CRIME

CRIME touches lives of all of Lafayette

Statistics are one thing, real fears are another

By Laura Heck

Wooden boards cover the broken glass doors of an abandoned white cinder-block building on the corner of E. Simms and Gen. Marshall streets.

Area residents still recall how the doors, now held together in places by duct tape, were smashed after the owner of the local boudin store talked to the police about the drug problems in the area.

They remember how Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Dept. deputies guarded the store each day from the moment it opened to the moment it closed for nearly two months.

And they will never forget how the owner, a longtime Lafayette resident who now feared for her life, closed the store, causing a few residents to lose their jobs and moved to another city last month.

Joseph Dennis, vice president of the Lafayette Chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and a resident of the area, said that incident, and others over the years, have scared his neighbors.

“They stay in their houses and lock their doors and hope it will go away,” he said. “I had one lady tell me, 'I can't afford to have my house burned down.'”

Most residents in several north side neighborhoods, including Azalea Park, the numbered streets and along parts of Evangeline Thruway, blame street-level drug sales for the majority of the problems they face.

“If you want to see a neighborhood die, incomes, feel the same way she does scared.

Dennis, and other neighborhood group leaders, said the residents turn a blind eye when it comes to the drug deals happening outside their homes and on the narrow side streets of their neighborhoods.

“We have to be somewhat scared because some people are crazy,” she said.

Dennis, however, said the residents are preparing to confront the drug dealers that are depleting the area of its lifeblood.

“We are preparing to take the name of our neighborhood and turn it around,” Dennis said. “We are going to do whatever it takes.”

Advertiser photos by Arthur D. Lauck

Jimmy Albarado, an officer with the ACTION unit of the Lafayette Police Dept., searches a suspect for contraband during a recent patrol stop.

After a run and jump at the corner of N. Bienville and Arthur St., officers take two men into custody on drug charges.

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Jimmy Albarado, an officer with the ACTION unit of the Lafayette Police Dept., searches a suspect for contraband during a recent patrol stop.

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There are dangerous people out there who will do anything if they know you called the police,” Dennis said. “They (the residents) don’t want anybody to know they even talked to them (the police).”

“I can’t blame the residents for not wanting to get involved,” he added. “They don’t want anybody to get hurt.”

For that reason, most north side neighborhoods have a system in place by which residents can call a contact who will report incidents to the police for them.

“We say all you have to do is let us know and we'll call for you,” said Raymond Corriner, spokesman for the North Side Alliance for Progress USA.

“We do that quite a bit,” he said.

Impacting the Community

With crime being such an important issue to so many people in Lafayette and around the country, the Daily Advertiser's new focus theme is focusing on the subject of this subject.

The series runs throughout the week and includes articles discussing the crime and the people who are affected. The series also includes police and community leaders providing insights into the issue.

The series will run throughout the week in an in-depth look at crime in Lafayette.

The focus issue will be about victims of crime and how they are coping with what happened to them.

“People are naturally hesitant because they’re afraid of the possibility of retaliation,” said Charles Robinson, president of the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association, Inc.

And Robinson, as well as Dennis, said their fears are not imagined.