

# APPENDIX THREE: WATERLOO POLICE DEPARTMENT INTERVIEW

## CHIEF DAN TRELKA, DIRECTOR OF SAFETY SERVICES

### Key Topics of Discussion

- Crime is trending down, and he is optimistic that it is going to continue to do so. In fact, crime in Waterloo is below the state average.
- Chief Trelka felt that people across the country are becoming more apt to use violence, not just those in Waterloo. That could be attributed to several things: lack of family values, violent video games, music, and movies/TV.
- The Waterloo Police Department tries to focus on both the “small” crimes as well as the larger ones. The small crimes may seem somewhat inconsequential; however, he applies the “Broken Window Theory.” If you address the small issues, like a broken window, then the bigger issues are less likely to occur.
- One of the Waterloo Police Department’s goals is to hold the “worst of the worst” accountable. The “worst of the worst” are defined as convicted felons who continue to engage in criminal behavior and violent acts. They are typically the product of an unstable family.
- Gang activity in the Cedar Valley remains stable, and is nothing compared to the gang activity in larger cities such as Chicago. Chief Trelka commented that, in general, gangs are deadly, but they are deadly against each other and not the general population.
  - People join gangs for a variety of reasons, but the biggest reasons are the need to belong to something (most common when they are from an unstable family) and/or the need for protection.
  - The biggest business for gangs in the Cedar Valley is burglaries, not necessarily drugs.
- The biggest illegal drug problem is high grade marijuana; however, Chief Trelka felt that prescription drug abuse was a bigger problem than illegal drugs or alcohol.
- Homicides are usually either gang related or domestic disputes.
- Concerns:
  - Funding – Chief Trelka is concerned that people who should remain in prison are getting released due to funding issues. This will have a trickle-down effect if these people come to the Cedar Valley.
  - Mental health – Iowa lacks in the way they help individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues. These issues are negatively impacted due to funding.
  - Concealed Carry Permit – Chief Trelka supports the right to bear arms; however, he feels that the Sheriff should be able to use discretion when issuing permits. He gave an example of a mentally unstable individual whose driver’s license was revoked due to his mental illness, but the Sheriff couldn’t revoke his Concealed Carry permit due to the new laws.

- **What would help?**
  - Crime prevention programs.
  - We also need to be responsible citizens and protect our property. Lock your doors and pay more attention to what is going on around you.
  - Work to change people's perception. Market the positives and not always the negative. With that being said, Chief Trelka recognizes and respects the job of the media, and commented, "If it bleeds, it leads."
  - We need to establish a common goal. We are a fragmented community, and a common goal would help us work together. He also strongly believes in getting the ministry involved.
  - One dimension of breaking the cycle is getting more involved in the lives of children.