

Violent city?

Longmont has high reports of domestic violence; police credit citizen vigilance

By Pierrette J. Shields
Longmont Times-Call

LONGMONT — Domestic violence reports and arrests are higher in Longmont than in neighboring communities, but Longmont police see the numbers as a positive.

"I firmly believe that the citizens of Longmont do care. ... Our citizens are more willing to report (domestic violence). They are not afraid to call the police," said Sgt. Greg Malsam, who is half of the Longmont Police Department's domestic

violence unit, the only one of its kind in Boulder County. "A lot of times it is witnesses or it is people who say, 'I just woke up, and I heard a loud screaming from next door.'"

In 2008, Longmont police took 320 domestic violence reports that did not result in arrests. Boulder police took 55 reports, and the Boulder County Sheriff's Office took 25. Lafayette and Louisville documented 67 and 85, respectively. Longmont made 398 single-person arrests in domestic violence incidents and in 26 cases arrested

both people involved. Boulder made 295 single arrests and 42 dual arrests. The sheriff's office made 140 single arrests and 14 dual arrests. The 2008 statistics show a pattern similar to 2007 data.

Malsam said Longmont's numbers may be so much higher because the department's policy is to report incidents in case something criminal occurs later. The reports would then serve to reveal a pattern as he and Detective Sara Pierce follow up on domestic violence investigations.

MORE INFORMATION

For information on domestic violence and reporting incidents, visit the Longmont Ending Violence Initiative at www.longmontdomesticviolence.org. The Longmont Police Department can be reached at 303-651-8501, or by dialing 911 in an emergency. For emergency counseling and shelter, call 303-772-4422.

Longmont Director of Public Safety Mike Butler said the police department has worked with organizations like the Longmont Ending Violence Initiative to reach out to residents through education and relationships to encourage re-

porting. "LEVI has also sponsored innumerable events, such as the white ribbon campaign to bring awareness to our community regarding (domestic violence)," Butler

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wrote in an e-mail to the Times-Call about the new statistics. "If you were to study the other communities in Boulder County, you would not find the comprehensive effort in those communities to educate, to build public awareness or a police department that has dedicated its organization to dealing with (domestic violence) at the level Longmont has done."

Butler said the numbers are not a barometer of the level of violence in the city.

"Bottom line, (domestic violence) occurs in every community at a similar rate," he wrote. "The differences in reported numbers will largely be dependent on what communities and their police departments are do-

ing to encourage higher reporting rates. In our minds, our community is much more successful in dealing with (domestic violence) because of the strategies we have developed and implemented."

According to LEVI, half of Colorado's murders are committed by current or past intimate partners, and recent high-profile crimes in Boulder County have brought the statistic into focus. In Boulder last week, Philip F. Dileo shot and killed his wife and son before turning the gun on himself in the family's home. Police reported that Dileo had threatened his family before.

In April, Boulder police reported that 39-year-old Robert Bryant Oakley had lured his wife, Katelin Rose Oakley, to his home, where he shot her. They were sepa-

rating. In June 2008, Alfred Michael Strauss was sentenced to 25 years in prison for stabbing to death his ex-wife in August 2007 in the Boulder home they shared.

Longmont police suspect the 2006 homicide of Dana Pechin may have involved domestic violence. No one has been arrested in her death, although police are still investigating. Butler said Longmont has had only one domestic violence-related homicide since 1998, when four women died in such crimes.

Sarah Huntley, spokeswoman for the Boulder Police Department, said it is possible that Longmont's community efforts on domestic violence have resulted in higher reporting numbers.

"They have really gone at that issue," she said. "I think it is conceivable that that has resulted in people being more willing to pick up the phone and call. I do know that education can make a big difference."

Domestic violence reports in and around Longmont

Annually, the Domestic Abuse Prevention Project (DAPP) compiles the domestic violence statistics of all law enforcement agencies in Boulder County for the previous year.

2008 statistics

	Report Only	Warrant issued	Arrest made	Dual arrests made
Boulder Police Department	55	38	295	42
Boulder County Sheriff	25	21	140	14
Lafayette Police Department	67	7	126	2
Louisville Police Department	85	4	60	9
Longmont Police Department	320	98	389	26

2007 statistics

	Report Only	Warrant issued	Arrest made	Dual arrests made
Boulder Police Department	53	46	316	28
Boulder County Sheriff	18	30	121	6
Lafayette Police Department	67	10	130	8
Louisville Police Department	55	12	34	5
Longmont Police Department	327	86	354	22

Source: Domestic Abuse Prevention Project

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Huntley said Boulder doesn't have similar communitywide efforts and that law enforcement can't address the issue alone.

"To my knowledge, our city has not dealt with domestic violence the way Longmont has, from (different perspectives)," she said.

Still, Huntley added, the statistics about police involvement don't necessarily tell a story about the prevalence of domestic violence.

"You have to be cautious with these statistics to draw conclusions about what they say about a community," she said.