Using Social Media to Your Advantage

If you need a lesson on social media and how it can benefit your Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Dave Wedding may just be the Sheriff you need to call.

The Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office has been using social media outlets to their benefit for years, and continue to do so with much success. "Whether it is general information about Sheriff events, or updating our communities with the latest information about a crime or criminal, the public expects quick and responsive information, and it is up to us to provide it to them," states Sheriff Wedding.

As a youngster in Vanderburgh County, Sheriff Dave Wedding wanted to be a firefighter. "I was sure that was my calling in life - to be a firefighter." But at the age of 21, Sheriff Wedding was offered a job as a jailer at the Vanderburgh County jail. "It wasn't long afterward that Sheriff Clarence Shepard offered me a job as a Deputy in the Sheriff's office. We had a gentleman's agreement that I would attend the Law Enforcement Academy and come back to the office to work in the offices permanently. It was then I decided law enforcement was my true calling," concludes Sheriff Wedding.

"From my graduation in 1983, I began a long career at the Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office that included prisoner transport, patrolling and the K-9 Unit. I worked my way up through the ranks - and in 2004 under Sheriff Brad Ellsworth I started in the executive ranks of the Sheriff's Office. Under Sheriff Eric Williams, I became the Chief Deputy."

Upon his election last November - Sheriff Wedding has continued to strengthen the Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office's use of Social Media. "I will be honest, I was a bit reluctant to use social media too much - but as I learned quickly - it is an avenue we must use and finesse constantly. We are in a day and age where people demand instant information - and it is our job to provide timely information and circumvent people who want to distort the truth. We must always get the information"

Operation "Choose Your Ride" had over 200 shares on the Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office Facebook page, and was a very well received initiative. Pictured left (left to right): Sheriff Dave Wedding, Mayor Lloyd Winnecke, Mr. Ted Thompson, and Chief Billy Bolin
Your Indiana Sheriffs’ Association .... We Are One Voice!

Attending the New Sheriffs’ School in the winter of 1990, little did Sheriff Jerry Harbstreit know he would be President of the ISA organization in 2015.

Fast forward to today, and Sheriff Harbstreit will tell you his 36 year career in law enforcement has been nothing short of fantastic. “I had the honor of attending all ISA functions from my first conference in 1990 until today, and the advancement of the Indiana Sheriffs’ Association has been phenomenal.”

Many other Indiana association’s look at the Indiana Sheriffs Association at the premier example of how a member organization should function and provide important services to its members and sheriffs’ offices across the state. “To be honest, I didn’t fully understand the significance of the ISA until I became 2nd Vice President on the Board of Directors, it was then that I really gained the knowledge and appreciation that this organization affords to law enforcement and the entire membership. Once I was elected to the board, I saw all of the hard work and sheer importance of the all of the training, educational programs and outreach afforded to everyone involved in the ISA.”

Since his tenure began on the ISA Board, President Harbstreit has personally experienced everything from setting up training sessions, planning out an entire conference and implementing important policies and procedures that are fundamental to the important work of the Indiana Sheriffs’ Association. “Our work isn’t over yet - we still have several new programs we plan on introducing over the next several months. Programs that are vital to the organization, its growth and relevance in the communities we serve,” proclaims President Harbstreit.

“One of the newest programs we plan to unveil is a Jail Academy. Sheriff’s and Jail Officers are excited and hungry for jail training. This new academy will assist jail officers, and entire Sheriff’s Office’s, in proper training techniques for all facets of jailing issues. The main targets of this top-notch training are to negate lawsuits, and provide resources to officers to simply deal with the sheer aggravation of working in confinement facilities.”

Another program President Harbstreit hopes to introduce is the ISA Consulting Group. This group would be comprised of former Sheriff’s from across the state of Indiana. When a new sheriff is elected, he or she could call upon this group to come in and share this information and their experiences with everything from personnel, building a new jail to community outreach. “I see and hear Sheriff’s every day that extend a helping hand to other sheriff’s - and this is a way for new Sheriff’s to tap in to a plethora of sage advice and professional experience that could really help in their day to day activities and decision-making.”

All-in-all, President Harbstreit wants to leave the ISA, and the Board of Directors, in better shape than when he started. “We are blessed to have superior officers coming in to the ISA Board each and every year. We are the cornerstone of the ISA and its deeds and actions. It is imperative that we don’t reinvent the wheel, create new and inventive ways of training and education, and that we remember common sense always prevails. I always keep in mind with everything we do for the Indiana Sheriffs’ Association that we are in lock step with each other, and we are the One Voice for Indiana Sheriff’s across our beautiful state of Indiana.”
Using Social Media to Your Advantage

continued from the cover

out first to ensure accuracy.”

The Vanderburgh County Sheriff’s Office Facebook page boasts over 6,400 likes - and the website sees an average of 8,000 hits a month. “Earlier this year, we had information out on our Facebook page and website regarding the need for another K-9 unit. From those postings, we receive an $8,000.00 donation for the purchase of our newest K-9 Deputy.”

The website is a source on continuous, updated information. Recent bookings are posted within 24 hours of intake. Traffic and citizen complaints can be posted anonymously - lending to the ability of officers to do their job. “When tips come through the site, we move on them immediately,” remarks Sheriff Weddell. “We encourage citizens to get involved - and we appreciate the information we are provided via this resource day in and day out.”

“Facebook provides up-to-the minute information. We regularly post information about sobriety check-points - and this deters impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel. We see a drastic reduction in DUl’s. It scares people about the propensity of getting caught. Facebook has also provided a great outlet for our younger demographic. They have really been some of our biggest proponents in the last 6 months. The national media hasn’t done law enforcement any favors recently - but our Facebook members are really using this media to bolster our office.”

Vanderburgh County Sheriff’s Deputies are on the front line daily - and in front of the cameras as well. “Whether it be a car crash, disaster, or arrest, our deputies face working in front of a camera, and it has become second nature to them. Previous Sheriff, Eric Williams, implemented our website - and it has been used as an instrument in providing volunteer opportunities in our communities. It is important to give back to the community we serve and be proactive, and we strive to do that through charity work, teen court and peer judging, Santa’s Clothing Club and the Salvation Army. We also get out to the schools and interact with the kids, this is a great way to create communication between law enforcement and kids that they will remember for years to come.”

“The website also provides a means of showcasing the work our deputies do, be it solving crimes or working with the community. We cross-post so Facebook fans and website fans both get this information. The platform provides us with a superb channel of communication and support, and it lends to the relationships we have with all of our counterparts in surrounding counties.”

In the end, although social media can have its challenges, they are off set by the positives that arise. “The Evansville Police and our Sheriff’s Office jointly developed a program where we wrapped a car as half a taxi and half a Sheriff’s car and used this to curb drunk driving by offering rides to those who were too impaired to drive. We posted this information on Facebook and had over 10,000 likes and 135 shares.”

Our communities see we are doing our due diligence to provide a safe environment for their families. Social media is enhancing our ability to stay relevant and timely to all of our constituents. Providing another avenue for our Vanderburgh County Sheriff’s Office to be proud of their work and stay focused on safety for the entire county.
Monroe County = Diversity and Ever Changing Populations

"If you can’t be coaching at I.U. ... the next best job in Monroe County is Sheriff".

This sums up Sheriff Brad Swain’s opinion on his first year as Sheriff of Monroe County. The tenth most populous county in Indiana, Monroe County is home to Indiana University, the largest public institute of higher learning in the state. “Being home to Indiana University poses unique challenges for the Sheriff and the entire Sheriff’s Office, but it also creates unique opportunities,” remarks Swain.

Sheriff Swain started his 29 year career at the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office as a jail officer. “I began my career in law enforcement when our new jail was being built - so I got experience in the old fashioned jail. After 5 years as a jail deputy, I began working on the patrol side and began road duty.” Sheriff Swain enjoyed 5 years on the road - then began a long career as a detective. “I was a detective for the last 20 years, specializing in child abuse investigations, and after over 500 investigations, I knew the time was right to run for Sheriff of Monroe County.”

Seven months into his first term as Sheriff of Monroe County, Swain has already seen a great deal of tumultuous issues, the most prevalent being the RFRA law. “The week after the RFRA decision, Governor Pence was scheduled to speak at a dinner hosted by the Veteran’s Club. Across the road at a local park demonstrators were picketing the Governor. That evening, I stopped to chat with folks and check up on their feelings about the protest. I then headed to a local elementary school science fair. We have diverse mind sets and lifestyles in Monroe County. Balancing, being objective and listening are all skills you must possess as a sheriff virtually anywhere, but with the diversity of people in Monroe County it is crucial.”

Language barriers can also be a hindrance to the Sheriff’s Office. “We have an international community of professionals and students, and there are times that we have to figure out the best way to communicate with them so they understand and appreciate the job we do for them. Monroe County is fortunate - we have our Sheriff’s Office, the Bloomington Police and Indiana University Police working in unison to ensure the safety of our constituents.”

The residents of Monroe County are also very in tune with national news, so staying proactive to ensure Monroe County does not drift into the problems of the bigger cities is crucial. “Although our communities are fairly liberal, people realize we are working in their best interests and they are not adversarial to local law enforcement.”

Some of the best volunteer advocates are right here in our communities. “When we need volunteers for a toy drive, assisting with fund-raisers or helping do community clean-up, we usually only have to put out one request and we have more volunteer workers than you can imagine. With the students at the university, and those who come back to Monroe County to retire, our volunteer base is also very diverse. With that diversity comes a plethora of ideas and ways to help serve the public.”

On the rare occasion that Sheriff Swain is not at his office, he enjoys competing in marathons and half-marathons. This year, he participated in the World Police and Fire Games in the Biathlon event - something he plans to continue to do for as long as possible. He also attended the National Sheriff Institute sponsored by the National Sheriffs’ Association this summer. “I was the only sheriff from Indiana to attend, and I learned a great deal through my leadership training and problem solving courses. It is a program that I would encourage other sheriff’s to attend.”

Home is a cattle farm in Southern Monroe County that he shares with his wife Amy. Sheriff Swain also has a tree farm in Perry County. “I am the third generation to own this 237 acre farm. It is managed through a contracted forester who helps maintain our viable forest. We also have one of the ‘Big Trees of Indiana’ in our forest, a Sourwood Tree. Perry County has a neat mixture of trees and flora and fauna from around the United States. The convergence of species here is simply amazing.”

So to say the Sheriff has diversity throughout his professional and private life may be an understatement. “I wouldn’t have it any other way. I don’t think Coach Crean plans to leave I.U. anytime soon, and that’s just fine with me. I know I have the best job in Monroe County.”
Challenges & Opportunities in Lake County, Indiana

Saying Lake County, Indiana is full of diverse people, challenges and opportunities is an understatement. That’s just the way Sheriff John Buncich likes the county he calls home.

For over 40 years, Sheriff Buncich has had the unique privilege of working in law enforcement in Lake County. “I have been with the Lake County Sheriff’s Office since 1971, and have worked in every division in the department.” Elected for his first term in 1995, Sheriff Buncich was the first merit officer to be elected to the office. “I served two terms from 1995 to 2002 - then I was elected again in 2010 and I am currently on my fourth term as Lake County Sheriff,” remarks Buncich.

The diversity in Lake County is evident through the communities the Sheriff’s Office serves. “We have 17 cities/towns in our county - and are second in population only to Marion County. We also have seafaring vessels, helicopters, traditional sheriff vehicles and horse patrols. Since we are on Lake Michigan, and we are neighbors to Cook County, Illinois, we have unique needs when it comes to protecting our citizens - and that can come in the form of land, water and flight.”

The Lake County Sheriff’s Office employs 550 people, and this includes 170 Merit Officers, 225 Corrections Officers, plus court security and administrative positions. “We also have one of the top CSI Sheriff Offices in the United States, along with superb IBIS (ballistics), AFI (computerized fingerprint systems), Drug Task Force/Interdiction Units and Mental Health Services that are state-of-the-art.”

“Our Drug Task Force Unit is exceptionally busy every day of the year. We have eleven K-9 units that assist with drug, bomb and cadaver locating. We also have superb relationships with every law enforcement agency in the county, as well as the Indiana State Police and federal agencies such as the FBI.” These relationships prove to be crucial in the day to day operations of the Lake County Sheriff. Being directly east of the city of Chicago, Sheriff Buncich also has daily communication with Sheriff Dart of Cook County, Illinois. “We are on the I-80/1-94 corridor, along with I-65, and drug trafficking is a huge issue, and one that we do not take lightly. We have officers that work hand-in-hand with our Cook County counterparts to ensure we are stopping drug traffic wherever and whenever we can.” Although drugs, like most other county’s in Indiana, are a huge problem, for Lake County its biggest issue is gang violence. “Gangs take hold of their members at a very young and vulnerable age. Unfortunately, the inherent task of gangs is to create mayhem through violent means. Our Gang Task Force is made of 12 officers who work hard every day to curb gang related crimes. We also strive to work with our incarcerated inmates to create an environment where they can work on their education and obtain a GED. History shows that providing opportunities to learn reduces recidivism. We continuously work with inmates to ensure they take the right path once released from jail. We offer follow up services and follow them through the community to give them a chance at becoming a positive member of society.”

Although it seems Lake County has built a reputation in challenges for law enforcement, there are many more opportunities than most can imagine. “I am very proud of our communities. I was born and raised here - and although I see a darker side in my job, I also see bright spots around every corner,” states Buncich. “Our Night Out Against Crime was a huge event. I meet with clergy from around the county and meet each and every week to talk about issues that are affecting our neighborhoods and communities. We work together in creative ways to communicate our missions and strive to be positive role models in the communities we serve.”

A few recent programs designed for community outreach include community service projects that include mowing and landscaping - done by non-violent offenders in the jail system. “We go out into the community and help where we are needed. Whether a Senior Citizen Center or a Veteran’s Cemetery - we do all that we can to ensure a helping hand is extended to those in need.” Another program that has received national attention - the Lake County Animal Control Center, which was taken over by the Sheriff’s Office. “Our Animal Control is a no kill center. Our inmates work hard to care for the animals that come in from abused situations or that are surrendered. Many times, these animals lack skills necessary to be in home environments, that’s where our group steps in. Our inmates train and care for these animals, making them adoption-ready. Some animals are trained to be assistants for those with mild disabilities.”

Sheriff Buncich knows there are challenges to continue to overcome, but in the end he states he is “Living the Dream” as Sheriff of Lake County. “Good things happen here everyday, but so many times only the negative is what is portrayed to the public. It is my job to ensure these good things continue, safely, and the challenges are met with a united Lake County Sheriff’s Office who will uphold the laws in our communities.”
Growing up in Shoals, Indiana, Sheriff Travis Roush never imagined he would someday hold the highest law enforcement position in the county. But after all of his work with the military and traveling around the world - he knew it was time to come home and serve his community.

Upon graduation in 1998, Sheriff Roush joined the Army and was in the 3rd Ranger Battalion until his service was up in 2001. He returned to Martin County and decided to head off to Vincennes University where he obtained a degree in Business and History.

"Little did I know - the military would be calling me back shortly after I graduated, and I returned to Ft. Benning, Georgia to just do it... let's get things accomplished. We must be accountable at all times in our office, Customer service is number one - and every one in the county is our customer. We are implementing GPS in our cars, that way we know where our officers are at all times. It is part of our commitment to safety for both our officers on the road and our constituents," remarks Roush.

Another pressing issue when Sheriff Roush began his first term - implementing a Reserve Deputy program. "Martin County has never had a Reserve Deputy ordinance. So we drew up an ordinance, and it passed on May 26th. We will have our first Reserve Deputies uniformed in August. We have so many untapped resources in our communities, this was one of those areas where we will be able to utilize talented people with a passion for law enforcement."

Although Sheriff Roush had no previous police experience, his experiences in the military, as a security contractor, and his one-year position as a correctional officer at a 400 man facility, assisted his working knowledge of law enforcement. "My time with the Afghan National Police was a real eye opener. There were some very questionable protocols and people in their units. I do love leadership, and managing people. Many of the jobs skills I acquired overseas... I was able to bring home to my community."

Sheriff Roush has also had some superb mentors that have given him great advice along the way. "Sheriff Harbstreit of Daviess County has been a wonderful mentor, as has Sheriff Fancher of Ohio County. I am thankful for their insight and help. That is one of the strongest aspects of Indiana Sheriffs - the support is phenomenal. The Indiana Sheriffs Association provides superior training and resources for all sheriffs."

Sheriff Roush has been married to Candace for 10 years, and she is the Superintendent of Shoals Community Schools. His seven year old son, Isaiah and 4 year old daughter, Josie keep him busy with school activities and functions. "I make it a point to visit the schools whenever possible. Kids come to know and respect law enforcement when you are available to them in their environment."

Overall, Sheriff Roush's passion to make his communities safer has come to fruition - but he knows there is more to be done in the coming years. "The people of Martin County have put a huge amount of trust in me. Honesty and integrity have to be priorities in this profession - and I am humbled at the faith that has been entrusted to me."

Sheriff Travis Roush ...

Coming Home to Serve

became a Drill Sergeant. After the service, I worked overseas as a security contractor. One of my contracts involved diminishing Taliban sponsored narcotics through surveillance and eradication operation. Some of that time overseas also included security details.

After returning home and finishing his B.S. degree in Business Administration through Indiana University, several people mentioned the idea of running for Sheriff of Martin County. "This is a service industry, so I did a lot of research into the sheriff's job. There was room for improvement in our Sheriff's Office, so I did my homework, and determined this was where I belonged." But Sheriff Roush met with some nay-sayers, leveraged print media to communicate with the people. "I wasn't taken very seriously, initially, but the tide soon changed and my message was heard.

Upon his election in November of 2014, Sheriff Roush began working on the structure of the office right away - and that included having officers on the job 24/7 - 7 days a week. "There was often lapse in officer availability, between the hours of midnight and 6:00am, sometimes there were no officer on duty. That was my first priority."

Up next - a K-9 officer to assist with drug enforcement. "Meth is still a huge issue in Martin County, it is simply destroying people and destroying lives. I knew we needed to acquire a certified K-9, but the cost can be prohibitive. So we started a campaign to raise needed funds. In less than 2 months, we had the needed $33,000 for the K-9. The dog was certified the first week of July, and has already had 10 arrests."

Sheriff Roush has taken a very proactive approach during his first year at the Martin County Sheriff's office. "I don't like sitting around waiting... let's..."
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ISA Vendors work the crowds on Friday

ISA attendees enjoying Friday's Luncheon

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Seth Troyer and his handmade Paracord bracelets were a hit!
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