

New Crime Stoppers officer good as Gold

STEPHANIE THIESSEN
Special to The IFP

When he was a youngster, the interaction Sgt. Gary Gold had with police officers was limited.

Every once in a while he'd approach the cruiser parked in the lot of his Burlington high school and start up a conversation with the officer, but he was always the one who initiated the contact, Gold said.

"We didn't have the same exposure to police back then," said Gold, the new co-ordinator of Halton Crime Stoppers.

Fortunately, things are different now. Students are introduced to police officers early on in the school system, and that contact continues right up through high school.

"There's a lot more openness and less mystery as to the role of police," he said.

As a former high school liaison officer and having worked in educational services, Gold has seen first-hand the benefits of building relationships with students.

It's something he wants to continue in his new role with Crime Stoppers, a position he started just a few weeks ago.

"We'll be marketing (Crime Stoppers) more toward the youth of Halton," said Gold

He added it's important for the organization to participate in community events so young people don't just see officers as an "enforcement machine."

One of the biggest struggles— and a challenge Gold said he'll be facing head on— is to make the public further aware of the crime fighting organization and how it works.

Crime Stoppers of Halton is a non-profit, charitable organization managed by a volunteer board of directors that allows citizens to anonymously report crimes or provide tips via phone or Internet. Information that leads to an arrest may make the tipster eligible for a cash reward of up to \$2,000. Callers are never asked to give their names or testify in court, and Crime Stoppers of Halton doesn't subscribe to call display.

Gold has now worked within the Halton Regional Police Service for more than 20 years. He started as a patrol officer in Georgetown in 1985, and then moved to the Milton station where he worked from 1989 to 1990.

Following that, he transferred to Burlington where he worked for about 10 years in various positions. Stints in the regional traffic and marine units followed at police headquarters in Oakville.

In 2000, Gold became a high school liaison officer for a couple of years and then moved to educational services where he became part of the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program, which is presented to Grade 6 Halton students.

Det. Frank Phillips was the previous Crime Stoppers co-ordinator, a position he held since 2005. He has now retired.

"Frank did a great job here. He's a real people person," Gold said.

Anyone with information on a crime is asked to call 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or visit www.haltoncrimestoppers.com.

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