

## From the Sheriff's Desk . . .

by Jeff Dickerson,  
Columbia County Sheriff



### Jail Capacity Management

When Columbia County voters passed the construction bond levy to build the jail in 1998, no moneys were authorized for the operation of the facility. It was only to build it. And build it we did.

The facility is a 195-bed capacity jail that replaced the old, dilapidated facility in

the basement of the county courthouse, and increased the bed-space by more than five-fold. It remains a state-of-the-art detention center capable of housing the most serious of criminals safely and securely. In the 11 years since the new jail was built, there has been but one escape from this jail (years ago when an inmate was allowed outside to empty the trash from the kitchen).

Since the jail was constructed, we have used outside funding to construct a security fence around the facility that both protects our staff and adds an additional layer of security for the jail. We are committed to providing the best, most effective and humane incarceration services for the citizens in our county.

Because, however, we have not been able to raise

enough revenue to fully operate the jail, efforts are now being made to make sure the resources we do have to run the facility are used to keep the most serious offenders in jail. This will mean reduction of the number of beds available over time, and a larger number of inmates and arrestees who will be given sanctions that are alternatives to jail time.

This topic garnered the majority of the time during the Sheriff's Services Reduction Summit held Friday, September 9, in St. Helens. Your interim police chief, Michael Conner, was in attendance along with attendees representing the courts, all police agencies and/or cities with police departments in our county, the district attorney, community corrections, Columbia

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