

## From the Sheriff's Desk . . .

by Jeff Dickerson,  
Columbia County Sheriff



### Making Lemonade from Lemons

The failure of the Sheriff's Stable Funding campaign has meant that the reductions for the Sheriff's Office in the coming fiscal year (beginning July 1) will go ahead as planned. It is my hope that citizens expe-

riencing the effects of the reduced services from my office will understand that these cuts are the inevitable result of reductions in funding and not in any way intended as a punishment for not approving the levy.

As Sheriff, I want you to know that I view it my sacred responsibility to do the best I can with the resources committed to us – however small they become – to solve the public safety problems we confront in our communities. I also believe it is important for me to explain the cuts we are making and how they will affect our service levels.

Columbia County started this new fiscal year with a 6.4 percent decrease in revenue and a 7.1 percent increase in costs of current services, which translated

into a \$2.8 million budget shortfall. The Sheriff's Office reduced its share of the County General fund by almost 25 percent, but made up for much of the decline with increased use of jail beds by the federal government for U.S. Marshals' inmates. Still, we had to lay off three positions in the jail and eliminate one patrol deputy position to balance our budget.

The loss of yet another patrol position now means we have lost half the authorized strength of our patrol force in the two-and-a-half years since I became Sheriff. With just five deputies to cover the 657 square miles of our county 24 hours a day and seven days a week, we are spread too thin to have any kind of de-

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