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Law enforcement personnel make rounds at the Imperial/ Wilmington Station to promote crime prevention awareness and transit safety.



Photos by Jennie Harris

Metro, Sheriff's Department Team Up for 'National Night Out Against Crime'

By JENNIE HARRIS

(August 10, 2007) Metro volunteers and Sheriff's personnel boosted community spirit, Tuesday, by promoting crime prevention awareness throughout the transit system during National Night Out Against Crime.



Passengers swarmed to the 'Night Out' table at Union Station's East Portal to take information pamphlets on crime prevention awareness and transit safety.

"Our goal is to make the commuter public aware of the Sheriff's Hot Line," said Sgt. Maria Luna. "When they see suspicious or unruly activity, they can call and help us reduce our response time. We want them to know that deputies and Metro personnel are available for them, and we want everybody to feel secure when they take transportation."

"We stress the National Homeland Security motto 'See something—say something!'" said Sheriff's Team Leader Deputy Gary

DeBondt.

Neighborhoods in the U.S., Canada, and military bases worldwide celebrate 'Night Out' with candlelight vigils, cookouts, and peace walks. In 2006, more than 34 million people participated.

The Sheriff's Department has participated in 'Night Out' for years, "but this is the first time it's been sector-wide," said DeBondt. Last year, only the San Gabriel Valley Service Sector and the Metro Red and Blue Lines participated.

Patrons at the El Monte Bus Terminal enjoyed petting "Darby," a Border Collie owned by volunteer Kathy Johnson, a member of the Civilian Volunteer K-9 unit. Her husband, Dana, also a volunteer, was at the Norwalk Station with Shayna, his German Shepherd.



At the El Monte Terminal, Civilian Volunteer Kathy Johnson places a souvenir Sheriff's badge on a passenger. By her side is her dog, "Darby," a K-9 volunteer.

'Important to coordinate efforts'

Transportation Operations Supervisor Ray Coutts of Operations Central Instruction talked about the relationship between Metro and the Sheriff's Department. "I think because we both deal with the public, it's important that we coordinate our efforts so that the people can feel safe when they ride the bus, and that they can utilize public transportation without being afraid that something could happen to them."

At the Norwalk Station, one passenger said of the Sheriff's deputies, "They're always present. They're very helpful."

'Night Out' was a morale booster for the law enforcement personnel as well.

"It's good for the Sheriff's Department employees to meet the citizens, because we get to see that the folks you're doing your job for every day are good people," said Sgt. Jim Rifilato. "Especially when you're working graveyard, you don't see the regular working folks. It's just bad guys and victims."

Other locations participating were Union Station, Imperial/Wilmington Station, Warner Center, Inglewood Transit Center and the Metro Customer Center on Wilshire Boulevard.

