



OP-ED

## Embedded Social Worker Program Showing Promising Early Results

Mayor Barb Tolbert

Last month, I joined Police Chief Jonathan Ventura at a panel discussion to report on the first year of the North County Law Enforcement Embedded Social Worker (ESW) program. This program, first launched by the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office of Neighborhoods, was expanded to Arlington, Marysville and north Snohomish County in late March 2018. The panel discussion provided the community an opportunity to hear from our partners, the City of Marysville, Snohomish County, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office, the Arlington Community Resource Center (ACRC), and our local businesses, about the progress we have made in the last year.

I am pleased to report that the program is showing positive results and I, along with many of our partners, believe we are on the right track to addressing the issue of homelessness and opioid addiction in our community. The ESW program augments our law enforcement efforts; it does not replace them. Our officers and our outreach team will not turn a blind eye to crime in our community. Our outreach team will work with anyone who needs and wants assistance. If an individual chooses to reject help and decides to commit crimes, they will be held accountable by the Arlington Police Department. Our outreach team often uses the carrot and stick approach and are savvy to know what approach will work and when.

During his presentation, Police Chief Jonathan Ventura shared some exciting Arlington-specific statistics from the first year of the program, including 110 new clients of the program, 46 clients secured stable housing, 33 clients completed a drug or alcohol detox program, and 24 clients graduated from drug treatment. Chief Ventura also reported decreases in specific categories of crime during the same time period, including an 11% decrease in shoplifting, a 13% decrease in burglaries, 15% decrease in thefts, a 16% decrease in malicious mischief cases, a 38% decrease in robberies, and a 40% decrease in vehicle thefts. Smokey Point Walmart store manager Brock Caskey reported there has been a 33 percent reduction in thefts from his store and Chief Ventura reported a 24 percent reduction in police responses to the store.

The numbers, while exciting to share, do not tell the full story. Each day I hear a new story of progress and hope from those in need in our community. As part of the event, Arlington social worker Britney Sutton shared a brief story of a local man who asked for help at Marysville Jail. He went right to the [Snohomish County Diversion Center](#) and into treatment. He is now over a year clean and sober. He works in Arlington and is now a positive contributing member to our community.

Earlier this year, a young man contacted me with a request to provide homeless individuals like him a permanent shelter facility. I explained that a permanent shelter facility was not the answer and encouraged him to engage in the services we had available through the Embedded Social Worker program and the Arlington Community Resource Center. At the time, he declined the services, but he continued to contact me with updates on his life and the struggles he was experiencing living on the streets. He recently contacted me to share that he was ready to accept help and is now fully engaged

with the services available through the Arlington Community Resource Center. He is now working with ACRC to obtain stable housing.

At the heart of this project's early successes is the partnerships. Without Arlington and Marysville working with the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office and the Snohomish County Health and Human Services team, ACRC and the many social service providers in the north County area, and our businesses we would still be pushing the homeless and addicted back and forth with no end in sight. Truly, this partnership also needs you, our citizens.

Many of you adopted our early strategy of "see something, say something" and reported suspicious or illegal activity. That reporting provided our officers the opportunity to address many of those incidents. Thank you! Our residents can continue to be a part of the success of this program. I encourage those that ask to do a few things:

1. Continue to report suspicious or illegal activity to 911. If you see something, you need to say something.
2. Give a hand up, not a hand out. Giving appropriately and directly to services that can aid those in need is one of the best ways to help. A number of organizations directly provide services in our community and could use your help. These are the City of Arlington Flex Fund, which provides funds to the Law Enforcement Embedded Social Worker team for immediate client needs), ACRC, the Arlington Community Food Bank, Kids Kloset, and the Hands Together Cold Weather Shelter. These valuable organizations work closely together to directly connect our most vulnerable to the services they need with
3. Volunteer your time if you can. ACRC, the Arlington Community Food Bank, Kids Kloset, and the Hands Together Cold Weather Shelter are always seeking volunteers to help with many tasks, big and small. Even just a few hours a month can make a significant difference in the operations of these service providers.

Given the successes of the first year, I am committed to continuing the Law Enforcement Embedded Social Worker program for our community. More information on the ESW program is available on the City of Arlington website at <https://www.arlingtonwa.gov/615/Community-Outreach-Team>.