

- Ladies and gentleman of the council, City Manager Ken Pulskamp, Assistant City Manager Ken Striplin, those in attendance, and residents of the city of Santa Clarita.
- I am Captain Paul Becker of the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station. As the new Chief of Police, a long-time resident of the city of Santa Clarita, and someone who has spent 29 years of my life in law enforcement, I am committed to protecting others and community service.
- After assuming command, I made it a priority to meet with community leaders, officials in local government, school representatives, and our local press. I have learned much in this short period of time, especially regarding narcotic use in the valley.

- At the April 27th City Council meeting, questions were raised about drug use in the city of Santa Clarita, and more specifically the rise of Heroin use and availability. Also asked was how Heroin is affecting our community, and specifically, what role Heroin has played in the untimely deaths of youth or young adults in our community.

Councilmember Kellar also raised questions requesting an explanation of the Sheriff's Department's policy pertaining to how the staff at the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station responds to parents in our community who ask for help with their children or young adults concerning drug addiction, drug dealers, drug use and the potential for addiction to these dangerous substances. Many of the questions were raised by Khristine McAfee, a city resident

who lost her 24-year-old son, Trae Daniel Allen, to an apparent Heroin overdose on March 23, 2010.

- On behalf of all the men and women of the Santa Clarita Sheriff's Station, I offer my sincere condolences to Ms. McAfee and her family for the loss of their son. As a stepfather of two boys myself who were born and raised in this community and graduated Valencia High School, I can only imagine the incredible challenges Ms. McAfee must have faced and endured while fighting such an addictive substance in hopes of saving her son. I assure you we share in her grief.
- The loss of even one young life to any illegal drug, senseless act of violence or traffic collision, is too many in the eyes of your community protectors – I know we all

share in that sentiment and we all have common goals of preventing crime, and especially protecting our youth.

- After that meeting, I began an immediate assessment into the scope of the drug problem in our community and what exactly is being done about it. I ordered a statistical review of drug and narcotic trends, and drug related deaths. I looked at enforcement, prevention, intervention, and treatment resources, as well as, overall awareness of the scope of the problem and our responsibility as a community. I spoke with our patrol deputies, who know better than most about this problem. And finally, I met with the captain of our Narcotics Bureau. As a result of that meeting, a narcotics ‘strike team’ has been put in place to increase enforcement over and above what the station narcotics unit already does.

- As we reviewed documents during our initial assessment, we found one report after another, where patrol deputies made simple enforcement traffic or pedestrian stops throughout the city of Santa Clarita that resulted in the recovery of virtually every legal or illegal drug imaginable. Since January 2009, deputies have made nearly 450 arrests for drug related crimes. Deputies' arrests for Heroin related crimes rose from just three during the same time period in 2009 to 18 so far this year. Many of the recent arrests have been made by a narcotics strike team I put in place last month to focus on Heroin.
- We also found that drug related overdoses resulting in fatalities increased slightly from four during the first five months of 2009 to five during the same time period in 2010.

Again, one death is too many, and it does concern me that three of the five deaths in 2010 were apparently Heroin related. Just as concerning was that five of the 10 deaths in 2009 were apparently related to intentional or unintentional use and abuse of prescription medications.

- Suffice to say, we have seen an increase in the use and availability of Heroin in our community, and we are not immune from methamphetamine or prescription medication drug abuse which topped our statistical analysis.
- It is my intention to see what steps are necessary and possible, and what resources are available, to improve our efforts in all of these areas with the ultimate goal of reducing the amounts of drugs in our community, and preventing senseless loss of life. However, we cannot do

this alone. It will take the involvement of the community as well.

- Drug prevention starts with family involvement, accountability, and personal commitment. We must do everything we can to protect our youth. It is my intention to enhance our school age intervention for our local youth. However, with more than 60 schools in our community and a student body population nearing 50,000 in the Santa Clarita Valley, this will not be an easy task. It is however, in my view, one of the most important elements of our success against combating drugs in our community. We must catch relatively minor substance abuse cases very early and address them before poor decision making develops into severe addictions.

- We must also allocate and balance resources throughout the community to address all areas of crime. Criminals know no boundaries, and the minute you pull too many resources from one area and put them into another, you run the risk of an increase in other criminal categories, such as robbery, rape, gang violence or even homicide. We lost 12 lives to unintentional drug overdoses dating back to January 2009. During the same time period we lost 26 to suicide, 5 to traffic collisions, and 5 to homicides. No problem or criminal matter can be ignored. It is my responsibility to ensure that does not occur.
- We are fortunate in Santa Clarita to have resources available for our residents – virtually at their fingertips. Any person who wishes to take personal responsibility for a drug addiction, depression, or other problem directly

effecting and impacting their lives can reach out to the city of Santa Clarita or the Sheriff's Department. There are 57 substance abuse treatment facilities within a 20 mile radius of Santa Clarita. In addition, there are incredible intervention programs and unlimited youth activities in Santa Clarita that can keep kids and teens away from drugs such as:

- Anti-Gang Taskforce
- Blue Ribbon Task Force
- Boys and Girls Club
- Girls Issues Group
- Community Center Programs
- Community Court
- STAR Program

- VIDA - Vital Intervention Directional Alternatives
- Youth Grove

- Perhaps our most important intervention is good parental involvement and personal accountability to parenthood throughout childhood and adolescence. Your Santa Clarita Sheriff's on average respond to 40 or more party calls in our community EVERY Friday and Saturday night. Many of these calls involve teenagers or young adults who are unsupervised and are making poor choices. Despite the awareness programs and enforcement efforts, these parties continue. In 2009 Santa Clarita Deputies responded to more than 4,000 such calls and in 2010, to date, we have responded to 1,214.

To answer Councilmember Kellar’s question about the Sheriff’s Department’s policy on responding to parents who are asking for help, I offer the following statement:

- The staff at the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff’s Station will help any member of our community in need who brings a specific concern to our attention. Although our primary function is law enforcement, we are also community helpers and protectors who will go to great lengths to assist our residents. If it is a matter of criminal conduct we will take appropriate law enforcement action. If it is a matter of not knowing where to turn for help with a drug addiction or other problems, we will offer them information about available resources within the community.

- In fact, we researched a number of specific requests that had been brought to the direct attention of the sheriff's station's staff since January 2009. Each of these cases specifically related to matters pertaining to Heroin, where concerned residents called for service about their friend or family member who needed help combating drug addiction. Each time the call resulted in the dispatch of a deputy sheriff and appropriate action being taken. The actions ranged from arrest to assisting family members with transfer arrangements to treatment and care facilities.
- In the city of Santa Clarita, we have unparalleled means of reporting suspected crime. This can be done anonymously through the Sheriff's Web site at www.scvsheriff.com, through the Los Angeles Regional Crime Stoppers Web site at www.lacrimestoppers.com or even via text or telephone

through the program. Each and every crime tip submitted to the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station through various channels is looked into and a response is given to the individual providing the information if they desire.

However, it is not uncommon for the drug related tips received to be very vague with little or no actual workable information. Often times they are based on assumptions and speculation. The anonymous tipsters may suspect drug dealing is going on because they see increased vehicle traffic, teenagers congregating, residents sitting in cars or other perfectly lawful behavior. These tips are subject to all the parameters of the law, verification, and investigation.

Those that provide specific information, such as names, vehicles, transactions, etc., receive top priority. With limited resources, it has proven much more effective to work backwards from a patrol arrest of a person who

purchases drugs in an area with suspected drug activity, than it is to put a team of deputies on surveillance for hours on end.

- Law enforcement cannot simply run out and arrest or detain a person solely based on anonymous tipsters' unsubstantiated suspicions. Nor would you want us to have the authority to do so. When it comes to drug related cases, the burden of proof is even greater for the District Attorney's office before they will file a case after a lawful arrest is made.
- Unfortunately, not all information is verifiable or timely. Some lengthy operations reveal completely legal and innocuous behavior. These surveillance operations come at a substantial cost, and hence are not always the best

allocation of resources. Many other investigative techniques have proven to be more effective.

- Even if an arrest is made, repeat offenders are often times given ample rehabilitation opportunities versus incarceration, which can put them right back on our streets facing the same temptations and challenges they are trying to leave behind. All that being said, our residents and their involvement and crime tips are a critical element of helping us protect our community.
- Although some of our recent overdose deaths involved residents who were 24 and 29 years of age, the other overdose deaths dating back to January 2009 had an average age of 35. In many of these cases, deputies had made arrests that resulted in the offender being placed by

the court directly into a court ordered treatment facility.

Most of these cases were subjected to repeated and lengthy intervention efforts.

- It is always our primary objective to arrest those who supply drugs to our community. Unfortunately though, as much as we cut the supply, it is virtually impossible for any law enforcement entity to entirely seal off drug accessibility. If a person is intent on obtaining drugs they will inevitably find a way. Drugs are even available in the most controlled environment, our state prison system.

- In conclusion, this is a very complex issue. I can't stand here tonight and tell you I have all the answers to the questions raised by drugs and their foothold in our society,

but what I can tell you is that I will continue to thoroughly assess all our drug enforcement efforts and policies. I will find out how we can get better in addressing this growing concern. We are certainly not alone in facing and confronting this issue, as virtually every community in the nation is faced with similar challenges.

- As a result, this is not solely a law enforcement problem. It starts right in the home with parental involvement, education, and awareness. We will continue our efforts in direct partnership with the community as a whole. I believe in accountability at all levels in addressing this problem.
- Let there be no doubt, it is time for better awareness, education, enforcement, and intervention. We have been doing a lot, but we can always do more. It is my intention

to continue to put Heroin and all drugs, under a microscope in the coming days, weeks, and months in our community. Expanded efforts have already begun. With the council and community support and involvement we can ensure the maximum resources possible continue to be directed towards stopping this apparent trend. I welcome any and all efforts of the council and members of this community.

- I would like to thank you for this opportunity to present to you the state of our city as it pertains to the questions surrounding crimes related to drug activity within our community and the untimely loss of lives.