



# *Hennepin County* **Sheriff's Deputies Association**

Al Saastamoinen, President

Dave O'Donnell, Vice President

## **2015 HCSDA President's Message**

Hello members,

2014 was a very busy year for your Association's Board and our membership. 2015 looks to be every bit as busy. I thought I would take this opportunity to inform you of what your Board has worked on this past year to this point.

We handled over 20 grievances involving our membership from almost every unit within the Sheriff's Office. Some of these grievances started as internal investigations initiated by Sheriff's Administration of our members. The resulting discipline in several of the cases led to grievances in an attempt to reduce or eliminate the severity of the discipline issued.

We had several Internal Affairs hearings on very old DVS issues. They were resolved without any discipline as the policy was changed well after these incidents had occurred. In many cases in the past, deputies had been encouraged to look up people in order to learn how to use the DVS system. Times have changed and that is no longer the case. Through meetings with supervisors and our administration, we have been able to reduce or completely eliminate the discipline on some of the grievances.

We have a few on-going grievances that we are working on, one being the creation of the Hospital-Sheriff's Enforcement Unit. Some members questioned why we would grieve it in the first place. It has been our stance that anytime a new unit is created, the Association has the right to bargain. This right to bargain allows the Association to make sure that the working conditions, hours, training, overtime, health and safety, etc. is taken into consideration by Sheriff's Administration. The Association does this in an effort to protect the membership as a whole and is not just about enforcing seniority. Sheriff's Administration argues that they want the best candidate for the position and seniority does not always allow for that. The Association's position is that a properly implemented FTO program allows for the determination of whether a deputy is suitable for that position or not.

We have had NUMEROUS issues with payroll and double-back over the past year as well. I worked with Sheriff's Administration and the County's Labor Law Attorney, Todd

Olness, diligently on double-back pay owed to our Crime Scene Investigators. Due to this unwavering determination, I was able to recover over 338 hours of double-back pay owed to them. We have had several issues regarding overpayment and underpayment on members' paychecks. The APEX system is flawed and our pay stubs are unreadable most of the time. We are working with the County to make changes to that system that would improve the readability of our pay stubs.

The Board also worked very hard on the current 2014-2015 contract. Bargaining with the County is ALWAYS a difficult and time consuming process. The County always wants to give to us what they gave AFSCME. We continue to argue, contract after contract, that we are a law enforcement agency and therefore need to be compared to other law enforcement agencies on pay and benefits. The whole process is excruciating as the County rarely deviates from their position even throughout the mediation process.

Some of the things we were able to accomplish were an increase in shift differential and weekend differential over the two years of the contract. The Foreign/Sign Language Differential was also increased as well as \$50 a month for Special Assignment pay for our ESU members. Language in the On-Call portion of the contract was changed to "In the event an Employee is on-call for a holiday, that employee shall be granted an additional eight hours of straight time compensated time off". That benefited the members assigned to the Detective Unit who are on call during those holidays with extra days off being compensated. We were finally able to get the double-back pay into the contract and not just as an arbitration award. That helped to clear up the language and understanding for payroll as well. Pay was increased for all members by 2.5% for both 2014 & 2015. An additional 1% increase was given to those at top pay in the job classification as "Sheriff's Deputy". The extra 1% was given by the County as they stated only the positions that were having retention problems were awarded the increase. The contract committee argued vehemently that all positions are affected and deserved the extra 1%. We also argued that the County was just using this tactic as a ploy to divide our membership. The County held its position with their final offer. The membership voted and the contract was ratified. Reviewing other contracts that were settled, it was determined that the extra 1% was indeed only given to those job classifications that displayed obvious retention issues (i.e. Detention Deputies and Dispatchers).

As president of this Association, I have opened the lines of communication with our membership through the use of our website ([www.hcsda.com](http://www.hcsda.com)), Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/hcsda](http://www.facebook.com/hcsda)) and electronic mailing list. Even though we have increased our level of communication, it is still impossible to relay everything to the membership. Many things such as Internal Affairs hearings and grievances are private matters. We walk a delicate line as to the amount of information we can release to the membership, as we balance the desire to share our hard work with you versus maintaining the anonymity

of the process and those involved. Other times we are in talks with Sheriff's Administration on several issues at a time, which we cannot communicate as to what will happen with an issue, until Sheriff's Administration commits to a position regarding it. An example is the schedules for different units. The 12-hour day in ESD Patrol & Canine was a very fluid example that did not get resolved until the last minute. However, due to the hard work, time, and research the Association put into working out the last second details for this schedule, we believe that we have allowed for one of the best schedules to ever have been implemented within the Sheriff's Office. We believe that those members that are assigned to the 12-hour schedule would agree. The Association will continue to work with Sheriff's Administration in bringing this schedule about to other units within the Sheriff's Office.

We are attempting to reopen the lines of communication with Sheriff's Administration. It was obviously strained during the election process, but we all understand that we must move on to make the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office a better place to work. The 12-hour schedule is working very well for the Patrol Unit, Canine Unit, and soon for those assigned to the Sheriff's Enforcement Unit. The Detective Unit is now on an 8-hour day, where they have had their take home squads returned to them, making it easier for them to respond to situations as they arise. Those are a couple of huge strides toward morale improvement within those units. We will continue to work vigorously to resolve schedule and morale issues for the rest of the units within the Sheriff's Office.

Officer safety is of the utmost importance in this line of work. With that being said, we have had a dramatic increase in critical incidents recently. Our members have responded heroically and we are extremely proud of how they handled themselves under those extremely stressful situations. Please remember that we all are potential targets and need to look out for not only ourselves, but those who we work with as well. Sheriff's Administration has done an excellent job of handling these critical incidents and I thank them for their professionalism during those stressful times. In 2014, we decided to enroll all our members in the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association-Legal Defense Fund without raising membership dues. This decision could not have come at a better time due to the recent incidents involving our members. It is reassuring to know that we have the backing of numerous well-qualified attorneys to assist us with these critical incidents.

Last, but definitely not least, I would like to extend a special thank you to my Board members who work extremely hard on all of our behalf. Without their hard work, knowledge, determination, dedication, and understanding, it would be impossible to achieve the successes that we have seen and will continue to see. I truly believe we are about to turn the corner on making this a better place to work and attract/retain new employees. We will learn more soon, as we will be entering into the 2016-2017 contract

negotiations. If you are interested in participating in this process, please send the Board an email expressing your interest. This is a great opportunity to learn first-hand the amount of time and effort that is placed into securing a favorable contract for all of our members.

Thank you all for your continued support and service.

Stay safe!

Al Saastamoinen  
President HCSDA