



By Dan DeWeese, Editor at Large

## Mounted Police Offer High-Profile Opportunity

**A** news story about an inner city crime-fighting program in Minneapolis recently caught my attention. The program, called the “Safe-Zone Collaborative,” coordinates efforts of the police department and private security firms operating in the downtown business and entertainment district. A key element in the program, which has been successful in suppressing crime in the once-notorious Block E district, is the Minneapolis Mounted Patrol (MMP). Other cities are said to be looking closely at this program.

The article made me wonder about the MMP, how the horses and officers are outfitted, how they source supplies and what local support is provided. What I learned surprised me, and made me think the programs offer not only valuable crime control and community services, but also sales and marketing opportunities for local merchants of horse and rider supplies.

The MMP is comprised of 12 horses and 30 fully trained riding officers. Eight are full-time mounted officers. After a shaky start in the late 1990s, the program found legs under the leadership of Sgt. Angela Dodge. Mounted police have been used successfully in crowd and crime control, search and rescue and community policing. MMP’s growing importance in the city was affirmed recently by its largest graduating class ever of 13 new officers.

The effectiveness of mounted police patrols stems from several aspects, according to Sgt. Dodge. An officer mounted on a horse has a vantage point that allows them to see and be seen from far greater distances than officers on foot. This high profile is not only a deterrent to would-be criminals, but is thought to be as effective as having 10 officers on foot. A mounted officer is able to control crowd movement and enter places and situations a squad car cannot. They draw attention and elevate the public’s sense of security. The power and majesty of a horse and rider are irresistible. With mounted police seen regularly on our city streets, the profile of horses and riding cannot help but be elevated.

Now comes the rub. According to Sgt. Dodge, less than half of the MMP’s expenses are provided by the city of Minneapolis. Nearly all of the mounts are donated horses, and local businesses contribute money to the program or purchase saddles and equipment outright. This is apparently so across the country.

Saddlemaker and importer Colin Dangaard, whose Malibu, Calif.—based company, Australian Stock Saddle Co., has been supplying equipment to U.S. and Canadian mounted police for years, estimates that there are 300 mounted patrols nationwide. It behooves the industry and local retailers to support them, not only for the security they bring to our streets, but for the enhanced profile they bring to horses and riding.

Contact your local police department or city officials to see how you might help these important programs. 🐾

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