

## **COUNCIL BLUFFS POLICE CHIEF SPEAKS**

Keith Mehlin has been Chief of the Council Bluffs Police Department for six years and on the police force for over thirty years. Mehlin spoke about the city police department operations and interaction with other area law enforcement agencies. There currently are 107 working in the police department, Mehlin noted. The force is led by four captains, four lieutenant captains, and twelve sergeants. There are about fifteen detectives working on 30-40 cases per month. Mehlin stated the uniform officers are the greatest contingent of the department, and there is a narcotics section, a bomb squad, a tactical operations squad, a traffic unit, and a crime scene investigation unit within the department. The department receives an average of 65,000 calls per year, mostly due to disturbances and suspicious behavior. Mehlin stated that Meth use was the greatest problem leading to criminal behavior. While the local production labs are fewer due to state laws, there is a great amount of Meth imported into the area. Relatively few local law enforcement problems stem from casino activity as most of the participants are not from Council Bluffs. There are increasing gang activities in Council Bluffs according to Mehlin. He encouraged a greater awareness of citizens. Property crimes and domestic abuse are predominant problems. Mehlin stated that domestic terrorism is more a concern of local law enforcement than foreign terrorism. Federal funding for preparations to counteract terrorism have been drastically cut due to the cost of the military effort in Iraq. Mehlin said the department keeps a presence of uniform officers in local schools. Mehlin noted the department budget has been impacted by increasing health benefit costs and this has resulted in restrictions on the size of the police force. There is great cooperation among law enforcement agencies-local, county, state, and federal. Mehlin is a member of the Metro Chiefs Association encompassing the region around Omaha. Mehlin said the department is working with the county to upgrade the radio communication system that is over 30 years old and obsolete. A new system would facilitate communication between different law enforcement units.