

# CRIME,

continued from Page A1

category that includes person-to-person violence or theft of property. Only 64 of those involved violent actions.

"Property crimes are always going to be the bulk of what we investigate," Steele said.

By looking at the crime numbers with a depth and breadth that had previously eluded KPD, Steele's work led to recent break-ups of theft rings and one drug house that had been in service for more than two decades.

In December 2014, KPD received a number of nuisance calls around a specific home on Juedes Avenue Northeast. However, the calls were coming in at different times during the day and being reported to different members of the four KPD officer shifts.

"It wasn't until Cara brought that (cluster of calls) to our attention that we realized we had a problem. From there we worked on a problem-oriented policing solution, wrote warrants and were able to shut it down a month later," Teague said.

More recently, Steele spotted a trend in the specifics of some area thefts.

"Individually, the incidents probably wouldn't have triggered anything, but we started seeing similar items taken, similar points of entry and exit, and all those things came together to paint a bigger picture," Steele said.

It led to a major bust of a theft ring on Marino Drive North in January of this year. Cars, utility trailers, ATVs, quads and various wheels, compressors and numerous construction tools were recovered in the course of the investigation.

The trends in Keizer crime also have a place in recent discussions regarding the need for more police officers in Keizer. KPD has 38 officers - ranging from beat cops to detectives - making it one of the least staffed police departments in Oregon for a city of its size.

Teague would like to see two additional officers on the night shift and another detective. If residents want more traffic control presence, he would push for a fourth officer.

"Right now, we don't have the ability to contain bad guys

in a perimeter on the night shift," Teague said.

Studies of police services cannot connect the presence of more officers with a decrease in crime numbers, but it could make a difference in the quality of service, Teague said.

"When we get one more detective, you're going to have a detective show up at your house to investigate a burglary, not just a patrolman," Teague said.

The additional officers would also free up the current roster to investigate current and past crimes. There is only one unsolved murder in the history of the city - Christine Michelle Speten in 2011 - but Kuhns contends it remains a solvable case.

"More officers would free up time for us to be able to go back to the Speten homicide and bring a resolution to that case," Kuhns said.

That's one area that the KPD's associated crime numbers can back up. Between 2014 and 2015, KPD increased its case clearance - in which an investigation is brought to some resolution, not necessarily an arrest - from 68 to 78 percent.

# ARREST,

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for infractions related to livability issues, like criminal mischief or urinating in public, it's not uncommon for those contacts to result in charges for possession of a controlled substance, Clarkson said.

In the past, the vast majority of those cases were forwarded to district attorneys and felony charges were filed.

"That resulted in using jail space for people with substance abuse problems and it created a revolving door," Clarkson said. "We have people who aren't getting treatment, getting released, ending up back in jail, and then prisons as they are charged with more, and higher level, felonies."

The "felony resumes" become an impediment to gaining employment and housing, two of the primary factors that lead to homelessness.

"We're trying to address a public health problem with the criminal justice system," Clarkson said.

In 2015, the DA's office began treating offenders found with controlled substances differently. More than 850 felony charges were lodged against those found in possession of a controlled substance, but another 555 charges were not filed against first-time offenders and those found in

possession of only trace amounts of controlled substances.

"We're shifting priorities away from felonies and to misdemeanors," Clarkson said. "We also present some of those charged with lesser crimes with the opportunity to have the charges dismissed if they show strides toward rehabilitation."

Lt. Tad Larson, of the Marion County Sheriff's Office, and Anne-Marie Bandfield, of the Marion County Public Health Department, explained how the CORT team has attempted to take on mental health issues encountered by police officers without immediate arrests and jail time.

"We have clinicians riding along with officers as a team to sites of disturbances," said Bandfield. "In addition to that we have case managers, crisis prescribers and money to provide wraparound services that stop the recycling that happens with mental health issues that result in jail time."

The result is lowered recidivism rates for mental health patients who stay connected to treatment, Bandfield said.

Both programs are part of a shift in approaching the problems related to homelessness, Clarkson said. It focuses on reducing harm for individuals and the community rather than attempting one-size-fits-all cures or hiding the problem individuals out of sight in correctional facilities.

"It requires redefining success, we're no longer looking for perfection, we're looking for better," Clarkson said.

"We're trying to address a public health problem with the criminal justice system."

— Paige Clarkson  
Deputy District Attorney

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