

# MACON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Howard G. Buffett

Macon County

Sheriff



Leading Law Enforcement in Macon County  
since 1829

## **A Message from the Sheriff**

Law enforcement requires multiple skills, more than any other profession that I can identify. At one moment, you're faced with a deadly situation and making a determination of how to deescalate the circumstances; the next, you're testifying in court, requiring you to articulate a set of complicated facts; then you're dealing with an accident, trying to console someone who just lost a loved one.

The ability to problem solve is often underestimated and I would put our employees up against any agency in terms of our ability to achieve successful results under stressful conditions. I believe we have one of the most well-balanced group of sworn officers, correctional officers, and court security officers we could ask for, but we can always improve.

The most basic part of our mission is to serve our community every day in the best way possible. If you have a bad start to your day, you cannot bring that to work. Each encounter we have requires us to be professional, polite, and helpful. So while others are at their worst, we must always be at our best.

Leadership comes in many forms. In our profession, we are fortunate because most of us have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership through our own actions. Every service call, traffic stop, or interrogation presents a different challenge or opportunity. Each disgruntled citizen or difficult inmate is an opportunity to challenge yourself to handle each situation to the best of your ability. How you resolve each situation is what I consider your own personal opportunity to demonstrate leadership. You're judging a person within seconds and making a decision on how that encounter will end. In some circumstances, your courage or integrity may be tested, but I am confident you will overcome your uncertainty and respond in an appropriate manner.

The most important aspect of any organization is the culture. The culture within law enforcement has inherent challenges, yet it provides a comradery that is perhaps unmatched except on a battlefield. No officer will leave another officer without protection; we will give our lives to save a fellow officer and, for that matter, a person we do not even know. Our personal goal should be to be a hero every day, fully realizing no one will likely notice. We don't need medals or recognition to do what we do; we do it because we have a personal desire to help people and to get bad guys off the street. You need to know that you did your best. That drives our culture.

The flip side is not as easy to discuss. It is when we see failure, inefficiency, complaining, complacency, or disrespect and we stay quiet because we do not want to break a code of supporting our brothers and sisters. This is a destructive part of our culture that erodes our performance as a team. When facing a situation like this, it can test our core values. It isn't easy to approach a colleague who is under-performing, but this is when you take real, personal risk, and you make an honest effort to deal with the problem when you recognize it. Once you confront it, you may or may not be able to help, but to be the best officer and best team member, you must always make the first effort.

Very few people can comprehend what we do, what we experience, or what we see. We typically deal with people at their worst and we are expected to take their anger, abuse, threats and foul language, let it go, and not react while we remain composed and professional. Stop and ask yourself if you honestly believe most people could do that; I can tell you they cannot, but that is what sets us apart from others. The expectations that are placed on you are not fair or reasonable, but you knew that when you made the decision to be part of this profession; that is the standard you set for yourself and that is the standard you must hold yourself to everyday.

Law enforcement is a culture built on personal responsibility and high expectations of individual responsibility. You must consistently do the right thing when no one is watching. It is a difficult job with a very high bar of responsibility. Every time you leave your home and family and walk out the door in a uniform, with a badge and gun, you become responsible to the community and to your fellow officers. You have accepted a responsibility on behalf of the public that is an honor and a privilege. That is something you cannot forget, even when you're frustrated, upset, or tired of listening to someone who is being disrespectful.

I have a short time as your Sheriff, less than a year and a half. That will bring a level of urgency to my efforts, but you can never rush certain decisions. My goal is to make this office as capable, effective, and cohesive as it can be and to leave a strong foundation for the next Sheriff.

The following are several initiatives that are currently underway or being reviewed:

- Jail Assessment to Recommend Improvements:
  - On-site assessment of jail policies and procedures;
  - On-site assessment of medical and mental health processes, practices, and policies;
  - Assessment of operational and administrative practices and the current jail management system;
  - Assessment, development, and implementation of an Objective Jail Classification System.
- 15 Year Personal Patrol Vehicle Program
  - Qualified patrol officers would be assigned a personal patrol Tahoe which they would be able to take to and from home under certain conditions.
  - Personal patrol vehicles would improve officer readiness, decrease response times in emergencies, improve officer safety, reduce crime, and increase a sense of civilian safety by having more vehicles on the streets and parked in neighborhoods.
  - An adopted policy would provide reliability to our fleet.
- Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) Historical and Comparative Study
  - The purpose of this initiative is to benchmark our progress over the past ten years and compare it to a number of like-sized counties to see where we stand on everything from average inmates to service calls, salary levels, CO ratios, budgets, jail medical expenditures...it will be a long and comprehensive list. This will take some time, but you cannot improve if you cannot identify the problems.
- A written Auxiliary Deputy Policy with clear standards, training, and expectations will be distributed in the near future.
- Patrol officers have been issued gift certificates to distribute at their own discretion on traffic stops for equipment violations. The primary purpose of this initiative is to improve community relations, however, we do have citizens who truly need this help.

- A community grant committee has been established to continue to support charitable community-based financial requests. The committee consists of Maria Roarick, Lt. Belcher, Lt. Thompson, Lt. Scheibly, and Sgt. Pope.
- A few of the things I am considering over the next year are leadership courses; various ideas for standards for promotion (the next Sheriff may accept or reject these ideas or use portions of them); continued opportunities for improvement in the jail, and an assessment of equipment needs. I expect this list to expand as I am able to identify other issues that I can consider addressing. We are also bringing several existing outside contracts current and we are looking at ways to collaborate and partner with other local and state agencies.

This will set out a roadmap for the next Sheriff and it will identify areas where we are doing well and areas where we need improvement. It will continue the legacy of leadership that Sheriff Schneider established.

If you know me you know I cannot get these things done fast enough, however I have resolved myself to the fact that these efforts will take time, so please be patient.

Goals, strategies, plans, and objectives are all nice, but they are only as good as the people who execute them. We have great people at MCSO. This is perhaps the greatest legacy of Sheriff Schneider's tenure. We need to build upon our strengths and we are fortunate that our people are one of our strengths. I am here to support you and to help you improve your performance and future at this agency.

The Sheriff is held accountable to the electorate every four years, but we are all accountable to our community every day. It is what drives our commitment to our job. This has inherent challenges, but it does not change the most basic management principle I believe in. It is laid out very simply in the book *Good to Great*. You want your best people on the "bus" and you get those who drag you down off the "bus." This isn't always easy to accomplish, but if you set high standards for yourself, your "neighbor" or your partner will notice. You want the people you respect and admire, those who you trust and have confidence in, to be your colleagues. Expect mediocrity and you will get mediocrity; expect greatness and you will achieve greatness. Every employee at MCSO makes choices each day, will you accept mediocrity or push for greatness?

I'm proud of our office, you should be too.

What follows is a brief overview of how to expect our office to operate.

Thank you for your continued support,



Howard G. Buffett  
Sheriff  
Macon County Sheriff's Office

# The Principles and Values of the Macon County Sheriff's Office

## Mission Statement

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The Office of Macon County Sheriff serves our community with a highly motivated, professional staff of individuals who strive to treat everyone with respect and courtesy. We work to create a safe environment for Macon County residents and visitors by preserving the peace and enforcing the laws. The men and women of the MCSO also volunteer their time and skills through community service to ensure that Macon County will be a better place to live for everyone. We are always working to do better for the people of Macon County.

## Vision Statement

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Providing the citizens of Macon County with effective and efficient public safety services since 1829. We will perform our duties with the utmost character, competence, honesty, and transparency.

## Guiding Values of Macon County Sheriff's Office

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**Courage:** Includes both physical and moral strengths. Physical courage is the ability to do something in the face of great, personal harm. Moral courage is the ability to make the correct decision when confronted with situations that challenge your ethics. Without moral courage, most all other attributes are diminished.

**Fairness:** The quality of being impartial in your behavior; the act of being just and honest.

**Integrity:** Is the adherence to a code or standard of moral and ethical values. Integrity means being honest in everything you do and earning the trust of your colleagues and the community.

**Honor:** The act of demonstrating respect and honesty without being legally or morally obligated. Honor is the basis of ethical and moral behavior; it includes behaving in a selfless manner and doing the right thing regardless of who receives credit.

**Respect:** Treat others with consideration and professionalism. Being respectful of others does not imply you have to accept every suggestion or idea that others may make. It means you treat others the way you would like to be treated.

**Duty:** We should expect ourselves to meet or exceed our responsibilities and to execute our assigned tasks to the best of our ability.

**Transparency:** Being honest and open in communication, including all of our actions, and to provide full and accurate information. Transparency means you do not hide or manipulate information.

**Accountability:** Being responsible for your own performance, actions, and behavior. Never blaming others for what you are responsible for completing.

## **Priorities of the Macon County Sheriff's Office**

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As Sheriff, I am providing eight distinct agency priorities to help in the execution of your duties.

Our command should review these priorities regularly to ensure they continue to align with community concerns, are effective, and are applicable. These priorities have the following objectives:

- To Achieve Effective & Professional Law Enforcement
- Provide for General Public Safety
- Provide Balanced and Fair Traffic Enforcement
- Reduce Criminal Drug Activity and Drug Demand
- Support our Schools, Students, and Parents
- Provide Efficient Management of our Detainee Population
- Support of MCSO Personnel in Public Service Opportunities
- Maintaining Open, Professional, and Respectful Communications

### **Priority 1: To Achieve Effective & Professional Law Enforcement**

To provide the citizens of Macon County with the highest degree of professional law enforcement services by investing in and developing the resources and staff of the Sheriff's Office.

The Sheriff's Office aims to develop qualified individuals who not only demonstrate integrity, professionalism, and competence, but who also promote and encourage quality decision-making. Creative problem solving and effective communications are important for the continuity of the Sheriff's operations. These efforts should ensure that when the public comes in contact with any member of the Sheriff's Office, they will be treated in a respectful, professional manner.

### **Priority 2: Provide for General Public Safety**

To maintain safe neighborhoods and a prosperous environment through effective, transparent, and efficient delivery of public safety services in partnership with the community.

The reduction of crime and domestic threats are paramount to the safety and security of the citizens of Macon County. Collaborative efforts with the members of the Sheriff's Office, law enforcement partners, and community are necessary to keep Macon County a safe place to live, work, and visit.

### **Priority 3: Provide Balanced and Fair Traffic Enforcement**

To keep the roadways of Macon County safe.

Traffic enforcement has a direct, proportional relationship to overall safety. Traffic enforcement allows citizens to travel safely, with the expectation that other drivers are complying with traffic laws. However, simply writing citations does not reflect success. Our office has traditionally focused on written warnings unless you observe egregious violations. I support this approach, however, you should issue traffic citations where you feel it will result in corrective behavior and make our roads safer. The most important outcome is concluding a traffic stop in a professional manner.

**MCSO will continue to aggressively remove drivers from the roads who are impaired by drugs or alcohol; this is a priority under my leadership.**

### **Priority 4: Reduce Criminal Drug Activity and Drug Demand**

To reduce or eliminate the impact of drugs within our community.

MCSO has exceeded simple basic enforcement to reduce drug use. We support superior efforts with our DRE officer. We are fortunate that this officer has the ability to be called out to assist other officers without regard to overtime costs. We have an officer placed full time in the DPD Street Crimes Unit, a dedicated team that partners with DPD in drug interdiction, a single purpose K-9 on each MCSO patrol shift, and a dual purpose K-9 to support the overall efforts of MCSO. We support both a School Resource Officer and an At Risk Officer to provide prevention on one end and treatment on the other end. These efforts go well beyond the basic level of resources to help alleviate drug use in our community.

Regular traffic stops provide an opportunity to remove drugs and guns from our streets. Many of our officers are trained to identify indicators that reflect criminal activity. I encourage proactive enforcement based on verbal interactions, solid observations, K-9 alerts, and current case law.

### **Priority 5: Support our Schools, Students, and Parents**

To enhance the safety and security of students and staff in and around schools within Macon County.

The Department of Homeland Security has identified schools as one of the primary, soft targets in communities which can be exploited by individuals or organizations wishing to inflict serious harm to a community. This harm goes beyond a single incident as it affects a community's emotional wellbeing, leaving long-lasting scars. It is incumbent upon our patrol officers to make an extra effort to include time to provide a presence in areas where schools are located.

**Priority 6: Provide Efficient Management of our Detainee Population**

To improve our jail environment and to meet or exceed the basic Jail Standards.

Multiple factors contribute to the direct costs associated with the daily operations of a jail. However, medical requirements of the detainee population significantly affect the funding required to operate our jail and is perhaps the largest challenge for our staff. Our jail, like most others, has become overwhelmed with inmates suffering from mental illness. This increases the stress on our correctional officers and creates a more challenging working environment. The current jail assessments will provide recommendations to improve in the area of medical and mental health, as well as other areas. Even in the face of these challenges, our primary objective remains the safety and well-being of our officers and inmates.

Our At Risk program is one way in which MCSO is trying to provide assistance to individuals who are more likely to benefit from rehabilitation programs than incarceration.

**Priority 7: Support of MCSO Personnel in Public Service Opportunities**

To improve the relationship of MCSO with our community.

Our personnel participate in a number of public events and we are fortunate to have individuals who also take significant responsibility for enacting some of the events. The personal time and effort put forward by all MCSO personnel to be part of our community does not go unrecognized and is appreciated throughout our community and by me personally. These efforts make Macon County a better place to live and provide increased opportunities for our younger population to excel in their own personal development. By participating and supporting these activities, our office represents the true spirit of commitment to improving our community.

**Priority 8: Maintaining Open, Professional, and Respectful Communications**

To ensure our communications with each other are in a fashion that respects each other and keeps those who need information fully informed.

The Sheriff's office should maintain an open door policy to foster good communications at all levels. All employees should be both accountable and transparent in communications both internally and externally. **Open communications does not mean circumventing the chain of command.** Please balance chain of command with open and positive communications.

Our shared efforts in pursuing our mission, values, and priorities will continue to keep MCSO as a leader in the law enforcement field. Our goal should always be to go beyond meeting expectations; we should exceed expectations. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to Macon County.