



## **Police Foundation: Partnerships for 21st-Century Policing**

by Thomas F. Murphy

As the nations' economic difficulties continue, law enforcement executives look to local citizens with an interest in public safety to help offset the costs of resources not covered by tax dollars. And while affluent residents often step forward and make philanthropic contributions, they sometimes come with confusing and conflicting restrictions.

To better address the changing needs of police agencies, many have turned to community leaders asking them to establish a police foundation as a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to solicit donations from the public. Those donations result in tax benefits for the donors and additional funding resources for the police agency.

Police foundations provide a unique vehicle for both major donors and civic-minded citizens to become involved in their local law enforcement efforts. Many potential supporters are wary of telemarketing efforts by unknown fund-raising organizations, but an established police foundation provides a clear, obvious, and trustworthy method to channel support to their local Police department.

It is incumbent upon the foundation to clearly communicate their mission and vision statement which in turn needs to be in synch with the police chief and the needs and requirements of his or her agency.

The first police foundation was formed in 1971 to furnish funds, equipment, services and other resources for the New York City Police Department. Since then, communities of all sizes, both geographic and in terms of sworn officers have formed police foundations to provide valuable and needed assistance. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has recently identified over 100 operating police foundations throughout the United States.

A question often asked by the community is "don't my taxes pay for that?" While taxes do provide for basic police services, some 90 to 95 percent of the department's operating budget is dedicated to salaries and benefits. Police executives are left with

very little to incubate creative strategic initiatives, keep pace with rapidly changing technology, meet time-sensitive needs, and implement vital new projects. A partnership between the police agency and the public, via the police foundation, allows police chiefs to close some of the gap between what their agency has and what they need to operate optimally and promote excellence in policing.

Fund-raising, though not the only value of foundations, is their most important function. The greater their success in attracting contributions, the more effective partners they can and will be to their local police department. Most police foundations however do not engage in telemarketing campaigns. Messages that mislead the public and fees that result in only pennies for the charity are some of the reasons why they avoid telemarketers. They more often rely on direct mail appeals, events and the influence of their board members.

Public-private partnerships for 21<sup>st</sup> century policing are growing in both scope and significance. The tangible results are providing a great amount of assistance to police chiefs in addressing the complexities of today's policing. Foundations grants are timely, flexible and nonpartisan. They help mobilize the community support in non-traditional ways and enhance community understanding of law enforcement initiatives.

Thomas F. Murphy was appointed president of the Palm Beach Gardens Police Foundation, Inc. in 2007. Before helping to form the foundation he was a marketing executive with IBM Corporation and earlier a member of the Nassau County (NY) Police Department.