



**NEWSLETTER**  
SPRING EDITION 2013



John W. Jones  
Executive Director  
701 East Franklin Street, Suite 706  
Richmond, VA 23219  
(804) 225-7152



# ***A Reassuring Presence*** **– Sheriffs' Programs** **for Safer** **Virginia Schools**



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## SHERIFFS' OFFICES PARTNER WITH SCHOOLS TO KEEP KIDS SAFE

Virginia Sheriffs are at the forefront in efforts to keep kids safe. Recently, Governor Robert F. McDonnell appointed Sheriffs Brian L. Hieatt of Tazewell County and Michael L. "Mike" Chapman of Loudoun County to serve on the Governor's Taskforce on school and campus safety. Sheriffs across Virginia have stepped up, some even prior to the unfortunate Newtown, Connecticut incident. Sheriff Ryant L. Washington of Fluvanna County implemented a school safety program several years ago. "School safety is a top priority here in Fluvanna County," said Sheriff Washington.

More recently the Washington County Sheriff's Office unveiled a program to, hopefully, reduce the opportunity for violence within their school community. According to Washington County Sheriff Fred Newman, the program entitled "Once a Day -- Every Day" requires Sheriff's Office personnel from each respective division to pay unannounced visits to all schools in the county.

"Sheriff's deputies from the Administrative, Community Services, Patrol, Criminal Investigations, Civil Process, Criminal Warrants, Animal Control and Litter Control are visiting at least one school every day when school is in session," stated Sheriff Newman. "These visits are being made in addition to the regular visits by our School Resource and D.A.R.E. deputies."



Almost a month after the program was initiated, public response has been very positive. School personnel and students are becoming acquainted with more deputies than just their SRO's and D.A.R.E. Officers; and the personnel are learning the physical layout of the different schools. Several private schools requested that these visits be extended to protect their students, and they have done so. Many parents and teachers have extended their thanks for the added law enforcement presence.

"We will continue to conduct these visits as long as a threat remains, or until it is possible to put a full time School Resource Officer in each school," stated Sheriff Newman.

Sheriffs everywhere are making school visits by deputies a routine part of the workday, which serves as a supplement to the already existing school resource officer program. The Virginia Sheriffs' Association expresses appreciation to the 2013 General Assembly for making critical school safety grant funding available.

## APPLICATIONS FOR 2013 VIRGINIA SHERIFFS' INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE

One of the many benefits the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute offers to our community is our scholarship program. This award -- which is funded by generous VSI supporters like you -- is granted to full-time or part-time students majoring in criminal justice and attending a Virginia state college or university. With the help of loyal members like you, we've awarded hundreds of scholarships to Virginia youths with an aspiration to serve their

fellow citizens in law enforcement-related careers.

Scholarship applications may be downloaded from our website or picked up in your local Sheriff's office. In addition to the application, students must submit SAT scores, transcripts, and an essay. A full list of application materials can be found at <http://vasheriffsinstitute.org/scholarship/>. Applications are due May 1, 2013.

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# TOUGH NEW “TEXTING WHILE DRIVING” LEGISLATION MOVING THROUGH VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Handheld communications devices have become a ubiquitous aspect of modern life, allowing the sharing of information quickly and easily from virtually any location. Behind the wheel however, their use can become a lethal threat to other vehicles’ occupants and pedestrians. “Distracted driving” is a big problem, whether texting drivers are simply holding up traffic at a green light or much, much worse.



According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2010 almost 4,000 Americans lost their lives in traffic accidents involving a distracted driver, and an additional 416,000 persons were injured as a result of distracted driving incidents – nearly 20% of all motor accidents involving injury or death.

With these very sobering statistics in mind, Virginia legislators have proposed a tough new bill in Richmond to improve the safety of our commonwealth’s

roadways. Sponsored by Delegate Rich Anderson and Senator Tommy Norment, the bill strengthens existing laws for dealing with this increasingly prevalent danger to our citizens.

The new legislation, which received wide bi-partisan support in the House of Delegates and Senate, calls for a tenfold increase in fines for driving while texting, with a first offense rising from a fine of \$25 to \$250, and

for subsequent offenses, from \$50 to \$500. The bill also calls for raising the offense from secondary to primary, meaning that officers may now stop violators for the act of texting itself, without observing a separate infraction.

The VSA will continue to monitor its progress and keep you informed should the legislation be enacted into law.

## SPRING IS HERE — STAYING SAFE AND SECURE AS THE WARM WEATHER RETURNS

With the return of spring to our beautiful commonwealth, we can expect to enjoy longer, warmer days and the pageantry of nature awakening from winter’s slumber. However, as the weather changes, new challenges present themselves to our citizens, so here’s a list of helpful tips to ensure your new season is a healthy and happy one!

- Remember to keep exterior doors locked at all times. Even if you are on the property, if you are not within visual range of an entrance, it’s a good idea to keep it secured, such as locking your front door and garage when you are working in the back yard. And always make sure to lock your doors when leaving, even if you only intend to be away for a brief time.
- If you open sliding doors and windows to enjoy the fresh spring air in your home, be sure to lock them securely when you retire for the evening.
- Installing motion sensitive lights is a great way to assure no one approaches your home’s entrances during darkness without being illuminated.
- Remember to return items used outside to their proper storage places when finished using them,

especially ladders and tools which could be used by an intruder to facilitate entry into your home. It’s also a good idea to lock outbuildings such as garages and sheds to prohibit entry to unauthorized persons.

- Be on guard against possible home improvement scams. A good policy is to only receive contractor services from a reputable business you have contacted yourself.
- If a worker from a utility comes to your home to perform service, it’s a good idea to request identification. You can also call the company represented to confirm that the individual is indeed a legitimate employee.
- And always remember to roll up your vehicle’s windows, remove any valuables which may tempt theft, and securely lock the vehicle’s doors even if it is parked in your driveway.

Lastly, being a thoughtful member of your community is one of the best ways to deter crime and keep your neighborhood safe. Be on the lookout for suspicious activity and help keep a watchful eye when neighbors are away. Together, we can all make a difference – let’s have a wonderful spring!

# PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM VSI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN W. JONES



As a new spring blossoms around us here at the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, I'm sure you are looking forward to all that the end of another cold winter holds for you and your family!

Spring is a busy time for law enforcement, just as it is for the wider community. With the warmer weather, our neighborhoods come alive with outdoor activity, from yard work around the home to

increased social and recreational gatherings such as picnics, concerts, and sporting events. And just as honest citizens emerge from the indoors with the passing of winter, the incidence of crime increases as well.

That's why it's important to be prepared for the possibility of new threats to persons and property as the days grow longer and more comfortable for law abiding citizens and potential perpetrators alike. In this Spring 2013 issue of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute newsletter, we highlight some simple but effective measures you and your family can take to avoid being targeted by season-specific crime.

Rest assured, the men and women of Virginia's Sheriff's offices are committed to keeping residents and visitors alike safe as the weather improves and the days lengthen. And just as work protecting our communities continues, the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute's work on behalf of our hardworking sheriffs' personnel continues as well.

Whether reaching out to our communities to foster greater cooperation in keeping our citizens safe or lending assistance to the loved ones left behind by officers who make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute stands ready to help -- and it's all made possible by your generous support.

On behalf of everyone here at the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, thank you again for standing with us. I hope you have a safe and happy spring!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John W. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive.

John W. Jones, Executive Director  
Virginia Sheriffs' Institute

## KEEPING A WATCHFUL EYE ON DRONE LEGISLATION

With the increasing use by America's armed forces of unmanned aerial systems (UAS), or drones, to perform reconnaissance and other missions overseas, there has inevitably been discussion of their potential for similar use here in the United States. While it is obvious that law enforcement could benefit from the surveillance and search and rescue possibilities aerial drones afford, their use also raises serious questions for personal privacy.

With many individuals and organizations nationwide expressing concern over the possible infringement of privacy rights the use of drones present, Virginia lawmakers enacted a two-year moratorium on their use by police and other government organizations in early February. Strictly limited use of drones will be allowed during the period in the case of emergencies or to search for missing persons. The VSA will continue to monitor this legislation as it moves through the General Assembly and to Governor McDonnell's office.

The VSA enters the debate on the use of UAS with officer and public safety in mind. The sheriffs want the ability to use an UAS in the event of critical emergencies to save lives and protect the public.

### We Want to Hear from You ...

*Drop us a note, give us a call, or send us an email.*



701 East Franklin Street - Suite 706  
Richmond, Virginia 23219



(804) 225-7152 phone



(804) 225-7162 fax



[vsavsi@virginiasheriffs.org](mailto:vsavsi@virginiasheriffs.org)

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute solicits articles and comments from associate members of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles and comments should be directed to: John W. Jones, Executive Director, Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, 701 East Franklin Street, Suite 706, Richmond, VA 23219-2512, or phone (804) 225-7152.