

Identification Specialist Sandra Williams checks prints in the department's fingerprint system.



police department

As the horrible events of September 11 unfolded, Meridian police officers moved quickly to protect the community and sensitive sites. Patrols were added at the Meridian Regional Airport and to the perimeter of the Air National Guard base. In the following weeks, five officers were called to active duty by their guard units and the length of their mission is unknown.

Despite the heightened security, the daily routine of professional police work continues. And the department is being aided by two new systems to improve proficiency in the areas of fingerprint analysis and firearms training.

The fingerprint system uses electronic imagery rather than ink to capture the prints, a much neater system that produces clearer prints. The prints are then sent to the Mississippi State Criminal Information Center where they are stored and can be crosschecked with prints collected as evidence in criminal investigations.



Officers Travis Ruffin, left, and James Ramsey confer at the scene of an accident.

The Firearms Training System

(FATS) is an interactive computer program that uses life-sized projections and laser detectors for training in real-life situations. The program responds to the officer's reactions and adjusts to the officer's moves to create a situation much like an officer would encounter on the streets. This equipment provides innovative, interactive and informative instruction with no potential for injury to the officer.

During 2000, the latest full year for which Uniform Crime Report

Ola Horn, Linda Queen and Annie Beard made lapel pins for the Red Cross using red, white and blue ribbon donated by their employer, Hancock Fabrics. Joe Norwood helped load New York-bound relief supplies onto the Amtrak train and later visited Ground Zero as a camera-person for WTOK-TV.



Ola Horn



Linda Queen



Annie Beard



Witherspoon Elementary



Joe Norwood

heightened security

statistics are available from the FBI, crime in Meridian rose a tiny 3/10 of one percent, from 2,008 crimes reported to 2,094. However, crime was up in other cities as well and Meridian continues to be the safest city in Mississippi with more than 30,000 people.

Preventing crime and meeting the needs of our senior citizens led to the creation of the Seniors and Lawmen Together (SALT) Council with the local AARP and the Lauderdale County Sheriff's Department. The council is working to identify problems and specific needs of senior citizens and is partially funded by a \$3,000 state grant.

Two major "Click It or Ticket" campaigns during the year resulted in a 10 percent increase in seatbelt usage. With the success of the campaigns to increase awareness of mandatory seatbelt usage, two more campaigns were scheduled around the Thanksgiving and New Year's holidays.

Our Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program, now in its 15th year, continues to build relationships with school children and help them learn to make positive choices. Our DARE officers and other police officers also participated in the Children First event, the Main Event, Riley's Children's Health Fair, the Rush Senior Health Fair and other events to provide public education on issues ranging from shopping safety and home security to telemarketing fraud.

Officers were saddened by the death of Breston, an eight-year veteran of the K-9 Corps. A successor has been put to work, however, giving the department three K-9s for use in drug apprehension cases.



Above: Police Officer Jackie Abercrombie hones his skills using the Firearms Training System (FATS) that simulates real-life situations. Background photo: Aerial photo of Public Safety Training Facility

Gayle Fry and his wife, Pat (not pictured), of Aloha Printing donated office supplies. Sandy Robinson and her coworkers at Trustmark National Bank's East Branch donated powder and work gloves. Precious Griffin, a fourth grader in Mrs. Fuller's class at Oakland Heights, raised money for the Red Cross. Jordan DeHaven's second grade class at West Hills Elementary donated supplies to the relief effort.



Gayle Fry



Sandy Robinson



Witherspoon Elementary School



Precious Griffin



Jordan DeHaven