

New security chief seeks cooperation

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

Wayne County's new homeland security director Tony Shannon wants the county to be prepared, whether it's for a devastating tornado or a biochemical attack by terrorists.

"We have to be sure the community is prepared for what might be," Shannon said. "It's better to do what we can and if it doesn't happen, that's great."

Shannon, 57, of Livonia brings more than 20 years experience in the Wayne County Sheriff's office and doctorate degree to his new position.

"My responsibilities are the same as Mr. Ridge's (U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge) on a smaller scale," Shannon said. "It is to look after getting prepared for disasters, manmade and otherwise."

County Executive Bob Ficano said the county has always been responsible for emergency management.

"But it's always been reactive ... to tornadoes, floods. The mindset has been reactive," Ficano said.

He said the new position will be proactive about organizing emergency response with the county's 43 local governments and surrounding counties.

"It takes everybody to do their part," Shannon said. "Everyone can't do it alone, there are cost factors."

Shannon said he will act as a central coordinating agency for local communities, working with mayors, supervisors, police and fire chiefs and medical people. He will also be preparing a program to educate the public on what to do in an emergency.

Shannon said knowing how to call and where to go in an emergency will help to cut down on panic. He said he will be building on programs already in place.

Wayne County is particularly vulnerable because of its international border and extensive industry.

"We have 100 chemical companies in the county, oil refineries, a bridge and a tunnel, three airports," Shannon said. "It's the hub of Michigan. That makes us higher on the target list. It draws attention."

Shannon said his first job will be working with other agencies in the county to develop a mitigation program outlining procedures for dealing with various emergencies. He is working on a couple grant proposals to seek federal funding and wants a coordinated effort rather than competing with other agencies in the region for federal funds.

Ficano said the county has money in its budget to fund the homeland security office but need extra federal funding. He said the money has been promised but "the feds have been much slower than anyone would want."

Ficano said the economic vitality of the region depends on strong security measures. He said Michigan depends on having an open border and he is working with the Canadian

government on balancing the need for "just on time" delivery with proper security checks.

Shannon said he understands the argument that there is a thin line between responsibly warning people about potential emergency dangers and causing unnecessary panic.

"It is a small line, but I don't now what it is," Shannon said. "If it never happens, we'll have a good exercise and exercise it always good. If we don't do it and something happens, we defeat ourselves."

He said we need to adopt an attitude that was more common in the late 1940s when people looked out for each other.

"Watch what's happening around you, take care of your neighbors, many people don't even know their neighbors," he said. "We used to do a lot of that back in the '40s under civil defense. We've let it fall into a lull."

As part of his program to educate the public Shannon has been holding townhall

Emergency planning tips

- Tony Shannon, Wayne County's new director of homeland security, offers these tips for being prepared in an emergency:
- Know where the gas cut-off is located in your house in case of fire.
 - Keep a First Aid Kit accessible.
 - Have a battery-powered radio and extra batteries on hand so that you are able to listen to emergency broadcast stations.
 - Be aware of emergency phone numbers.
 - Keep cash on hand.
 - Have candles available for emergency lighting.
 - Have plastic and duct tape ready to cover windows in case of a chemical attack.
 - Keep hooded gas masks at home.
 - Make sure you have bleach available in order to make a 5 percent decontamination solution.
 - Have a three-day supply of food and water available at all times.
 - Keep food and water available in your car.
 - Keep your car gas tank filled.
 - Know how to contact family members at all times.
 - Be familiar with evacuation routes from your place of work.
 - Have a planned evacuation route from your city or town.
 - Have a designated location to meet with family members.
 - Keep toiletries and paper toweling ready to travel.

meetings around the county answering questions and providing tips on what to do in an emergency.



A history lesson

Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano celebrated Black History Month with first-graders last week at the Kay Beard County Building in Westland. The students from the Michigan Automotive Academy learned about Black inventor Elijah McCoy who died at the Eloise Infirmary in 1929. The Beard building is on the former Eloise site.

GRANHOLM

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Catholic faith.

"There was loud applause when it was announced," said state Rep. Aldo Vagnozzi, who said he attended for the first time to show support for the school. "The bidding was so furious."

Offered first at \$500, the item was sold for a winning bid of \$3,750.

Two couples who wished to remain anonymous bid on the lunch for the lunch for Marie Doelker, school president.

Doelker called the auction successful.

"Attendance was good, more than 400 people."

Tickets for "An Evening with the Stars" ranged in price from an "early bird" discount of \$85 to platinum star donor tickets that sold for \$250. Several silent auctions and a live auc-

tion proved highly successful.

"We went over \$100,000," Doelker said. "We think we did better than last year."

As of Wednesday Doelker was still calculating how much the event would net after expenses are paid.

Proceeds from the auction are considered an educational enhancement, necessary for the school's operational budget, Doelker said.

The evening began with a 4:30 p.m. Mass in the chapel. Bizarre predictions and inclement weather kept some people away.

But even though weather conditions grew worse during the evening, many guests stayed until the end.

"Supporters were great," Doelker said.

A strolling buffet included a potato bar, a pasta bar, a shrimp bar and roast turkey.

Doelker praised the students who helped with the raffle, the billboards and serving desserts.

Girls even assisted with valet

parking. "They were frozen," Doelker said.

Among the items bid on were vacations, a Zamboni ride, a tuition package, a suite for 18 at Comerica Park, a pig roast dinner for 125 and a meal prepared by the Mercy High administrative team.

The auctioneer also asked whether school officials had a wish list. They wanted a chance to finish renovation of the chapel and said 100 more chairs would help. About 75 people responded, raising almost \$10,000.

Liz Boyd, a spokesman for Gov. Jennifer Granholm said the Governor was pleased to learn so much money was raised with her auction item.

"She has the greatest respect for Sister Regina and the school," said Boyd.

The time and location of the lunch has not been determined.

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