

New Crimestoppers billboards to fight crime

Police say the public makes program work

Tuesday, June 16, 2009

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Crimestoppers, the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office and the New Orleans Police Department are continuing their successful "Most Wanted" billboard campaign and are plastering the names and faces of nearly a dozen new suspects throughout the metropolitan area.

The agencies announced the third iteration of their collaborative billboard campaign at a joint press conference Monday where officials praised the public for helping locate so many suspects since the program's creation in 2006. Crimestoppers has featured 30 wanted suspects on the billboards and authorities have arrested 27 of those men, according to statistics released by Crimestoppers Executive Director Darlene Cusanza.

"The public has stepped up in a huge way," Sheriff Newell Normand said.

The billboards will be placed in three locations in New Orleans and on the West Bank. One billboard will be located on South Claiborne Avenue, another will be near Read Road and Chef Menteur Highway and the third will stand at 3825 West Bank Expressway. Crimestoppers will pay \$2,500 for tips that lead to an arrest and an additional \$2,500 when an indictment is secured, Cusanza said. Most of the men featured on the billboard are wanted on charges of murder or attempted murder.

New Orleans Police Chief Warren Riley praised Crimestoppers for providing a simple way for the public to get involved in policing their communities. He said the billboards provide constant reminders to residents, and also let them know that police are searching for suspects. Riley said a billboard was placed in eastern New Orleans because residents there specifically asked to be included in the program.

"This program has been highly effective," Riley said. "Crimestoppers has been a huge success."

The suspects featured on the billboards are Tai Le, 49; Adolfo Ibarra, 25; DeJean Turner, 21; Derrick Alexander, 30; Brandon Banks, no age available; Brian Fields, 21; Joseph Delay, 37; Long Dang, 37; Jeremy Patterson, 25; Alvin Tuckson, 40; and Xuan Do, 39.

Banks and Alexander already have been arrested and their pictures will feature "arrested" banners, Cusanza said. In addition, she noted that two wanted suspects from Jefferson Parish, Long Dang and Xuan Do, are being featured on New Orleans billboards in hope of generating more leads on their locations.

Normand and Riley said their agencies will need all the assistance the public can provide as the typical summer crime spike appears to be already starting. Both men said the region's demographics -- excess poverty, poor education and inadequate health care -- create a breeding ground for a criminal element that law enforcement alone cannot eradicate. They said it's going to take a concerted effort from everyone in the region, along with increased job opportunities and better education, to stanch the tide of crime.

"We are breeding criminals each and every day," Normand said. "I don't think either one of us is responsible for poverty, but it drives a lot of the things we're seeing."