Sheriff backs battle against illegal drugs

Deputies cite recent efforts, encourage PADD cooperation with department

By PAUL KEDINGER
Editor

“We’re 100 percent in favor; we want to be there,” said Greg Dupuis and Leon Fontenot, about recent efforts to establish a PADD (Parents Against Drug Dealers) chapter in Mamou.

The two Evangeline Parish sheriff’s deputies, however, stressed that they were not informed of a core meeting held last week at which Mamou residents heard from PADD leaders in Basile and Eunice.

The two deputies cited their own assignment to a Drug Task Force as proof of Sheriff Floyd Soileau’s commitment to battling the drug problem in Evangeline Parish.

“We’re willing to work hand and hand with PADD or any other group,” said Dupuis.

Answering a comment made during the Mamou meeting by Jim Bienvenu and Otis Lomineck of Opelousas, Deputy Fontenot suggested parish residents call Eunice Police Chief Tony Fuselier. “They will learn that the Evangeline Parish Sheriff’s Office has worked with the Eunice Police Department and, in turn, they have worked with us.”

Fontenot also relayed how upset Sheriff Soileau was with the false impression the PADD leaders left about “lax law enforcement.”

Between September 1988 and July 1989, Fontenot noted that the sheriff’s two deputies, with the assistance of neighboring parishes, have made 74 drug arrests, confiscated 10 vehicles, $46,000 in suspected drug money and a large quantity of illegal drugs.

“That’s over and above working burglary cases and answering other calls,” interrupted Dupuis.

As further evidence of the sheriff’s dedication to fighting drug use in this parish, the two deputies revealed that they have conducted two flyovers in an aerial search for illegal marijuana plots. The aerial surveillance, conducted in cooperation with the Louisiana National Guard and the federal Drug Enforcement Agency (D.E.A.) resulted in the discovery and destruction of over 300 illegal marijuana plants. “We will continue the flyovers,” emphasized Fontenot.

The two parish deputies are also in the process of receiving their second law enforcement commission — as special Louisiana State Police drug agents — directly related to enforcing the anti-drug laws. Several months ago, the two men were commissioned as special U.S. Customs agents.

In addition to paying those training expenses, the deputies pointed to Sheriff Soileau’s decision to use a narcotics detection dog in Evangeline Parish. The dog, Beau, is qualified as one of the top narcotics dogs in the state, said Fontenot. “He’s available anytime to school officials and will follow up any drug leads generated by the public,” explained Fontenot.

“Sheriff Soileau invites all and any suggestions about fighting the drug problem,” said Fontenot. “He or a representative want to attend any PADD meetings.”

Dupuis added that the deputies and sheriff want to avoid getting into a “word war” with private citizens who want to cooperate in battling the drug problem. “We want to have the public call us and pass on any information they might have.”