of committing gun crimes. After each official speaks, the attendees are educated on that topic and directed to social service agencies for assistance in re-integrating themselves into society. At the end of each presentation, a survey is conducted, and the attendees are asked specific questions about the program. According to the PSN Research Partner, this one-hour program has reduced probation and parole gun-related crimes by nearly 45% since its inception. Because of the success and effectiveness of this program, the USA has replicated this program in the second largest city in this district.

### **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

The Southern District of Texas (SDTX) enthusiastically carries out its duty under the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative by reducing firearm violence through law enforcement, outreach, and education.

In the SDTX, federal prosecutions of firearms offenses have increased since the inception of PSN, but recently, have begun to level off. As one Houston Police Department (HPD) officer stated: "Since the inception of Project Safe Neighborhoods, the district has seen a considerable decrease in the number of felons arrested with firearms in Houston. In addition, we've seen felons in state court plead guilty at arraignment for substantial prison sentences to avoid federal prosecution. This tells us that word is out on the street in Houston about PSN, and the criminal element is aware that they will face federal prosecution and hard time for gun-related crime." An example of a recent federal prosecution occurred in February 2006. A parolee was sentenced to 210 months incarceration after being convicted by a jury of concealing several semi-automatic assault rifles, a machine gun, shotguns, a pistol, a street sweeper (a copy of a South African military weapon), and almost 1,000 rounds of ammunition in his home. Cases like this help to get the message out that hard crime means hard time.

Another way that PSN is having a positive impact on the SDTX is through the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network/ Integrated Ballistics Identification System (NIBIN/IBIS). Essentially, this is a fingerprint or DNA identification system for firearms. In August 2005, the NIBIN/IBIS program at the HPD Firearms Laboratory logged its 500th cold hit match. PSN helped make this possible through grant funding that paid for technicians to work overtime gathering and entering the data into the system. PSN grants will also be providing more microscopes in the near future to support this program.



The media outreach campaign has been an extraordinary partnership and a model for cooperation and team effort between the four districts in Texas. This coordinated effort is designed to achieve “economies of scale” and result in a large volume of high quality media in the form of posters, flyers, pamphlets, reference cards, and billboards, as well as video and audio commercials, at the lowest possible cost. Three of the districts in Texas pooled their media grant funding to coordinate a joint mass media campaign that provided almost statewide radio and television coverage of the localized PSN public service announcements. A partnership with the Texas Association of Broadcasters (TAB) enabled the districts to participate in a Non-Commercial Sustaining Announcements (NCSA) program, whereby donated air time was provided by participating radio and television stations to air the PSN public service announcements. By pooling the media money and partnering with TAB, the districts were guaranteed a three-to-one return ratio on the \$240,000 allocated for this campaign. The campaign surpassed all expectations and provided an almost twelve-to-one return ratio with over \$2.8 million in donated air time. Another component of the media outreach effort was a statewide billboard campaign, in which all four districts participated. In an effort to leverage the funds allocated for the billboards, an advertising agency was hired to strategically place billboards in high crime zip codes. The advertising agency provided additional billboards at no additional cost due.

Another successful partnership with the Eastern and Western Districts of Texas and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) involves the “Drop the Gun” video for inmates approaching parole and recent parolees. The video contains an expansion

of our locally-created public service announcement (PSA) and has interviews with former TDCJ inmates currently in federal prison for firearms charges. The inmates detail their own experiences about how they ended up in federal prison and describe how their sentences have not only negatively impacted their lives, but the lives of their families.

The SDTX is providing training to youths through a school-based curriculum. This curriculum includes ten chapters relating to gun crime, hate crime, violence, and gangs. SDTX has also joined with the Western and Eastern Districts of Texas to offer four gun training sessions to approximately 350 state and local law enforcement officers.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

The efforts of the Western District of Texas to energize Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) through effective partnering with state and local law enforcement continues to be demonstrated most clearly by the district’s impressive prosecution statistics. The district has seen a 74% increase in prosecutions from FY 2000 to FY 2004 and again experienced an increased number of cases filed in the past fiscal year. The Western District of Texas continues to meet the enormous challenge of implementing its PSN strategies through seven separate field offices.

Since late 1999, the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Western District of Texas has actively participated in Texas Exile, which is a joint federal-state firearms prosecution initiative established in partnership with the Texas Attorney General’s (AG’s) Office, state and local

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

prosecutors and law enforcement agencies, ATF, and the other three USAOs in Texas. This partnership provides funding for state prosecutors cross-designated as Special Assistant United States Attorneys (SAUSAs) to prosecute firearms offenses in state or federal court. Four of these prosecutors are currently assigned to prosecute firearms cases in the Austin, El Paso, San Antonio, and Waco divisions of the district.

In San Antonio, a PSN grant was provided to the Bexar County District Attorney's (DA's) office for two positions. A local prosecutor cross-designated as a SAUSA fills one position, and the other is occupied by an intake prosecutor at the DA's office. These two positions work together to screen the cases for either state or federal prosecution. In Austin, the gun prosecutor and the SAUSA from the Travis County DA's office work with ATF, Austin Police Department, and other law enforcement entities around the Austin area to determine whether the cases will be brought in federal or state court. El Paso and Waco have similar programs with dedicated gun prosecutors.

The district's prevention and outreach efforts are varied. The Texas AG's Office receives PSN grant funds for the "Consequences" curriculum for middle school and junior high school students. The curriculum includes 10 chapters relating to gun crime, hate crime, violence, and gangs. The U.S. Attorney (USA) and other gun prosecutors in the office engage the community by routinely speaking to law enforcement agencies and community organizations.

The media outreach campaign has been an extraordinary partnership and a model for cooperation and team effort between the

four districts in Texas. This coordinated effort is designed to achieve "economies of scale" and result in a large volume of high quality media in the form of posters, flyers, pamphlets, reference cards, and billboards, as well as video and audio commercials, at the lowest possible cost. Three of the districts in Texas pooled their media grant funding to coordinate a joint mass media campaign that provided almost statewide radio and television coverage of the localized PSN public service announcements. A partnership with the Texas Association of Broadcasters (TAB) enabled the districts to participate in a Non-Commercial Sustaining Announcements (NCSA) program, whereby donated air time was provided by participating radio and television stations to air the PSN public service announcements. By pooling the media money and partnering with TAB, the districts were guaranteed a 3-to-1 return ratio on the \$240,000 allocated for this campaign. The campaign surpassed all expectations and provided an almost 12-to-1 return ratio with over \$2.8 million in donated air time. Another component of the media outreach effort was a statewide billboard campaign, in which all four districts participated. In an effort to leverage the funds allocated for the billboards, an advertising agency was hired to strategically place billboards in high crime zip codes. The advertising agency provided additional billboards at no additional cost.

With respect to the district's prosecution successes, two noteworthy sentences were obtained in the Austin and Waco divisions. In the Austin division, a 26-year-old, a 21-year-old, and another 21-year-old were sentenced to 572 months, 252 months and 272 months in federal prison, respectively, for their roles in committing 27 armed robberies of Austin convenience stores and

stealing money and property valued at more than \$28,000. In Waco, a career criminal defendant was sentenced to life in federal prison for being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm. Due to his extensive criminal history, including 14 prior convictions on various charges including burglary, robbery, and arson, the judge ruled him an Armed Career Criminal and subject to the maximum term of imprisonment.

### **DISTRICT OF UTAH**

Utah Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) has stressed the importance of strong partnerships since its inception. The Attorney General (AG) recognized Utah PSN in 2004 for Outstanding Contributions to Community Partnerships for Public Safety. Utah's PSN partnerships extend from local, state, and federal law enforcement professionals to community and private business representatives.

At the heart of these successful partnerships, aggressive enforcement of federal firearms laws defines Utah PSN's success. From 2002 through 2005, Utah PSN secured indictments in over 1,200 federal firearms prosecutions, while averaging federal prison sentences of 45 months in those cases warranting prison time. Utah PSN's prosecution team includes city, county, and state prosecutors, who exercise federal prosecution authority on behalf of their particular communities. In addition, the Utah PSN law enforcement task force benefits from a pool of veteran investigators whose originating agencies donate significant amounts of time and resources to fighting gun crime in Utah.

Capitalizing on this aggressive approach, Utah PSN has directly marketed its success to the greater community through its award-

winning media and community outreach efforts. Over one million dollars of media and advertising value has been donated to Utah PSN, and a high-level public relations effort has led to press events consistently highlighting Utah PSN's successes and developments. The launch of the "clipboard campaign" highlights the public relations effort and the strength of Utah PSN's public-private partnerships. The Utah PSN clipboard is oversized, so that when a gun purchaser fills out a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) 4473 form at a store or pawn shop, a gun crime admonition is boldly visible. A major regional firearms retailer partnered with Utah PSN in a hugely successful press event that was held at a local store. The business offered testimonials of the clipboards' effectiveness in stemming straw purchases in their chain. In turn, the U.S. Attorney (USA) highlighted a just-indicted straw-purchaser case to emphasize the point of the campaign, and state agency officials emphasized the effectiveness of instant background checks.

Of all cooperating state agencies, the Department of Corrections and its Adult Probation & Parole (AP&P) division have proven to be invaluable. Utah PSN holds biweekly "offender notification" meetings at a local AP&P office to address new state parolees, and a corresponding DVD presentation has been shown to new parolees in outlying areas. In addition, the Department of Corrections, in partnership with ATF, has created a "watch list" of supervised persons who qualify as armed career criminals according to federal sentencing provisions if found in possession of firearms or ammunition. Dubbed "Operation Predator", the Department of Corrections flags these persons on their statewide database. Should a patrol officer encounter one of these persons with a

## DISTRICT OF VERMONT

firearm or ammunition, the database displays a banner directing the officer to contact the ATF/PSN duty agent immediately.

Utah PSN's Project Sentry initiative has undertaken various efforts to reduce juvenile gun violence, ranging from federal prosecution of juveniles to education of at-risk youths. In 2005, Utah PSN successfully prosecuted a hardened juvenile offender as an adult in federal court, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Utah has used the prosecution as an example case for other potential juvenile offenders. The project has partnered with SHOCAP (Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Program), a program which closely supervises the 80-90 juveniles who are deemed the most serious offenders on juvenile probation in the Salt Lake City area.

Partnerships set Utah PSN in motion, and partnerships are driving its continued success.

## **DISTRICT OF VERMONT**

Project Safe Vermont—Vermont's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative—provides funding for the assignment of a Vermont State Police Detective Sergeant at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) resident agency. This cooperative effort had been a successful Vermont initiative in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but it had ceased due to lack of funding. Renewal of the relationship as part of Project Safe Vermont returned immediate results with the federal prosecution of a violent offender who had fired a shotgun at two Vermont State Troopers (VSTs) responding to a report of renewed domestic violence at a rural Vermont residence. Fortunately, the troopers were not injured, and they arrested the offender. This

VST/ATF cooperative effort also has led to the conviction of numerous domestic violence offenders and drug traffickers who possessed or used firearms.

Vermont has few state laws regulating the acquisition or possession of firearms. Larger New England metropolitan areas have reported crime gun seizures of firearms acquired in Vermont. PSN investigative efforts have led to the indictment of several individuals who have engaged in out-of-state gun trafficking by "straw purchasing" guns in Vermont. These offenders were responsible for numerous guns being transported and sold in major metropolitan areas, such as New York and Boston. The offenders are presently awaiting sentencing.

The Anti-Violence Partnership: A Community Collaboration at the University of Vermont through the Project Safe Vermont's Media and Community Engagement Team implemented an extremely successful campaign to get the message out about federal firearms laws. The intent of the overall campaign was to make it clear that law enforcement would respond to situations where firearms were in the possession of federally prohibited persons. The purpose of the most recent media outreach effort was to continue with the successful "POSTED" campaign. This campaign was originally targeted adults, but has now been redesigned to provide a more youth-focused message about federal firearms laws. Project Safe Vermont Task Force used the campaign's message to reach thousands of youths in the state. After soliciting the advice of teen behavioral experts, the Project Safe Vermont media team determined that hosting a concert in a safe, drug-free environment could reach Vermont teens, particularly at-risk teens. By providing teens with pertinent educational materials at the concert, the event was a

## DISTRICT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

powerful information catalyst. The Project Safe Vermont team embarked on an ambitious educational campaign targeting all Vermont teens and worked closely with two non-profits committed to improving the lives of teens - Straight Talk Vermont, and SPECTRUM. The team sought several sponsors which resulted in them securing a sizeable donation from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont to underwrite the cost of the entertainment and food. In addition, the Pepsi Bottling Company provided product support, and Ben & Jerry's, Filenes, Discovery Channel, Gravis, Burton Snowboards, Spencer's, and FYE all donated products for the event.

Project Safe Vermont materials were distributed at three statewide youth conferences. Additionally, two Governor's Youth Leadership conferences hosted over 1,000 youths from Vermont high schools, who are peer leaders in their schools and who carried the message of Project Safe Vermont back to their schools. One conference designed for positive development of youth in state custody also was held for youth at the greatest risk of engaging in gang-related and illegal activities.

Project Safe Vermont worked in conjunction with the highly-acclaimed Voices Project sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont, Vermont Health Plan, and Kingdom County Productions. This youth theater project was an exceptional opportunity to reach an enormous number of teens throughout Vermont and disseminate the gun crime reduction message. The project was produced by Kingdom County Productions, a nonprofit media arts education organization, and explored the identity, hopes, courage, and concerns of Vermont youths, including the effects of gun violence, through the creation of a vibrant

stage production based on teen voices. The show toured the state of Vermont in the fall of 2005 and staged 15 performances. The Voices Project agreed to allow Project Safe Vermont to distribute its message and materials at each performance. Further, Project Safe Vermont was given one page of advertisement in the 10,000 copies of the production's Play Bill and Project Safe Vermont's logo was included on all publicity and advertising pieces produced by the Voices Project, including its web site, press releases, videos, DVDs, commemorative books, and posters. The exposure for Project Safe Vermont cannot be underestimated in this extraordinary opportunity to spread the word about federal firearms laws to teens.

## **DISTRICT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

Since the implementation of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), the District of the Virgin Islands has developed cooperative law enforcement partnerships and engaged in several school and community outreach efforts. Members of the district's PSN Task Force include the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of the Virgin Islands, Virgin Islands Police Department, Virgin Islands Attorney General (AG), U.S. Probation Office, St. Thomas – St. John Chamber of Commerce, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and several leading business and community leaders. One measure of PSN's success in the Virgin Islands is the number of PSN-related indictments that have been filed over the last few years. For fiscal year 2004, 109 indictments were filed, and through April 2005, 65 indictments were filed.

Through Project Sentry, school outreach efforts have included meeting with school representatives about school security and

## EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

supplying school monitors with hand-held security detectors. The district has also participated in several annual community events, including agricultural fairs and carnivals.

The law enforcement component of the task force consists of a local and federal prosecutor, a VIPD officer, and an ATF agent. Those task force members meet weekly to review gun arrests and discuss arrestees' criminal histories, appropriate charges, and possible penalties. The district expects to initiate a pilot program to interdict illegal weapons entering the Territory, and the research partner is developing a protocol to be used in evaluating the effectiveness of PSN strategies.

The district's Media/Outreach Committee (a sub-committee of the PSN Task Force) is working on a comprehensive media plan to take the PSN gun violence reduction and anti-gang message to the community through electronic and print mediums.

The USAO has continuing dialogue with Virgin Islands Department of Education Officials which has created a relationship, where projects such as the "Pledge Against Gun Violence" and other school anti-violence programs have been instituted.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA**

The Eastern District of Virginia has established a task force of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors in each of its five Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) sites. These sites include Northern Virginia, Richmond, Petersburg, Newport News, and Norfolk. As a result of these efforts, the district has effectively prosecuted armed career

criminals, Hobbs Act robberies, armed drug dealers, and numerous "street crew" gangs for various firearms offenses. Strategic plans were developed to complement other initiatives operating in the district, including Weed and Seed, a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Violent Crime Impact Team (VCIT), and an anti-gang initiative.

As a result of the leadership of former U.S. Attorney (USA) Paul J. McNulty, the implementation of effective strategic plans in the district yielded 387 defendants charged in fiscal year 2004. The Eastern District of Virginia remains a top producer of the overall number of PSN defendants charged and prosecuted. Examples of significant PSN cases include the following:

Seven individuals were convicted for their participation in a conspiracy to commit robberies of a total of 15 jewelry stores in five states, many of them located in outlet malls, and one pawn shop. In each robbery, one defendant would enter the store posing as a customer, another robber would point a firearm at the clerk and force the clerk to empty the display cases, while another would bring the employees to the rear of the store, retrieve the in-store video tape, open the safe, and steal money and jewelry. Another member would act as lookout and keep customers under control. The jewelry stores were located in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee. In the Eastern District, the conspirators robbed three Zales Outlets in Williamsburg and Leesburg. One of the defendants converted the jewelry into currency, provided travel money in the form of Western Union transfers and currency, and purchased bail bonds to keep the other robbers out of custody. The approximate total value of the jewelry and cash taken was \$6,671,251.40. These defendants, with the

exception of one, were all multi-convicted felons who received sentences ranging from 240 to 325 months in prison.

On August 25, 2005, Newport News Police Officers made a traffic stop of a taxi cab and received consent from the driver to search the car. A loaded revolver was found under the right rear passenger seat, where officers had noticed a passenger making furtive movements. After being Mirandized, the passenger initially denied knowledge of the gun, but later acknowledged that he had handled it earlier that day. He also confessed to committing a murder two months earlier, but that statement was later suppressed, leaving only the federal firearms charge stemming from the traffic stop. The passenger pled guilty to that offense without a written plea agreement or the promise of cooperation, and sentencing is scheduled for May 2006. This is a dangerous individual who literally got away with murder. His new conviction will not only lead to a new sentence, but it is likely to result in the revocation of a 20-year suspended sentence he faces in the state system. This federal prosecution insured that the offender will stay off of the streets of Newport News.

Two men involved in a string of armed robberies in the Newport News and Hampton areas from December 2004 through March 2005 were charged in January 2006 with a Hobbs Act conspiracy, along with seven firearms charges under 18 U.S.C. § 924(c). In the robberies, the defendants wore masks and gloves and employed a high degree of violence and intimidation at each location, which included 7-11, Food Lion, Crown Gas Station and Chanello's pizza. The defendants held many of the employees and customers against their will, and they fired their weapons at five of the seven robbery locations. Two store employees were

wounded by gun fire. If convicted, one man faces 157 years of mandatory imprisonment and the other faces 132 years.

A Richmond man was sentenced to 95 years in federal prison for robbery and firearms-related offenses stemming from two armed robberies and one attempted armed robbery at Richmond area hotels in July and August 2003.

An Alexandria man was sentenced in December 2004 to life in prison after a jury convicted him of two counts of being a felon in possession of a firearm. The offender had fatally shot his neighbor in the head and subsequently used her ATM card to drain her bank account. Due to the missing murder weapon, state officials were concerned that the man would not be convicted of murder in state court. Under PSN, the case was referred to the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Eastern District of Virginia, which prosecuted him for firearms-related offenses in federal court.

The Eastern District of Virginia has implemented an aggressive and expansive media and community outreach campaign to educate the public about gun violence and federal firearms laws. Thus far, the district has received over \$250,000 in donated media space. This has enabled the district to target its message effectively, using home-grown television and radio spots, bus wraps, billboards, and movie theater public service ads. In addition, the USA has spread the PSN message by personally speaking to over 5,000 public school students in the Commonwealth of Virginia since the inception of PSN.

PSN strategies intentionally focus in part on the Weed and Seed sites in Petersburg and Portsmouth. This relationship between PSN and Weed and Seed has drawn significant

## EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

community support and has increased the effectiveness of local law enforcement in these communities.

The district is currently preparing to launch in the spring of 2006 an offender notification and reentry program similar to those in High Point, North Carolina, Indianapolis, Indiana, and elsewhere. With the support of the U.S. District Court, U.S. Probation, U.S. Marshals Service, local clergy, social services, and the PSN task force partners, the district expects to identify the most violent supervisees to participate in this program, and presents them with a strong deterrent message, along with an offer of social services and other assistance.

PSN prosecutors continue to offer regular training to federal, state, and local law enforcement officials. They are currently preparing to offer to local law enforcement partners in the spring of 2006 the PSN Gun Recovery and Training Program.

Of the many partnerships forged through PSN, the USA recently met with Chief of the Newport News Police Department in an effort to assist that community with increased prosecutions and resources applied against the most violent offenders in a targeted community within Newport News. As a result, several Hobbs Act robbery cases have been identified. Partnerships throughout the district have yielded many successes, including hiring prosecutors with PSN funds in Virginia Beach and Newport News, each devoted to the prosecution of federal and local firearms cases. The Portsmouth Commonwealth's Attorney agreed to supply a local prosecutor to serve as a Special Assistant United States Attorney (SAUSA) devoted to firearms prosecutions, while the USA agreed to reciprocate with an Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) who is cross-designated to handle

local prosecutions. In Petersburg, PSN funds enabled the hiring of a full-time investigator to serve as a liaison between local prosecutors in four outlying jurisdictions and the PSN task force in Richmond. This investigator identifies, investigates, and assists on local cases brought to the task force for federal prosecution.

In early 2005, the USA awarded the city of Richmond PSN grant funds to enable local partners to provide training, equipment, motorcycles, computers, lighting, and advertising. Among other things, the advertising funding assisted the Fugitive Task Force with posting the most wanted fugitives on local buses. This resulted in a widely-successful capture of most of the top fugitives in the City of Richmond. The USAO also continues to provide the other local partners with funding for one-time needs for overtime, computers, and cellular telephones.

The research partners, Dr. Colleen McCue (Richmond Police Department) and Diane Bishop (Virginia Commonwealth University), were tasked with assessing the impact of our PSN initiative district-wide through data-mining and other research tools. They extracted the requisite data from each local law enforcement agency and conducted surveys to assess the impact of our prosecution and outreach efforts in our PSN focus areas. Their work has enabled the Task Force to evaluate its efforts, and it will help us as the district continues to shift resources to most effectively combat gang and gun crime in the district. Among our successes was a substantial increase in gun recoveries district-wide over the last four years, due in large part to the increased emphasis on gun recoveries and tracing by the ATF. Also, a



September 2005 study by three researchers at the University of Missouri at St. Louis concluded that Richmond's Project Exile – one of the models for PSN – contributed in large part to a drop in homicides in Richmond.

### **WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA**

The Western District of Virginia has a vigorous and effective Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) strategy working to achieve the President's gun violence reduction goals. There are three main components of the strategy: targeted prosecution of armed violent felons; building strong working partnerships between federal, state, and local law enforcement to focus on gun crime; and reaching out to target communities to educate people about the penalties for gun violence and to discourage illegal gun possession.

The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Western District of Virginia has worked effectively to use the power of the federal gun laws to target violent armed felons for federal prosecution throughout the district. The number of federal gun prosecutions in the Western District of Virginia has shown a sustained significant increase since the initiation of PSN. In fact, the number of federal gun prosecutions jumped from 84 to 207 annually within the first four years of PSN. Significant numbers of the most violent offenders are now off the streets and are serving lengthy sentences in federal prison. The district's communities are significantly safer as a result of this.

The USAO has built strong partnerships with state and local law enforcement agencies to enable the office to identify and prosecute cases of illegal firearms possession. The office has established new

PSN task forces in several regions in the district, including the greater Roanoke area, Augusta County, and Southwestern Virginia. In each of these task forces, federal agents are co-located with state and local police officers, and investigate gun crime cases together, in order to identify and prepare the cases for federal prosecution.

The district has used PSN grant funds to both prosecute and prevent gang crime. A recent major prosecution involving members of the Bloods gang, who were dangerous armed narcotics dealers, was a PSN case. In 2004, prosecutors in the Charlottesville Division used PSN resources to prosecute a neighborhood group responsible for drug sales and several acts of violence in that community. The Lynchburg and Roanoke Police Departments have used the PSN grant money to fund officer overtime to address youth violence and anti-gang initiatives as part of "Operation Safe Summer". These local police departments have also used the PSN grant funds to purchase surveillance equipment, bicycles, and patrol car cameras.

The district is working hard to make sure that the community knows about PSN, and that felons understand the risks that they take when they pick up a firearm. To this end, the district has advertised on conventional mass media, posted billboards, and used other, less conventional approaches. These other approaches include "wrapping" city busses that regularly drive through target neighborhoods with the PSN/Project Exile message. The USAO also had police officers distribute cards and flyers to individuals that they encountered in the course of their regular patrols. One measure of the success of these efforts comes from post-arrest interviews of indicted drug dealers. Many of these narcotics offenders have commented that Although they sold drugs, they did not carry

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guns because “you could get in too much trouble that way.”

The district believes that every armed felon taken off the streets makes the community safer. The district’s approach has succeeded because of the hard work and cooperative efforts made by all of the law enforcement officials in federal, state, and local PSN partnership.

### **EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON**

The Eastern District of Washington focuses its efforts on gun assaults, armed drug traffickers, and illegal possession of firearms by convicted felons and other prohibited persons, with a special emphasis on gang interdiction and pro-active investigation of targeted gang members. One of the most effective ways of achieving our goals has been through task force membership with local and state law enforcement agencies representing the geographically diverse twenty counties of the district, as well as federal agencies.

The Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) task force is comprised of the Washington State Department of Corrections, Kennewick Police Department, Spokane City Police Department, Spokane County Sheriff’s and Prosecutor’s Offices, Yakima City Police Department, Yakima County Sheriff’s and Prosecutor’s Offices, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Federal Bureau Investigation (FBI), and U.S. Probation Office. These task force members effectively represent the three major metropolitan areas of the district: Spokane, Yakima, and the “Tri-Cities” (Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick). A quarterly newsletter (the “PSN BULLETin”)

also helps apprise task force members of the district’s PSN activity.

The use of Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys (SAUSAs) in these three metropolitan areas has added another dimension of cooperation between the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Eastern District of Washington and county prosecutor’s offices. The Spokane SAUSA—cross-designated from the gang unit of the Spokane County Prosecutor’s Office—has been actively involved in federal court cases, and on-going gang investigations. SAUSAs have recently been designated in the Yakima and Tri-Cities areas, and they are expected to also contribute to task force cooperation.

The USAO’s partnership with the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) has resulted in DOC gun seizures being referred for federal prosecution. DOC has been a supportive member of the PSN Task Force, has been especially effective in gang interdiction due to their aggressive supervision of gang offenders on state supervision, and has actively participated in the district’s outreach program. The U.S. Probation Office is also represented on the PSN Task Force and assists in reaching out to federal offenders. As an example, the USAO, in conjunction with the DOC and U.S. Probation Office, developed an innovative way of communicating the tenets of PSN to prisoners re-entering the community. This project involves distributing PSN information cards to recently released prisoners beginning terms of supervision. The front of the information card warns offenders that they cannot be in possession of firearms or ammunition, and the back of the card lists a dozen or so cases where offenders failed to heed that message, and were charged and successfully prosecuted with federal gun crimes, and then sentenced

to extensive prison terms. To date, over 2,000 of these cards have been distributed to offenders being released back into the community from the state and federal prison system. This program was noted as a “best practice” at a recent PSN Press Information Officer Training at the National Advocacy Center (NAC).

Another practice the district uses is its PSN “Top 10” list. This list is a compilation of offenders in the Spokane metropolitan area whose criminal activity is a constant drain on law enforcement resources, and who are believed to be armed and pose a significant threat to the community and law enforcement. Pro-active law enforcement resources are often invested in “Top 10ers”, and they are given special consideration for federal prosecution when arrested on firearm or controlled substance offenses.

Other outreach programs include regular appearances and presentations by the U.S. Attorney and Assistant U.S. Attorneys to community groups, television public service announcements, press releases on significant cases, bus wraps, billboards, and a wide variety of printed materials made available to the community and law enforcement (some of which are printed in Spanish). PSN grant funds have been provided to a number of school programs, including “Keep Guns Outta School”, which provides incentives to students to report the presence of guns or other weapons on their school campus.

As a result of these and other efforts, federal firearms prosecutions in the Eastern District of Washington increased by over 56% from FY 2000 to FY 2005.

## **WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON**

The Western District of Washington has concentrated its PSN efforts in Seattle/King County, Tacoma/Pierce County, Bremerton/Kitsap County, and Clark and Cowlitz Counties—areas designated by the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) research partner as “hot spots” of gun violence. The district has partnered with a number of federal, state, and local agencies and has facilitated the creation of task forces comprised of these law enforcement partners in each of the “hot spots”. The district’s most notable achievement is its use of PSN funds to pay for county prosecutors from each of the “hot spots” who are cross-designated as Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys (SAUSAs). These SAUSAs review all gun-related arrests in their respective counties for consideration for federal prosecution. They pay particular attention to chronic offenders (designated “Armed Career Criminals” in the Federal Sentencing Guidelines) and gang members. The SAUSAs, with their knowledge of both the county and federal systems, decide where the cases will be referred. In many cases, the SAUSAs are able to obtain higher than normal sentences in the county when the defendant is confronted with the possibility of a federal prosecution. The SAUSA program has been critical to addressing gun crime and coordinating the district’s response, as well as developing partnerships with local prosecutors and law enforcement agencies.

From FY 2000 to FY 2004, federal firearms prosecutions in the Western District of Washington increased by 137%. The U.S. Attorney’s Office focused its efforts on gang members and violent chronic offenders. For example, the Pierce County Violent Crimes Task Force, which consists of federal, state,

## NORTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA

and local law enforcement officers and receives a substantial amount of PSN grant funding, investigated a violent gang called the Seven Deuce Mob. The Seven Deuce Mob was considered to be one of the largest crack cocaine distribution groups in Pierce County, one of the district's "hot spots". The gang's violent history includes a drive-by shooting that resulted in the death of a 14-year old boy. The homicide remained unsolved until the task force's investigation, which also resulted in the seizure of firearms, ammunition, drugs, and cash. Eight gang members were successfully prosecuted.

Another important element of the district's approach is fugitive apprehension. PSN grants have been used to fund state and local law enforcement members of the Pacific Northwest Fugitive Apprehension Task Force (PNFATF), housed at and coordinated by the United States Marshal's Service. The PNFATF focuses on serious violent fugitives, most of whom are gang members, and has conducted fugitive apprehensions in each of the "hot spot" areas.

The district has facilitated a number of law enforcement training sessions for federal, county, and local departments. Approximately 90 agencies in the district—representing 90% of law enforcement personnel—have participated in the training sessions through 2005. The USAO also organized a special Violent Firearm Crime Investigator Conference in the fall of 2004. The topic of the conference was firearms crime, and over 250 investigators attended this three day conference.

The district has partnered with Crimestoppers in a "Zero Tolerance for Gun Crime" media campaign, consisting of television, radio, and poster advertising, including placing billboards with the

campaign slogan in each of the "hot spots". In addition, PSN funds have been used to produce posters for the back of police cars and in booking areas, warning offenders of the increased penalties associated with possessing and using firearms.

The USAO also sends representatives of social service agencies, law enforcement agencies, and prosecutors' offices into a state prison to educate prisoners about the federal penalties they will face if they are caught with a gun. The group also provides the prisoners with ways to avoid being involved with guns in the future, including information about social service resources available to them.

### **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

The Northern District of West Virginia has utilized the flexibility built into Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) to tailor an initiative that addresses the objectives of the national program and uniquely serves the needs of its communities. This initiative, Project Safe Homes (PSH), was conceived by U.S. Attorney Thomas E. Johnston as a strategy to address the serious problem of domestic violence in the district. The overall goals of the initiative are to reduce the incidence of firearms-related domestic violence and gun-related crime in general.

PSH is premised on the belief that vigorous prosecution of federal gun laws can improve life for those mired in violent relationships and benefit entire communities at the same time—literally making the neighborhood safer. Although gun prosecutions in general have significantly increased since PSH was instituted, special attention has been paid to situations where the underlying possession or criminal act occurred in a domestic violence context.

Domestic violence is a serious law enforcement issue in West Virginia. Domestic violence typically accounts for about one-third of all homicides in West Virginia. In recent years there have been several domestic incidents involving multiple fatalities. Further, for every homicide there are many, many more victims, some suffering in silence.

Many of the individuals prosecuted under PSH could be considered “thorns in the side” of local communities and the law enforcement agencies that serve them. Experience has shown that such individuals can have a disproportionate impact on the small towns and rural communities that are so prevalent in West Virginia. Savvy or lucky enough to avoid apprehension for violations of serious state law offenses, these offenders often, nevertheless, run afoul of federal firearms laws relating to the possession of firearms by prohibited persons. The removal of these criminals from the community results in an improvement in the safety and quality of life for all who reside there.

Prosecution, however, is just one strategy of the two-pronged PSH initiative. The other is outreach—the process of getting the PSH message out to the community. This message and the prosecution strategy are mutually supportive of each other.

As part of the outreach effort, significant resources were devoted to a media campaign. The general public (and potential offenders) were targeted with public service commercials, billboards, and posters. The essential message of the campaign is an explanation that under federal law, persons convicted of domestic violence are prohibited from possessing firearms. This message represents a powerful deterrent in a

district where hunting and gun ownership are highly valued in the local culture. In connection with the threat of other penalties associated with prosecution, this warning is designed to cause would-be offenders to think twice. It has also succeeded in making the public more aware of federal firearms laws and domestic violence, thereby providing an even broader deterrent effect.

Partnerships have played an important role in PSH. In addition to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and state and local law enforcement agencies working to investigate cases for prosecution under PSH, the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence has been a valued partner. In 2004, the Coalition and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of West Virginia worked together on the first Summit on Domestic Violence in years using PSN grant funds.

### **SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

The Southern District of West Virginia’s Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative is known as “Hard Time for Gun Crime” (HTGC). The HTGC task force is made up of federal, state and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors, community leaders, religious leaders, and concerned citizens. The initiative has focused its gun violence reduction strategies in the counties with the highest violent crime rates: Kanawha (Charleston), Raleigh (Beckley), and Cabell (Huntington).

HTGC has had great success with its public awareness campaign. Using traditional as well as innovative media strategies, people in the district know that federal penalties are severe for gun crimes. A recent telephone survey conducted by the research partner

## EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

indicated that 51% of the people in the three targeted counties were familiar with the initiative. The following are some of the innovative ways that the district has increased public awareness about gun violence: Gino's and Little Caesar's placed 80,000 flyers (40,000 each) on their pizza boxes and 112 Gino's locations posted PSN stickers on their doors and placed PSN brochures on their counters; over 100 convenience stores have placed posters and stickers on their gas pumps, front doors, and coolers; and the only taxi cab company in Charleston has agreed to place stickers in two locations in their cabs.

Community outreach is an important component of the district's strategy. The U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Southern District of West Virginia has spearheaded the formation and development of community groups in Charleston and Beckley to help concerned citizens fight the violent crime in their neighborhoods. The office organized training in both cities, and the success of the community group in Beckley was featured in the Winter 2005 edition of *LINKS* magazine, the magazine of the Community Policing Consortium. The Beckley group targeted a two-block area in downtown Beckley where gun violence was rampant. Six months after the inception of the project, 911 calls to the Beckley Police Department from the targeted area had decreased 41 percent.

The task force firmly believes that targeting at-risk youths is critical to the ultimate success of the initiative. Therefore, it has organized a mentoring program, where employees of the USAO get one hour of administrative leave per week to mentor children at a local center for at-risk children. The task force partnered with the Federal Correctional Institution in Beckley, WV, and organized trips for selected inmates to

travel to local schools and talk with students about making good choices in life. Other student groups have come to federal court to watch sentencing hearings and then speak with the federal judge afterward.

Although there are numerous notable cases that have been prosecuted under this initiative, one that stands out is the prosecution of five defendants for an armed robbery and shooting of a pizza delivery person. Four of the defendants were gang members or associates, and the robbery was committed in order to get money to buy drugs. One of the defendants was 17 at the time of the robbery and was prosecuted as an adult. Two of the gang members who carried firearms during the crime were sentenced to approximately 14 years imprisonment, and the shooter was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment.

## **EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN**

The Eastern District of Wisconsin has a significant gun violence problem centered in Milwaukee, the most populated city in the district. Milwaukee is a city with pockets of poverty, where guns, gangs, and drugs have proliferated as the number of manufacturing jobs has declined. In 2005, 557 people in Milwaukee were shot with firearms, resulting in the deaths of 95 citizens.

The goal of the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) effort in the Eastern District of Wisconsin has been to reduce gun crime in Milwaukee by targeting repeat violent offenders, gangs, and armed drug dealers. The centerpiece of the PSN strategy has been increased state and federal prosecution of gun crimes. Through weekly gun case reviews, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and local law enforcement agencies work

with the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Eastern District of Wisconsin to determine the most appropriate jurisdiction to prosecute each gun crime in Milwaukee. Since the inception of PSN, this process has resulted in a 58% increase in the number of federal firearms prosecutions. In 2004 alone, the number of federal firearm prosecutions increased 40%. State gun crime prosecutions increased 20% during the same period.

The PSN Task Force has also focused on gangs and gang crime and has made a concerted effort to coordinate its efforts with the work of the Milwaukee HIDTA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Safe Streets Task Force, the ATF Gun Task Force, Milwaukee Weed and Seed, and a local Byrne Grant Drug Task Force, as well as with an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)-sponsored Gang Violence Reduction Project in one of Milwaukee's most distressed neighborhoods. As the result of these efforts, major cases have been brought in federal court against the leadership of several of the most violent street gangs in Milwaukee. In 2004, 41 members of the Cherry Street mob were charged with federal and state drug and firearms offenses. Twenty members of the gang have since pled guilty, including two who face life sentences. In early 2005, 21 members of the 2-6 Vice Lords were charged with federal drug trafficking and firearms offenses; 20 of these have pled guilty to charges carrying mandatory minimum penalties of 20 years and more. In the Fall of 2005, 49 members of the Latin Kings street gang were charged in federal court with racketeering, drug trafficking, firearms offenses, and related violent crimes, including murder, arson, kidnaping, and intimidation of witnesses. In early 2006, 12 members of the 2-4 Vice Lords were charged in federal court with

drug trafficking and related firearms offenses.

The PSN Task Force has used PSN grant funds to further the anti-gang and gun crime reduction strategies described above by funding a number of enforcement-based programs, including:

- The Juvenile Firearm Prosecution Program, a coordinated effort of the Milwaukee County District Attorney (DA), Milwaukee County Sheriff, and Milwaukee Police Department to target adults responsible for putting crime guns in the hands of children.
- The Major Violators Project (MVP), a collaboration between the State of Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation and Milwaukee Police Department to target Milwaukee's most violent offenders. The goal of the MVP is to closely monitor the "worst of the worst" repeat offenders and to apprehend them before they commit violent crimes.
- The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission, which brings together researchers, state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies and community organizations to systematically review each homicide in the city and target services for delivery to victims and the community.
- Hiring a new gun prosecutor in Kenosha County to supervise and monitor the investigation and prosecution of all gun crimes within that county. Kenosha prosecutors have used the position to target habitual domestic violence offenders and felons in possession of firearms.

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

The PSN Task Force has also used PSN funds to leverage other funding for prevention and outreach projects, where community-based organizations and citizens work with law enforcement to prevent and deter gun crime. PSN is actively working with the following prevention programs:

- A faith-based reentry initiative in Racine, Wisconsin, called the Community Reentry Program. This reentry program has brought together law enforcement, probation and parole, community organizations, and the faith community to target violent offenders returning to Racine from state and federal prisons.
- The local PSN-funded media outreach partner, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Division of Juvenile Corrections, and several community based organizations, has created a rap/hip hop music competition called “Speak Your Peace”, which requires youths to incorporate the message, “Gun Crime Means Hard Time”, in each performance. Excerpts from winning submissions are used in a radio, TV, and transit ad campaign.

The PSN Task Force has also engaged the community to work with law enforcement in the fight against gun crime. In January 2005, the Community Policing Consortium led a PSN Community Engagement in Milwaukee. Law enforcement, community and faith-based organizations, and residents met to develop an action plan for a specific area in the city of Milwaukee. The engagement resulted in a cooperative effort between police and citizens. Predominantly on the south side of Milwaukee, the South Side PSN Consortium has developed a project that brings line police officers and citizens together to present anti-gang and

gun crime messages at local churches and seeks commitment from citizens to work with the police through signing a Safe Neighborhoods Pledge.

The district is using its partnership with the Office of the Mayor of the City of Milwaukee to engage the community in the fight against gang crime through events like Ceasefire Sabbath, in which pastors from around Milwaukee speak out against gun violence on the same Sunday.

The U.S. Attorney is committed to working with law enforcement, community and faith-based organizations, and citizens to reduce gang crime and gun violence.

## **WESTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN**

The initial Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) task force in the Western District of Wisconsin was developed in Rock County, which had seen a dramatic increase in the number of shooting incidents and shots-fired calls to police, as well as open-air drug markets. The task force consists of law enforcement and prosecutors from local, state, and federal agencies, including the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the Western District of Wisconsin, the Rock County District Attorney’s (DA’s) Office, the Beloit Police Department, the Janesville Police Department, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections - Probations and Parole, the Rock County Sheriff’s Department, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

The Rock County Task Force developed a multifaceted response to the escalating gun crime problem. They developed posters, bus placards, and brochures for distribution throughout the county and created public service advertisements for television and radio. The task force also produced a



videotape for use by Department of Corrections and county jail officials warning felons of the prohibitions against, and penalties for, possession of firearms and ammunition. Additionally, they trained local law enforcement officials on the investigation of firearms crimes and tracing of firearms.

The DA's Office and the USAO regularly discuss cases involving firearms, which has resulted in a significant increase in the number of cases referred for federal prosecution. The PSN efforts in Rock County are done in conjunction with the anti-gang initiative, in which the USAO and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are partnering with the local agencies and the State Line Area Narcotics Team to address gang violence in Rock County and Winnebago County in Illinois, which contains the city of Rockford.

In 2003, a national PSN award was given to Detective Craig Johnson of the Beloit Police Department and ATF Special Agents Jason Salerno and William Baudhuin for their work in the investigation of a drive-by shooting which resulted in four men being convicted of federal firearms crimes.

Beloit Police Chief Sam Lathrop praises the PSN program in the Western District of Wisconsin, saying "I think this is one of the efforts where we can honestly say that the taxpayers' money is being well-spent, and it is a wonderful harmony of state, federal, and local efforts to work together to address gun violence in our community."

The second PSN task force was developed in partnership with the Dane County DA's Office, Madison Police Department, Fitchburg Police Department, Wisconsin Department of Corrections - Probation and Parole, and ATF. This task force has also

developed printed PSN materials and used public service advertisements on television and radio. There have been training sessions on the investigation of firearms crimes and tracing firearms for local law enforcement officials. In addition, the DA's Office and the USAO regularly discuss cases involving firearms, which has resulted in a significant increase in the number of cases referred for federal prosecution. The PSN Task Force in Dane County operates in collaboration with the City of Madison's Weed and Seed program. A third component of the district's PSN program has been grants awarded to preexisting multi-jurisdictional task forces operating in the northern tier of the district that address drug, gun, and gang crimes. Training was provided to the members of these task forces on the investigation and federal prosecution of firearms crimes and the tracing of firearms. There has been a significant increase in the number of cases referred for federal prosecution by these task forces.

Project Sentry funds have been used to support neighborhood prevention programs and school presentations. Dane County has used a small PSN grant to contract with an individual who operates a prevention program for youths in juvenile detention.

Since PSN's inception, over 130 individuals have been successfully prosecuted for federal firearms offenses in the Western District of Wisconsin. The many different gun crimes have been prosecuted—drug dealers who have carried firearms as protection, gang members involved in shootings, armed bank robberies, a felon stopped while driving drunk with a loaded firearm in his waistband, firearms discovered in a home after a felon was arrested for domestic violence, and a straw-purchaser who provided a firearm used in a gang-related drive-by shooting. These

## DISTRICT OF WYOMING

examples demonstrate the comprehensive nature of the PSN efforts in the Western District of Wisconsin.

### **DISTRICT OF WYOMING**

The District of Wyoming continues to demonstrate its commitment to the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) strategy by equipping law enforcement officers with comprehensive training and resources and by engaging in extensive school and community outreach efforts. As part of its enforcement efforts, the district provides PSN training to all new law enforcement officers who attend the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy. Additionally, a Wyoming program called Project Guardian has implemented a number of initiatives, including placing digital messaging equipment in 18 county jails and three prisons to enable broadcasting of PSN messages to offender groups. Since the inception of Project Guardian, gun prosecutions have risen by over 300%. In addition to these enforcement efforts, the district's Project Sentry initiatives have included sponsoring a three-day safe school training that drew nearly 200 attendees. The PSN Coordinator and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Wyoming have also presented the PSN message to rotary clubs and held a press conference during Domestic Violence Awareness Month stressing that the USAO would vigorously prosecute anyone with a domestic violence conviction who possessed a firearm.

The following detailed descriptions of the above-mentioned PSN enforcement and outreach activities demonstrate the success of PSN in Wyoming and the importance of its state and local grant assistance:

- The USAO's partnership with the Wyoming Department of Corrections (DOC) has been particularly successful. PSN training is now mandatory for all newly hired probation officers. Additionally, the DOC has been very supportive of the district's efforts to conduct offender notification training sessions.
- Every new law enforcement officer who attends the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy receives a 1.5 hour block of PSN training as part of the basic curriculum. PSN training is also given to all new agents with the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation and to new probation officers hired by the Wyoming DOC.
- The district has placed digital messaging equipment in 18 county jails and three prisons in the state as a means for broadcasting PSN messages to offender groups.
- Gun prosecutions have risen by over 300% since the inception of Wyoming Project Guardian. In 2001, the USAO prosecuted 24 individuals for federal firearm violations. In fiscal year 2004, that number rose to 84. In 2001, gun crimes constituted 16% of the USAO's caseload, while in 2004-2005, gun cases constituted 30% of cases.
- The district's Project Sentry efforts have focused on supporting the acceptance and expansion of school resource officers within the district and sponsoring safe schools training. In June 2004, the USAO sponsored a three-day safe school training with nearly 200 attendees. The training, put on by Fox Valley Technical College, was directed at assisting local communities develop

safe school strategies. School board members, school administrators, teachers, school resource officers, and local law enforcement administrators were among the attendees.

- The PSN Coordinator has done presentations on the PSN program for rotary clubs and other civic organizations. Within the last year, the LECC Coordinator conducted PSN presentations for a large group of human service providers and for school district administrators at their annual conference. The USAO has also made PSN presentations at LECC Conferences and at the annual Wind River Indian Conference. Additionally, in conjunction with Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the U.S. Attorney and the State Attorney General held a press conference stressing that the USAO would vigorously prosecute anyone with a domestic violence conviction or subject to a protection order who possessed a firearm. Finally, the PSN Coordinator made presentations throughout the district for parolees and probationers concerning the consequences of possessing a firearm.
- As part of Project ChildSafe, the Cheyenne Police Department distributes free gun kits, including gun locks, inside police headquarters.