

## Police Department focuses on advanced training for Parks Unit...

As more and more residents enjoy walking, hiking, horseback riding, fishing or simply relaxing at Bonita Lakes, the officers in our Police Department's Park Police Unit have honed their skills to ensure the safety of all Bonita Lakes visitors. The officers have received basic and advanced training and certification in areas like water rescue, waterfront life guarding and boating safety. They're also trained in all-terrain vehicle operations, rappelling, mountain bike utilization and mounted patrol operations.

Our K-9 program is also expanding significantly. Thanks to a \$35,000 grant from The Riley Foundation and \$15,000 in private donations, an additional K-9 "officer" has been purchased, equipment upgraded and one of our handlers certified as a trainer. Having a certified trainer will allow us to conduct our own

K-9 training, saving thousands of dollars. The balance of the money is being used to construct a new K-9 training facility, which will provide an excellent place for our own handlers to sharpen their skills and will allow Meridian to serve as a training center for other law enforcement agencies in East Mississippi.

Other police departments in the state look to Meridian as a model for our Youth Anti-Tobacco Initiative. Our aggressive program to stop tobacco use by young people received numerous awards from the Mississippi Attorney General, in addition to two prestigious awards from the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi—the Partnership State Award as the top anti-tobacco program and the Partnership State Award for Individual Achievement for our program's coordinator.

# THEN 1900

IN 1900, THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN AND CITY COUNCIL VOTED EACH YEAR ON WHO WOULD BE EMPLOYED BY THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND SELECTED ALL TEACHERS, AS THE SCHOOL SYSTEM WAS PART OF CITY GOVERNMENT.



WHERE THE DOUGHBOY MONUMENT IS TODAY, LIVESTOCK ARE MOVED THROUGH DOWNTOWN MERIDIAN IN 1900, CREATING AN EARLY "TRAFFIC" PROBLEM FOR POLICE. A BIG CONTROVERSY BREWING IN THE COMMUNITY AT THE TIME WAS WHETHER LIVESTOCK SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO RUN FREE IN THE CITY. THE BUILDING ON THE LEFT CORNER IS TODAY BROWN PRINTING COMPANY.

# NOW 2000

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION HAVE CERTAINLY CHANGED IN 100 YEARS (ALTHOUGH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S HORSE UNIT MIGHT DISAGREE). DIRECTLY BELOW, OFFICER JERRY JORDAN PATROLS BONITA LAKES PARK ON A FOUR-WHEELER. LOWER LEFT, THE ENTIRE PARKS POLICE UNIT. LOWER RIGHT, CAPTAIN KEITH McCARY CONFERS WITH SECRETARY PAT MAY AT THE PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING FACILITY.

Even with all these programs, the basic measure of a police department's success is its ability to deter and solve crime. And, once again, Meridian posted the lowest crime rate of Mississippi cities over 25,000, with the FBI's Uniform Crime Report showing a seven percent decrease in major felonies. At the same time, our clearance rate for major felonies met or exceeded the national average.

Our highly successful Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program continued to educate young people about the dangers of drugs. Our accomplished officers have been in demand regionally

and nationally to train other D.A.R.E. officers. Our crime prevention specialist continued to work with businesses and church and social organizations, plus helped several neighborhoods organize Neighborhood Watch programs.

Safety on our streets is always the goal of the Enhanced Traffic Enforcement Program, which joined forces with the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Mississippi Public Service Commission to perform drug interdictions and conduct safety checks.

