



EDWARD PIKULSKI / TRIBUNE STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Retired Scranton police officer Jody Viscomi, left, and Lt. Leonard Namiotka talk with traffic clerk Amanda Pesavento in the central records office at City Hall. Lt. Namiotka has taken over the police community outreach program from Mr. Viscomi.

Police office strives to show it's 'not all handcuffs and guns'

Scranton cops' community outreach program changes officers, but not mission.

By Brian Clark

TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

When Lt. Leonard Namiotka took over the Scranton Police Department's administrative lieutenant office a month ago, he stepped into a position drastically changed from two years earlier.

Jody Viscomi had filled the position at that point after it sat vacant for six months. By the time Mr. Viscomi retired this fall he added more than a dozen new presentations and revamped pre-existing community programs.

"We found a bunch of different people in the community who could benefit from different programs," Mr. Viscomi said.

Lt. Namiotka now plans to continue those programs and to reach out to more adults.

"It's not all handcuffs and guns and we show up and somebody's getting arrested," he said.

Police started a bank robbery prevention program during a rash of holdups in the spring. In July, they offered a retail theft prevention session at the Mall at Steamtown.

School presentations grew to include fingerprinting and identification sheets for parents if children go missing and lessons about being wary of strangers.

The Scranton Police Department added its inaugural Citizens Police Academy, began rotating patrols that saturate communities to combat blight and began participating in National Night Out, an anti-crime program that promotes public awareness of drugs and violence.

The department has won awards in each of the two

years it has participated in National Night Out.

The administrative position now fills a community policing/crime prevention duty that Chief David Elliott has encouraged.

"We pretty much threw a lot of programs together on Lt. Viscomi and told him to develop it," the chief said. "I think it's very important to get out to the community."

Lt. Namiotka will develop a junior police academy and will continue previous work adding computers to patrol cars.

Chief Elliott said Mr. Viscomi's impact on the department goes beyond the friendship.

"We had a pretty much non-existent crime prevention program in the past," Chief Elliott said. "It just evolved into a huge part of the department."

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