

Annual "Salute" honors law enforcement



Spectators can get up close and personal with law enforcement officers and all their equipment at the Salute to Law Enforcement held May 6 at Willowbrook Mall.

By Brandon De Hoyos

Staff Writer

With more than 100 agencies represented and approximately 50,000 residents expected to attend, organizers for this year's Salute to Law Enforcement say the 12th anniversary of the event could be the biggest yet.

The event, scheduled May 6 at the Willowbrook Mall, is the largest known single law enforcement exhibition open to the public, and is sponsored by the Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce, the Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce and Willowbrook Mall.

Began in 1994, the event, chaired by Spring ISD Police Chief Alan Bragg, has grown from the original presentation of 15 area law enforcement agencies in a

local restaurant parking lot, to a larger exhibit of local, state and federal officials at the mall's northwest parking lot near Sears.

Showcasing 100 different agencies, more than 200 officers and more than 90 indoor and outdoor exhibits, the event is an opportunity for law enforcement agencies and the community to make a connection, said Willowbrook Mall

See SALUTE, page 3A

SALUTE

continued from page 1

marketing manager April Jones.

"We are proud to be able to support the work of our local and national law enforcement men and women," said Jones. "The Salute to Law Enforcement is one of our most highly attended events, drawing citizens from northwest Houston and throughout the city."

Beginning at 11 a.m. with an opening ceremony, citizens can watch a performance of "The Star Spangled Banner" by Megan Bouchan, the St. Thomas Episcopal School Bagpipe and Drum Ensemble, and a recitation of the names of local officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

In addition, visitors will have an opportunity to meet law enforcement representatives throughout the day and will be able to tour emergency vehicles; climb aboard a helicopter; tour the Harris County Sheriff's Department mobile command center; explore a CCEMS ambulance; see drug-sniffing dogs; watch patrolling robots; and receive handouts at a number of exhibits and demonstrations.

Neighboring booths will also provide opportunities for and information about child fingerprinting, auto ID, anti-theft devices and light/heat sensitive displays.

Initiated through discussion in the then Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce Crime Awareness Committee (later renamed Public Safety Committee), Bragg informed the committee of a similar concept ongoing in Spring I.S.D. to educate elementary schools about law enforcement.

Along with the help of Officer Tim Galligan, Harris County Precinct 4 Capt. John McClure and then committee chairman Larry Lipton, the event has expanded from two locations, Grundy's Club and Restaurant on Kuykendahl, and the Champions Village Shopping Center on FM 1960, before the Willowbrook Mall agreed to host the event.

Since then, Willowbrook Mall has helped host the annual event since 1996, rain or shine.

The Salute to Law Enforcement is a free event and open to the community. The event is scheduled for May 6, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information about the Salute to Law Enforcement, visit www.salutetolawenforcement.org or call 281-440-4160.

For directions to the Willowbrook Mall, visit their Web site at www.shopwillowbrookmall.com or call 281-890-MALL.

Spotlight to shine on law enforcement

■ Annual event allows community to meet protectors, see equipment

By FLORI MEEKS
CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcement representatives from as far as Wichita Falls and the Fort Worth area

will join officers from Houston and Harris County during the Salute to Law Enforcement on Saturday at Willowbrook Mall.

The event, which is explained on page 5

WANT TO GO?

■ **What:** Salute to Law Enforcement

■ **When:** 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday

■ **Where:** Willowbrook Mall, Texas 249 and FM 1960

SALUTE: Law enforcement event to have more than 100 exhibits

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

pected to feature more than 100 exhibits, is set for 11 a.m.-3 p.m. inside and outside of the mall.

The Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring the event with the Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce and Willowbrook Mall.

"This is just one way to celebrate the people in law enforcement," said Barbara Thomason, president of the Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce. "There are a lot of times when all they experience is the negative side of life. People don't always thank them."

This year's salute will open with a performance of "The Star Spangled Banner" by Megan Bouchan.

Concerns of Police Survivors members will read the names of local officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty, and the St. Thomas Episcopal Bagpipe & Drum Ensemble will perform "Amazing Grace."

Later, the Meyer Elementary School Freedom Choir will present a patriotic concert.

Salute participants will range from the United States Marshals Service and the U.S. Coast Guard to the Harris County Constables Office and the Tomball Police Department.

Participants will invite the public to tour emergency vehicles, climb aboard helicopters and see mobile command centers.

Guests can meet CSI and SWAT teams and check out patrolling robots.

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—BARBARA THOMASON

president of the Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce

Officers also will be bringing drug-sniffing dogs and officers on horses.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons is hosting a display for the first time this year and the Texas Department of Transportation will be bringing equipment that simulates a vehicle rollover to illustrate the importance of seat belts.

Salute to Law Enforcement is a 12-year-old event, said event chairman Alan Bragg, chief of the Spring school district Police Department.

It was launched by Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce's Crime Awareness Committee, now the Public Safety Committee.

"People were curious about all of the law enforcement agencies in the area," Bragg said. "We had the sheriff's department, the constable's office, three or four school district po-

lice, the Tomball Police.

"We felt the community didn't know who was who."

Committee members decided to create an event that would bring law enforcement agencies and the community together.

The first salute drew 18 agencies. Last year's event had 100, a number Bragg expects to match this year.

About 50,000 guests are expected.

"It's a good event for the kids and for the family," said Bragg, who was honored for his efforts as salute chairman by the Houston Northwest chamber in 2004.

The Northwest Houston chamber invited Cy-Fair Chamber to help with the salute this year because the northwest organization also is hosting its Airport Festival on Saturday, Thomason said.

The chambers are locating salute sponsors and helping with the event logistics.

"We were so excited when the Northwest Chamber asked us to join their efforts," said Darcy Mingoia, president of the Cy-Fair Houston chamber. "It's a real opportunity for our citizens to meet and greet law enforcement from all over the area."

"I think you have better relations with people if you have a chance to meet them under pleasant circumstances."

For details, call 281-440-4160 or 281-587-3901, or visit www.SaluteToLawEnforcement.org.

Salute to Law Enforcement

— See page 9



12 years and counting: Salute to Law Enforcement



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Comments about this article can be sent to bdehoyos@hcnonline.com.