

# SHERIFF'S ADVISORY COUNCIL: PROVIDING SUPPORT AND FUNDING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

By Hilary Grant

**O**NCE UPON A TIME, MOST SMALL AND MID-TOWN police departments in America really were a lot like the one in fictional Mayberry on *The Andy Griffith Show*.

A few patrol cars, a smattering of law enforcement personnel and a dispatcher usually did the job with a minimum of fuss and equipment. But today, with so many of these agencies expected to take on new responsibilities, as well as being asked to utilize increasing technological advances in criminal investigations, much more is needed than the bare basics.

Here in SLO County, that's where the not-for-profit San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Advisory Council comes in.

Founded in 1988 to provide extra funding and support to law enforcement agencies throughout the entire county, SAC, as the group is also known, began with a little more than 20 members and now has 130 active participants. (The organization hopes to attract at least 30 new applicants in the next year.)

Thanks to these members and various money making events, SAC was able to purchase a good deal of needed equipment just last year, including more than three dozen vests for the fire department in Cambria; partially paying for two K-9 dogs for the Arroyo Grande Police Department, and purchasing mobile radios and ancillary equipment for the SLO-located Horse Emergency Evacuation Team, whose members move farm animals and other livestock in emergencies such as wildfires.



SAC Chairman, Jim Brabeck with supporter Katcho Achadjian

Additionally, the Council helps with the funding of officer training, public forums and student scholarships.

In this category was co-sponsoring a sexual assault training program to SLO city officers, and funding and organizing two sheriff candidate forums, which gave area residents a chance to meet and ask questions to candidates running for sheriff in 2010. SAC has also donated monies to the local dial 2-1-1 program, which gives

free referrals for assistance with food, housing, health care and unemployment, and in 2009, the group awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to the son of a deputy sheriff planning to major in criminal justice at a community college in California.

"This group is very close to all of our members' hearts," says Jim Brabeck, SAC's current chairman of the board and the CEO of Farm Supply Company. (Other occupations on the 15-member board include a former SLO County Supervisor, certified public accountant, and retired Cal Poly professor.)

"We receive the donations we do because people realize that public safety is the foundation upon which our quality of life here on the Central Coast is built."

While a short-term goal is to bring in new members, Brabeck says that SAC's longer, money-making push right now is funding a new coroner facility. This new building, he adds, will allow autopsies to be performed locally.

Involved in SAC "since day one," Brabeck says that the Council was formed to fulfill a campaign pledge of then newly-elected SLO County Sheriff Ed Williams. Williams, he says, hoped to create an advisory board of citizens who could do two things: address community law enforcement concerns and, as a non-profit, bring in dollars to meet many of the expanding, and unmet, needs of police agencies.

Another early ambition, adds Brabeck, was to start a regional law enforcement training facility, and in fact, thanks to Council lobbying, the SLO County Board of Supervisors did allocate land for this purpose.



Sheriff's Day at the Ranch is September 17th



Founding SAC Chairman, Bryan Duvall with Chairman Elect, Sylvia Dodd at Pat Hedges retirement party.



Last election debate for Sheriff sponsored by the SAC

to our collective efforts, we really feel that we're benefiting the men and women of the sheriff's office, as well as all of those who volunteer their time in auxiliary units to serve our community.

"It is truly an honor to be chairman of this board."

Log on to [www.sacslo.org](http://www.sacslo.org) to find out more about the Sheriff's Advisory Council, including its mission, meeting schedules and the upcoming Sheriff's Family Day at the Ranch.

"Allan Hancock College beat us to it, but we were still able to fund the first video camera for a patrol car, which is now standard in all sheriff cars," says Brabeck. Other early equipment that SAC bought was night vision goggles and protective vests for the County.

Indeed, Brabeck says that SAC is now able to give \$15,000 to \$25,000 for various police-related activities every year.

The public will have a chance to see some of the results of the group's efforts this month at its annual Sheriff's Family Day at the Ranch.

Slated for Saturday, September 17, from 10 o'clock in the morning to four in the afternoon, the free event will be, as it was last year, at the Madonna Inn Field, adjacent to Highway 101 and Madonna Road. Last year, about 5,000 persons attended, and Brabeck is expecting at least the same number of visitors this time. There will be no charge for hot dogs and sodas to kids 12 years old and under.

"All law enforcement agencies within our county will have a presence," says Brabeck.

To that end, there will be demonstrations by K-9 units and Jaws of Life programs, as well as representatives from federal agencies including the FBI and Drug Enforcement Agency. Brabeck says members of the sheriff's posse and California Highway Patrol will also be on hand to interface with the public.

SAC plans to get word out about the event via local television, radio and print ads (including an ad on page 47). A new web site (it debuted earlier this summer) will, says Brabeck, also increase public awareness of not just Sheriff's Day, but other Council activities.

"The most gratifying part of belonging to SAC is getting to know outstanding individuals who understand the importance of what we're all doing," says Brabeck. "Thanks

# Right In Your Backyard!

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Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>

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San Luis Obispo Store, 10am - 12pm

Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>

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