



# Department of Justice



## Office of Justice Programs

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2004

Office of Justice Programs

Contact: Sheila Jerusalem

202-307-0703

[www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov)

### **DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE 'S VOLUNTEERS IN POLICE SERVICE PROGRAM DOUBLES PARTICIPATION SINCE 2003**

WASHINGTON— Participation in the U.S. Department of Justice's Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program, a volunteer law enforcement program, has more than doubled since last year, increasing participation from 27,000 to 69,000 civilians nationwide. VIPS now operates 1000 programs across the country; nearly doubling last year's 585 programs.

The VIPS Program is administered by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and assists local law enforcement in every state and the District of Columbia. VIPS is one of four Citizen Corps programs, which are a part of USA Freedom Corps, President Bush's initiative to encourage and provide opportunities for all Americans to engage in community service and to participate directly in efforts to improve homeland security. Prior to the launch of the VIPS national effort in 2002, there were 76 programs in 27 states and the District of Columbia.

It is especially encouraging to watch VIPS programs flourish and the number of volunteers double over the last year. The tremendous growth in the number of citizen volunteers illustrates their eagerness to serve and support local police departments in securing our communities and neighborhoods, said OJP Assistant Attorney General Deborah J. Daniels. Equally encouraging is the fact that police departments are acknowledging the value of volunteers, allowing officers to concentrate on their primary duties and spend more time where they're most needed.

The goal of the VIPS Program is to enhance the volunteer capacity of state and local law enforcement agencies. The Department of Justice administers the VIPS Program in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). IACP is the world's oldest and largest nonprofit membership organization of police executives, with over 19,000 members in more than 89 different countries. VIPS volunteers assist law enforcement agencies in a variety of ways, including answering phones, taking incident reports, participating in crime prevention programs such as Neighborhood Watch, sitting on citizen advisory boards and engaging in citizen patrols, and assisting with special events. They also help direct traffic, act as interpreters and donate their computer skills.

(MORE)

The 1000th registered VIPS program is the 911 Explorer Post, affiliated with the Albion, N.Y., Police Department. The Explorer post was formed by the Village of Albion Police Department in conjunction with the Albion Central School District. The Explorer post has nine volunteers trained in basic police tactics and operations who provide security at school and community events. The volunteers are issued uniforms similar to those of the Albion Police Department and often work to control traffic and crowds at festivals, parades and other community events.

Another volunteer unit, the "VIPS Gray Squad," is an all-volunteer "cold case" unit within the Tulsa, Okla., Police Department, dedicated to solving cases on which the trail of evidence has become cold. It is located within the department's Homicide Unit and is led by a former Tulsa Police Department detective who now volunteers. Earlier this year, the Gray Squad spent hundreds of hours closing the 1975 murder of a local college student. In April 2004, the case was closed when the accused pleaded guilty and received a sentence of life in prison.

The VIPS Web site serves as a gateway to information both for law enforcement agencies and for citizens interested in volunteering. It includes a searchable database of existing programs, a resource guide of downloadable sample documents and policies, a VIPS information e-mail list, and a AVIPS to VIPS@ moderated discussion group. The Web site has been instrumental in helping communities establish new VIPS programs and in mobilizing citizen volunteers. It also provides a wealth of information for law enforcement agencies seeking to enhance or establish a VIPS program. To date, the VIPS Web site has received more than 5.1 million hits and is accessible from the OJP's Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>.

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises five component bureaus and two offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Office of the Police Corps and Law Enforcement Education and the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed program and OJP's American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Desk. More information can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>.

###

BJA04104