

## Orinda Police Chief Bill French Shares Some Thoughts

By Lee Borrowman

Bill French now has three months as Orinda Police Chief under his belt, and he has settled right in to the business of running a Police Department. It did not take long for him to identify his priorities. "The juvenile diversion program, disaster preparedness and emergency planning, and traffic issues around the schools," French explains, are at the forefront. He spoke with us recently about a couple of issues of concern to him and to Orinda residents.

"Orinda, like Lafayette, is perfectly situated for a certain type of criminal who just drives around looking to commit a crime of opportunity," began French. "With a freeway running through the middle of the city and the San Pablo Dam road artery, criminals have easy access to - and quick exit from - this city."

A recent string of burglaries, three over a two week period, on the south side of Orinda caused concern among residents. The last of those burglaries was about four weeks ago. "We do think these crimes were committed by the same people, because the m.o. was very similar. They knocked on the front door, and if nobody answered they circled the house and entered through an unlocked door or unsecured window." French continued, "In addition to investigating these crimes, we've been doing proactive police work, aggressively patrolling the area to be both on the look-out and a visible presence."

French also said, "Statistically, Orinda averages about one burglary per week."

French urged residents to take steps to protect themselves and their property. "Lock and alarm your homes. Provide proper lighting, which may act as a deterrent. Lock your cars and homes even if you're only going to be gone a short time. Call us if you see someone who you think may not be-

long in your neighborhood."

French also voiced strong concerns around the issue of teenagers drinking and driving. "We will be very firm and strict about enforcing the law. My officers have been instructed to do everything they can, within the law, to keep kids who have been drinking off the streets." Police are targeting those who host a certain type of teenage party. French said, "I would love to talk to the parents who allow parties in their homes at which kids are drinking."

"There are drugs and alcohol in the high school now, just like there have always been," said French. Alcohol and marijuana are the most prevalent, but French reported that there has also been one case involving LSD since he arrived on the job.

On French's desk was a working document of crime trends from 2005 to 2006. In the category of serious crimes, the number of burglaries increased from 55 to 67, thefts rose from 201 to 233, and the number of assaults doubled, going from 15 to 30. There have been no murders, one rape and seven robberies. French was not prepared to comment on these statistics, because he is still in the process of reviewing the data.

Finally, Chief French would like Orindans to know that, "I like to talk citizens. We are here to do a job, and you have a right to expect a certain level of service. If you're not getting it, I'd like to hear about it." He added, "Not all interactions with the police are going to be positive experiences. It's the nature of police work. We deal with difficult situations."

Read more about some of Chief French's other priorities on these pages in the weeks to come.



Orinda Police Chief Bill French

Photo Lee Borrowman

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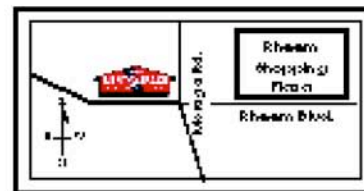


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