Sheriffâ€™s Safety Town to open on Tuesday

Monday, December 1, 2008
Second-grade students driving electric cars and riding bicycles will lead a parade to officially mark the opening of Sheriff's Safety Town during a ceremony at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 2.

Community sponsors, citizens, and area officials will join Caddo Sheriff Steve Prator for the facility's ribbon cutting at 8910 Jewella Avenue next to Summer Grove Baptist Church. Classes highlighting safety awareness and prevention are expected to begin this coming week.

"What takes most locations five years to complete, we've done in three," Prator said, looking back at the progress of Safety Town. The Sheriff officially announced plans to build Safety Town in 2005. A ground breaking ceremony was held in November 2006 and construction by Sumrall Construction Co. began in January 2008. "There have been children in our area who have been hurt and some who have been killed since we began planning this project. We simply couldn't wait any longer. We need to start educating our children now."

Sheriffâ€™s Safety Town includes a two-week curriculum that is taught through the school system to area second-graders. Children learn 10 areas of safety, including vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, fire, and electrical safety. At the conclusion of their studies, students visit the pint-sized town where they practice safety skills in an interactive environment featuring child-sized streets and sidewalks, traffic lights, bicycles and small electric cars. Safety Town also includes an educational building with two classrooms where children review safety lessons with Caddo deputies, Shreveport firemen, and Louisiana State troopers.

Sheriff's Safety Town is the first of its kind in Louisiana, although an earlier version did operate in Shreveport in the early 1990s. Prator said this is the first permanent, year-round facility designated to community and child safety. "Our goal is to make this the safety hub for Caddo Parish, for all agencies to come here and teach all aspects of safety to citizens of all ages."

Prator said Sheriff's Safety Town would not have been possible if not for the generous support of local businesses, citizens, and community groups. The cost of the facility has not yet been tallied since a majority of the financing came from in-kind donations and support.

A core group began meeting in 2005 to determine the best way to design and build the facility. Those businesses included representatives from Fenner Consulting, Alliance Inc., Mohr and Associates Inc., Purtle + Associates, F.J. Burnell Inc., Wicker Construction Inc., Hand Construction and the Home Builders Association.

Contributors include Willis-Knighton Health System, which donated funds for theeducation building, and philanthropist Bill Robinson, who funded the maintenance facility. Small building sponsors include McDonaldâ€™s â€“ Griggs Enterprises, Regions Bank, State Farm Insurance, the Allstate Foundation, Barksdale Federal Credit Union, Brookshire Foods, Capital One, Gateway Tire & Service Center, Circle K, Gannett Foundation and The Times, Hand Construction, the Shreveport Bar Foundation, Ivan Smith Furniture, Samâ€™s Club and Wal-Mart, Tango Transport, Time-It Lube, Kilpatrick Life Insurance, Caddo Parish Schools, and Rose-Neath Flower Shops.

Other sponsors include the Shreveport-Bossier Junior League, which donated funds for an outdoor pavilion, and SWEPCO, which donated funds for an electrical display and observation tower. Chesapeake Energy Corp. and Caddo Parish Public Schools funded two classrooms.

Electric cars were donated by the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission, the Shreveport-Bossier New Car Dealersâ€™ Association, Fire Tech Systems Inc., Wray Ford, and Querbes and Nelson Insurance. Other donors include James Huckabay Insurance, United Auto Workers Local 2166, Shreveport-Caddo Crime Stoppers and the Credit Bureau of the South â€“ street signs; Lifepath Hospice Care Services LLC and Crime Stoppers â€“ bicycles; and Coventry Healthcare of Louisiana â€“ bicycle helmets and classroom curriculum.
In-kind donations were received from numerous sources including Buster Netherton of F.J. Burnell Inc.,

Richardson's Masonry and Construction, Acme Brick, the City of Shreveport, John and Pam Sloan, Wilhite Electric, Payne Mechanical and Northwest Louisiana PHCC.