

Crime Stoppers of Halton going strong after 19 years

DENNIS SMITH
Special to The IFP

It's a success story worth nearly \$16 million.

Crime Stoppers of Halton is celebrating close to 19 years of operation. Since its inception in Halton, the program has led to 736 arrests and the recovery of just under \$16 million in drugs and property.

The program operates independently from Halton Regional Police, but it's a co-operative arrangement that has helped police clear many cases— 42 during last year alone.

Crime Stoppers enables people to call in anonymously with information about a crime or suspected crime.

"Without tipsters calling, the program wouldn't be anywhere," said Det. Gary Gold, police co-ordinator for the program. "Often times, people are reluctant to talk, but this gets around the fear of reprisal. It's completely anonymous. You never have to testify in court and you never have to meet with a police officer to provide a statement."

He noted the program's phone line and computer operate independently and the Crime Stoppers board manages the tips and forwards them to police, who then forward them to their districts.

"Crime Stoppers is incorporated and completely separate from the police service," said Gold. "We do the investigation process, but that part is independent of

the tips and information."

He said the information is helpful, even though tipsters do not provide their names or give statements directly to police.

"We do have to verify that the information was correct, so we take it to the officer to investigate in the various divisions where it occurred," said Gold.

Last year, Crime Stopper tips were directly responsible for 30 arrests (including one fugitive) and 88 charges being laid. Nearly \$14,000 in property was recovered, \$3,500 in drugs was seized and two handguns were recovered.

In 2006, Crime Stoppers received 645 calls, up significantly from 583 the previous year.

"We're always looking for ways to improve and continue to raise awareness for Crime Stoppers," said Gold.

The program offers cash rewards of up to \$2,000, with creative events held to raise the funds.

Gold noted the Crime Stoppers board decides who gets rewards and what is paid out.

"We like to have a variety of people on the board with a good representation of the community and geographically, with the four municipalities represented (Burlington, Oakville, Milton and Halton Hills)," said Gold.

Crime Stoppers of Halton does not subscribe to call display. The number to call is 1-800-222-TIPS (1-800-222-8477).

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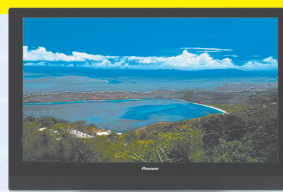
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