

## **Community Policing: Alive and Well in High Springs**

The High Springs Police Department has launched its Citation for a Cookie Community partnership initiative. Each officer of the High Springs Police Department has been issued a book of Cookie Citations to hand out to unsuspecting children throughout the city. The children, in turn, can redeem the Cookie Citation for one free cookie at a local business.

The Cookie Citation, which depicts a High Springs Police Department gold badge and shoulder patch reads, "On the above date and time, Officer (issuing officer's name) of the High Springs Police Department observed you commit the following...."

Officers are on the lookout for children seen committing a random act of kindness, or following safety rules, such as, wearing a helmet while riding a bicycle, wearing safety equipment while rollerblading or skateboarding, or crossing the street within the crosswalk after looking both ways. The child, after being issued a Cookie Citation can redeem it for a freshly baked gourmet cookie treat.

The High Springs Police Department has partnered with the Kiwanis Club of Santa Fe, and The Talented Cookie located at 25 NW 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in High Springs. Chief Anterio pitched the idea to Kiwanis' President Jerry Kiernan and his membership of Kiwanians at their monthly meeting a few weeks ago. Meanwhile, Officer Vernon Higginbotham, Cookie for a Citation coordinator presented the concept to Wendy Newman, Owner/Cookie Queen of The Talented Cookie. Kiernan and Newman saw tremendous value in the Citation for a Cookie initiative and happily agreed to partnership with the police department.

For the Citation for a Cookie Community partnership initiative, The Talented Cookie has committed to providing one freshly baked gourmet cookie per citation, which normally is available in ten different flavors such as chocolate chip, chocolate chip and bacon, red velvet, triple chocolate, birthday cake, almond joy, gone nuts, pecan butter, snickerdoodle, and vegan chocolate chip. On the other hand, the Kiwanis Club of Santa Fe has committed to funding the cost of the program, as well as printing the Cookie Citations.

According to Chief Anterio, I see this as a win-win for all involved; the children, a local business, the Kiwanis Club, the City, and its police department. This is truly a community partnership initiative at its best. Quite often, a child's first interaction with a police officer may be a negative experience; such as his/her parent or loved one being issued a traffic citation, being arrested, or seeing an officer having to intervene in a family related matter.

The Cookie for a Citation program is a way for the officers of the High Springs Police Department to interact with the children on a much different level as typically seen during the officer's normal tour of duty. This type of positive police-community relations is invaluable; especially in light of recent incidents seen in the media.

Good police-community relationships demand that feedback from the community is constantly solicited and evaluated by the police. I am confident the feedback for the Citation for a Cookie initiative will be positive.