

Zephyrhills Police Department serves with 40

By Joe Potter

The Zephyrhills Police Department employs approximately 40 people.

The police station is located at 6118 Eighth St., two blocks east of US 301.



David Shears

Police Chief David Shears, who was promoted to chief in 2008, is a 16-year veteran of the ZPD.

Other members of the police department's leadership team are Capt. Jeffrey McDougal and Capt. Robert McKinney.

McDougal was promoted to captain in 2008 to fill a vacancy that was created when Shears was promoted to police chief. He is in charge of the operations division. McKinney is in charge of the administrative services division.

Uniform patrol, which is within the operations division, is the department's primary crime suppression unit. The uniform patrol section has the primary responsibility for preserving the peace, protecting life and property, and preventing crime.

McDougal also oversees the special operations division that consists of a reserve unit, a bike unit, a Tactical Anti-Crime Team and an honor guard.

Reserve officers may either be sworn (have arrest powers) or non-sworn (no arrest powers). Non-sworn reserve officers are also known as auxiliary officers.

Officers assigned to bike patrol are encouraged to interact with citizens to encourage communications between police officers and citizens. A police officer on a bicycle is theoretically more easily approachable than one in a police car.

TACT officers are used in special circumstances that require the expertise possessed by TACT officers.

The honor guard represents the Zephyrhills Police Department at both festive and solemn events.

In addition to being the public information spokesman for the department, McKinney is in charge of overseeing the records unit, the information technology unit, the property/evidence unit, the communications section, the criminal investigation section, the crime prevention section and the school resource officer section.

School resource officers are assigned to four schools within Zephyrhills. Their responsibilities include fostering a positive image of law enforcement officers to students; providing education and counseling to students on law enforcement topics; and providing security and maintaining the peace on school campuses.

The Zephyrhills Police Department also has a Community Service Division, a Crimeline and an Explorer's unit.

Demographics of Zephyrhills

Population: 12,730
Zephyrhills Area: 53,000
Zephyrhills Area Seasonal: 85,000
County Population: 352,380
Density (County) per square mile: 462.9
Average Home Cost: \$110,000
Housing Units: 6,167
Per Capita Income: \$18,047
Median Age: 49.0
Percentage of Whites: 89.7
Percentage of Blacks: 2.8
Percentage of Hispanics: 5
Percentage of Other Races: 4.1
Percentage of Females: 54.5
Percentage of Males: 45.5
Average Temperature in degrees Fahrenheit: 71.4
Precipitation in inches: 58.8
Retail Demand: \$209.5 million

Source: The population estimate is from the City of Zephyrhills. All other information is from the 2000 Census.

The role of the Community Service Division is to help prevent crime through increasing citizen's awareness. Services offered by the Community Service Division include fingerprinting, child identification cards, background investigations, providing tours of the police department and providing community service patrols.

The Crimeline (1-866-541-2427 or e-mail crimeline@police.zephyrhills.fl.us) provides an opportunity to provide confidential tips that may help lead to the solving of a crime or the apprehension of a suspect.

Police Explorers are a group of young adults (ages 13-21) with an interest in law enforcement. Explorer members receive training in different aspects of law enforcement, ranging from traffic stops and building searches to federal laws. Members of the Zephyrhills Police Explorers help direct traffic for high school football games, provide an honor guard for parades and patrol Main Street during special events.

In case of emergency, always call 911. For non-emergencies, the police department may be reached by calling (813) 780-0050 or by e-mailing policedept@police.zephyrhills.ci.fl.us. The department's Web site address is www.ci.zephyrhills.fl.us/police.asp.