

Volunteers in Police Service

On May 30, I had the honor of joining US Attorney General John Ashcroft in Alexandria, Virginia, to announce the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) initiative, an effort developed by the US Department of Justice and the IACP. The VIPS program was created to support President Bush's USA Freedom Corps initiative and is one of three Citizen Corps programs administered by the Justice Department

The Call to Service

The VIPS program is designed to address the increasing demands on state and local law enforcement agencies in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. At a time when law enforcement's limited resources are being stretched even further than usual, many agencies are turning to civilian volunteers so that police officers can serve on the front lines, working to make communities safer.

Volunteers who participate in VIPS programs truly are "very important people." They assist departments by performing nonsworn duties such as answering phones, compiling crime data, preparing incident reports, and facilitating crime prevention programs. VIPS is designed to bring together law enforcement volunteer programs nationwide to share resources and support each other's efforts. This national initiative helps state and local law enforcement agencies by increasing the number of law enforcement volunteers, expanding or improving various components of existing programs, and aiding agencies in establishing new VIPS programs.

An Outgrowth of Community Policing

I believe that the VIPS program is a logical outgrowth of the growing community policing trend. Community policing programs have built strong bridges between law enforcement agencies and the citizens they serve. A logical expansion of this collaboration is to allow citizens to work at their local law enforcement agencies to enhance police services without budgetary or police manpower concerns. As Attorney General Ashcroft stated, "Volunteers can assist police in performing routine duties

that are necessary to the efficient operation of their department. Though the work may not be glamorous, it is essential."

Although the IACP's role in this initiative is multifaceted, its efforts are primarily focused on increasing the number of police volunteers. We will be working to do the following:

- Build a comprehensive database of successful police volunteer programs already in place
- Provide best practice guidelines, education, information, training, and technical support to communities to increase volunteer levels
- Create a turnkey volunteer program implementation approach for state, county, and local police departments
- Measure the impact of the VIPS program, specifically its value to communities, citizen volunteers, and the departments they serve

We have very high expectations for our work. We already know that volunteer programs can make a significant difference in police agency capacity. Now we need to expand these programs. An essential part of this effort

will be to ensure that the volunteers enjoy their experiences by creating meaningful and rewarding opportunities for them to serve their local departments. To assist in this effort, we will create models of police-based volunteer programs that can be introduced anywhere in the world.

Information Gateway

As a first step toward achieving our goals, IACP has developed the Volunteers in Police Service Web site. This comprehensive site, located at www.policivolunteers.org, will serve as the gateway to information for citizens who are interested in volunteering for a VIPS program and law enforcement agencies that are interested in establishing one. The IACP is gathering data on existing volunteer programs from state and local law enforcement agencies so that citizen volunteers will be able to locate programs in their own geographic area. In the law enforcement section of the Web site, you can learn about other volunteer programs and share information about your own. In the coming weeks, information in the database will continue to grow.

IACP considers the VIPS program to be critically important. In the wake of September 11, our nation needs the highest level of police presence and effectiveness we can muster. The use of citizen volunteers through the VIPS program is one way we can increase police capacity, and we intend to make it work. However, only by working together can we make VIPS a success.

I urge you to explore the Web site and contribute information on your agency's volunteer program. I believe that the VIPS initiative, together with the other Citizen Corps programs, will enhance local homeland security efforts and make emergency preparedness a part of our daily lives. Thank you for being a part of this important effort, and thanks also to all of the volunteers who make it possible. ❖

In friendship,



*Chief William B. Berger
North Miami Beach, Florida*

Bill

U.S. Department of Justice and IACP Launch VIPS Program

On May 30, 2002, in Alexandria, Virginia, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft and IACP President William Berger launched Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS), a U.S. Department of Justice program administered by IACP to promote citizen-police volunteer programs nationwide.

The initiative is designed to increase the number of law enforcement volunteers, expand or improve components of existing programs, and help agencies without VIPS programs to establish them. "The efforts of these volunteers enable officers to stay on the front lines where they are needed most," Ashcroft said.

At the event, Berger unveiled www.policevolunteers.org, the Web site developed by the IACP to support the VIPS program. "The Web site coordinates information from VIPS programs in our local communities to create a nationwide resource," said Berger. "It provides information about all VIPS programs and allows law enforcement agencies and volunteers alike to communicate in order to improve their programs and create more opportunities for volunteer services."

IACP members who have volunteer programs in their agencies are encouraged to go to the VIPS Web site and register program information at <http://www.policevolunteers.org/programs/>. Citizens can learn about opportunities that are available for volunteering. Police agencies can learn about programs across the nation.

To view a video of the VIPS launch on the VIPS Web site, visit <http://www.policevolunteers.org/webcast.htm>.

IACP Web Site: Redone, Reworked for You

IACP's Web site—www.theiacp.org—has a new look, new features, and new functions that allow you to do more than ever before.

Several new features have been incorporated in the site. The pop-out navigation bar gets you where you want to go faster than before. IACP members may access the members-only area by typing their membership numbers in the user name box and using their last names as their passwords. Once in, members may search the directory of members, update their data files, renew their memberships, and see other features in the future.



Scenes from the May 30, 2002, launch of the Volunteers in Police Service initiative administered by the U.S. Department of Justice and the IACP. Top left: IACP President William B. Berger. Top right: U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft. Center: On the dais (left to right): Richard R. Nedelkoff, director, Bureau of Justice Assistance; Deborah J. Daniels, assistant U.S. attorney general, Office of Justice Programs; John Bridgeland, director, USA Freedom Corps; Attorney General Ashcroft; Charles Samarra, chief of police, Alexandria, Virginia; President Berger; Carl R. Peed, director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Bottom left: President Berger presents a certificate of recognition to a police volunteer as Chief Samarra looks on. Photographs by David Hathcox.