

THE OBSERVER/ ENTERPRISE

Serving Coke County



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CRIME IN COKE COUNTY

How we got here ... What we can do

Coke County, like the rest of Texas, is seeing a spike in crime rates from previous years. Coke County is fortunate that violent crime within our borders has not seen a similar spike.

Most crimes are considered "property" crimes and occur in the towns of Bronte and Robert Lee. The majority of the recent "out-in-the-county" larger burglaries were traced back to one suspect and these cases are making their way through the court system.

Citizens must also remember, real life policing and CSI, Wherever are very different from each other. In real life, the probability of getting a fingerprint that meets the 9 point legal requirement for our court system is low. Also, Coke County does not have a crime lab. Evidence gathered in Coke County must be sent to DPS

Crime Lab where it takes a number and waits.

Coke County is different than many of the counties mentioned in the table accompanying this article. Not only does Coke County have two small cities, it has two lakes, a portion of another small city, and three more communities.

The only full-time law enforcement for the county are the officers employed by the Coke County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Wayne McCutchen and his four deputies are responsible for covering all 928 square miles of Coke County twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. These men work wrecks, put up livestock (a lot), investigate burglaries, handle domestic disputes, assist EMS on ambulance runs, assist Child Protective Service officers, assist with traffic for funerals, parades,



WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sunday, July 9

Vacation Bible School, 6 pm - 8:30 pm,
First Baptist Church, Bronte

Monday, July 10

Robert Lee City Council Meeting, 6 pm,
Robert Lee City Hall

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting, 6 pm,
First Baptist Church, Bronte

Vacation Bible School, 6 pm - 8:30 pm,
First Baptist Church, Bronte

Water Aerobics, 6:30 pm,
Bronte Pool

Bronte Volunteer Fire Department Meeting,
7 pm, Bronte City Hall

Tuesday, July 11

Commissioners Court, 9 am,
County Courthouse, Robert Lee

Vacation Bible School, 6 pm - 8:30 pm,
First Baptist Church, Bronte

Wednesday, July 12

Vacation Bible School, 6 pm - 8:30 pm,
First Baptist Church, Bronte

Thursday, July 13

Bronte City Council Meeting, 6 pm,
Bronte City Hall

Vacation Bible School, 6 pm - 8:30 pm,
First Baptist Church, Bronte

Water Aerobics, 6:30 pm,
Bronte Pool

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etc., transport prisoners for both county and district court, act as bailiff for county court, work traffic, assist stranded motorists, check on the welfare of elderly and disabled citizens, assist firefighters, and other assorted acts. They are called upon to be grief counselors, marriage counselors and are often requested to be the strong parental figure for young people.

Due to the fact there are only five officers, shift work is not an option for this small department. Due to the size of the county and safety issues, one officer on duty at a time is also not an option. This means that if an officer works late into the night, you probably won't see him early the next morning. Or if he works during the day, you won't see him out at night. With days off, vacations and holidays, there are usually only two to three officers working on any given day. Because these men are visible members of our community and all deputies either live in one of the cities are within view of a major highway, local criminals can easily know when deputies are working or

off duty. Shall we say, they can tell if the coast is clear.

In days past, the overall crime rate in Coke County and the surrounding areas was much lower. There are many reasons for this. People knew each other, looked out for each other, and were held accountable for their actions. God was a part of most peoples' daily lives and was welcome in homes, businesses and schools. The drug of choice in Coke County was alcohol, purchased out of county. By the 1970s, young people were experimenting with pot, but harder narcotics were rare. Today, drugs drive 90% of the crime in America and in Coke County. The vast majority of thefts and burglaries finance the acquisition of addictive drugs.

Being a small county where most citizens are known to each other also plays into Coke County's drug community. That is why undercover narcotics officers from various drug task forces have proven to not be an option in Coke County's war on drugs. Law enforcement, as well as many citizens, know members of the local drug community.

However, knowing them is not enough. In order to prosecute, evidence must be obtained and even drug offenders enjoy protection under the Constitution. If their rights are violated, the case will be thrown out.

As time progressed and crime in our larger surrounding cities increased, the law enforcement agencies serving these cities were given additional funding to add personnel to their forces as required to keep up with the crime rate. As more officers were added, it became harder for thieves working within these cities to escape detection. The thieves began to branch out to the neighboring smaller communities where pickings were easier. This is usually what has happened when multiple vehicle thefts occur in one of our communities over the course of one night.

Another reason for the increased crime rate lies with some parents who either can't or choose not to discipline their children. Many reasons are given for this lack of discipline -
(Continued on page 3)