

Times-Republican

Making an MPACT

Social work, police program receives \$206,000 in federal grant funds



T-R FILE PHOTO — Autumn Drewelow, Darcy Andersen, David Hicks, Chief Mike Tupper and Ryan Keller accepted the Program of the Year Award from the Iowa City/County Management Association during a July city council meeting.

Marshalltown's progressive policing practices have drawn praise both locally and across the country, and the federal Department of Justice has taken notice, awarding the MPD a grant for more than 206,000 to assist in funding the Marshalltown Police and Community Team (MPACT) for the next two years.

"I think it's really just a vote of confidence that we're on the right track with community policing," Marshall County Youth and Shelter Services Director David Hicks said. *"The city has immense confidence in its police department and social services, and by blending them both together, you're getting the most bang for your buck."*

Since implementing the MPACT program, which dispatches social workers to address non-criminal matters including mental illness, family conflict, substance abuse problems or emotional/behavioral situations, Marshalltown has already received about \$230,000 in previous grant money. The Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Police Services (COPS) awarded 185 law enforcement agencies a total of \$33 million through the Community Policing Development (CPD) program, and Marshalltown was one of just two Iowa departments to receive such funds (Waukee was the other).

"We're doing something innovative, and the COPS office sees this as a worthy project to support. We'll use this money to keep pushing forward and build upon our successes," Marshalltown Police Chief Mike Tupper said. *"This is a great thing for Marshalltown and a great thing for our police department, and I'm just proud of all the work we've put in to make this happen."*

Tupper said one of the only complaints he's received from his officers thus far is that they wish the social workers and advocates were available for longer than their usual 10 hours a day between 2 p.m. and

midnight.



“The perception that police don’t want to implicate these kinds of practices is a false narrative. I don’t think it’s true generally, but I definitely don’t think it’s true in Marshalltown,” Tupper said. “They’ll always take a new resource or tool if it’s going to make their job easier. We’re asking police officers in this country to do too much.”

Hicks also pointed to survey statistics to show that MPD officers- by overwhelming margins- support and appreciate the MPACT program, and 95 percent of respondents wish to continue the relationship going forward.

Marshalltown Mayor Joel Greer praised Tupper for his leadership and willingness to be on the cutting edge, even if it means wading into uncharted waters. Programs like food drives, coffee with a cop, the

citizens academy and friendly competitions with the fire department have all served to bolster the police department's relationship with the community at large. Greer also noted the fact that Tupper was a keynote speaker at a local protest sparked by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis last summer.

"I'm pretty sure we have a special deal going here in Marshalltown, and it starts at the top," Greer said.

Because the MPACT program costs about \$150,000 a year to run, the federal grant, which is spread out over 24 months, will only cover about two-thirds of the funding. The MPD continues to seek community input on the program as well as donations to YSS and the city to help make it a continuing reality. While he sees the funding as a validation of the work that's already been done, Tupper is equally excited to see what the future holds.

"This is the best of both worlds. My dad used to say you can't have your cake and eat it too, but in this case, you can," he said.

Contact Robert Maharry at 641-753-6611 ext. 255 or
rmaharry@timesrepublican.com

Newsletter

Today's breaking news and more in your inbox

I'm interested in (please check all that apply)

Daily Newsletter

Breaking News

Obituaries

4 articles remaining...

Starting at \$4.38/week.

Subscribe Today

paper? *