



# The Oil Can

The Award Winning Newsletter of the Cooperstown Rotary Club  
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The long arms of the law in Otsego County are led by...

## Sheriff Richard J. Devlin, Jr.



Otsego County's chief elected law officer, Sheriff Richard J. Devlin, Jr., was at our podium last Tuesday to bring us a report on the role his agency plays in the bigger picture of law enforcement in our area. First elected to the office in 2007, Sheriff Devlin imparts an imposing and professional presence to his office.

"My career began in 1992 and I worked my way through the ranks. I enjoy it and you can get a lot accomplished as the Sheriff," he said.

The office of the Otsego County Sheriff is quartered at the Otsego County Public Safety Building on County Route 33W south of Phoenix Mills. To its population of inmates, the building is known simply as "the jail."

"We currently have 76 inmates," Sheriff Devlin noted. "We were designed to house 30 to 40 but we average 70 to 80. And, at times the population has been as high as a hundred and we've had to get a variance to be over our limits."

The jail facility is the Office of the Sheriff's largest operation and perhaps its most visible component in terms of physical structure. But, there's much more to Sheriff's Devlin's office than one might suspect.

"Probably our road patrol is the most visible part of what our office does. Thirteen deputies cover the entire county on a 24/7 year-round schedule," Sheriff Devlin explained. The patrol responds to road service calls, accident scenes, crime

scenes, fires, family disturbances, DWIs, and facilitates the execution of warrants. "Our civil office processes \$1 million a year," Sheriff Devlin said. Those 13 deputies are never all on the road at the same time and Otsego County is a considerable chunk of territory to cover. The Sheriff could utilize more deputies and more vehicles, but budget constraints have dictated limitations, and the Office of Sheriff strives to get the most out of the resources it has. Cooperation with other law enforcement agencies is critical. The Office of the Sheriff collaborates closely with the New York State Police, the City of Oneonta Police, the Village of Cooperstown Police, the Department of Environmental Conservation, fire departments and a host of other security and public safety officials at the local and state level.

New technology is proving to be a productive tool in law enforcement that offers services to the general public that never existed in years past. The Office of the Sheriff and its array of services can be found online. "Go to [otsegocounty.com](http://otsegocounty.com) and click on the Office of the Sheriff," Sheriff Devlin advised. At the site are numerous services of interest to the general public. A confidential tip line and Crime Stopper's program enlists public input in identifying and apprehending known criminals. A "Safe Child" program offers parents the opportunity to have their children fingerprinted and registered to assist law enforcement officials in locating children should they go missing and trigger what is known as an "Amber Alert."

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### Today's Program

March 23  
State of the Village of Cooperstown  
Mayor Carol Waller

### Forthcoming Programs

March 30  
Bassett's Medical School  
Dr. Walter Frank/Dr. Henry Weil

April 6  
"Consigned to the Poor House"  
Sherlee Rathbone,  
Otsego Town Historian

April 13  
Group Study Exchange Team  
District 1030 England

April 20  
"Click The Pig" — Dr. Julie Dostal  
LEAF Council on  
Alcoholism & Addictions

April 27  
Otsego Safe Kids Update  
Colleen Vesely, R.N.

May 4  
The Lakelands Development  
Christina Conn — CGP

May 11  
The CCS School Budget  
Mary Jo McPhail

May 18  
My Country Italy  
Carola Neri

### House Committee Assignments



- March 23 — Doug Walrath
- March 30 — Dave Bliss
- April 6 — Bill Coleman
- April 13 — Doug Geertgens
- April 20 — Carl Good
- April 27 — Will Green
- May 4 — Tom Heitz

### Sheriff Richard J. Devlin (continued from p. 1)

Sex offenders released from prison have emerged in recent years as a formidable threat to child safety.

"From our web site you can link to New York State's sex offender registry website. There, you can determine whether any released sex offenders live within a mile radius of your residence. And, you will automatically receive an e-mail should a released sex offender move into your neighborhood," the Sheriff explained.

Similarly, victims of crime in Otsego County have a legitimate interest in knowing when their convicted perpetrator is released from jail. This can be determined on the website as well and those who register will receive e-mail notification when a perpetrator of interest leaves jail.

Those who need to know when a warrant, or order of protection has been served will also find that information on the department's web site.

Another unique program of interest to families with a youthful driver at the wheel (under age 21) is one that alerts parents by e-mail whenever their progeny are stopped while driving, for whatever reason.

The Office of the Sheriff also operates several direct education programs. "We provide free gunlocks, for example," Sheriff Devlin said. "Just ask for them."

A new program just coming the aegis of Sheriff is the STOP DWI program, a state-mandated, and state-funded program aimed at reducing drunk driving through educational programs. "We just inherited the STOP DWI program," Sheriff Devlin explained, noting it had previously been administered by a separate director not under his administrative tent. The Sheriff's department will conduct boat safety courses and conduct safe driving clinics for high school and college students among other activities related to drunk driving issues.

"I'm looking for a golf cart I can borrow," Sheriff Devlin said. The cart is needed not for a day on the golfing fairways, but rather as a vehicle used to simulate the experience of driving drunk. The driver, a student, takes the golf cart wheel wearing a set of goggles that skew their vision simulating the vision of a drunk, and making it virtually impossible to steer the cart properly through a course of traffic cones even at a slow rate of speed.

"What happens when a citizen calls 911? Who responds?" Lyn Edinger asked. "The agency with the officer nearest your location will respond," Sheriff Devlin said. "It could be the Sheriff, the state police, or the city or village police."

Tom Lieber asked the Sheriff about his department's budget. "Our county has the state's third smallest budget," Sheriff Devlin began. We have certain mandates under the law that we must meet. For example, in the jail we have to maintain staff levels. Budget cuts have left our road patrol understaffed. We've been looking for ways to reduce the jail's operating costs. We reduced the cost of feeding prisoners substantially by changing suppliers. We're trying to save money on medicines for prisoners which can run into thousands of dollars. Medicine bills average about \$7,000 monthly. I currently have a prisoner in the hospital that may cost the county upwards of \$75,000 for treatment and medicine," the Sheriff said.

The Sheriff pointed out that inmates who destroy jail property are charged with an offense and compelled to pay for repair or replacement. "We have a zero tolerance policy on that score," Sheriff Devlin said. Sheriff Devlin and the long arms of the law in Otsego County, the men and women in the Otsego County Sheriff's Office, are on doing difficult and necessary work, and doing it well. TRH