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## **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 03/16/18

### **Putnam County School Resource Officers**

PUTNAM COUNTY, TN – The Putnam County Sheriff’s Office considers school security to be of the utmost importance. When Sheriff Farris was elected, Putnam County had three School Resource Officers. Putnam County currently has nine, and we will increase that number, as funding becomes available, to include all 11 elementary schools. As of the end of 2017, there are just under 12,000 students enrolled in the 20 schools that comprise the Putnam County School System. School Resource Officers are Sheriff’s Office Deputies. They attend statewide training for School Resource Officers as well as Sheriff’s Office Deputy training which includes county in-service training, where they must qualify with firearms. Our SROs do train with PCSO SWAT, and most of our current SROs are former SWAT operators.

What does School Resource Officer training look like? SROs complete 40 hours of school specific training which can include any or all of the following: foundations of school-based law enforcement, school law, ethics, diversity, violence and victimization (bullying and abuse), threat response and prevention, emergency response (ex: natural disasters), social media, human trafficking, adolescent and teen psychology, and crime prevention (illegal drugs, gangs, etc.) The qualifications for becoming an SRO are that the Deputy must be POST certified for at least one year, have no disciplinary issues, and enjoy working with children.

Each Putnam County SRO is in constant dialogue with their respective school’s student population, instructors, administrators, parents, and school employees. Our School Resource Officers are actively involved in their respective school populations. They attend academic, social, and sporting events, and they make concerted efforts to get to know everyone at their schools.

Sergeant Steve Elrod gives some insight into the mindset of our SROs.

“We are here to protect your children by any means necessary, including giving our own lives. We will not hesitate to meet danger to put a stop it. SROs are always available for students or parents for any situation they may need us for.”

Threat and vulnerability assessments to address ever changing needs for the schools such as security, access, and personnel checks are updated regularly. The Sheriff’s Office strives to determine the credi-

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bility of all leads, approximately 45 annually, to ensure security for our schools. We do not take threatening statements, any kind of actions, or photos lightly. Any student found to be making threatening remarks, we will be working with the District Attorney's Office to prosecute them accordingly.

"This is not only a School Resource Officer issue or a law enforcement issue, but it is a school and community issue. Assessment of the concern, threat or well-being of the student population must be done collaboratively with all concerned parties such as law enforcement, prosecutors and state officials," said Sheriff Eddie Farris.

"We are in constant communication with county leadership, public safety officials across various disciplines and the school system. We consider the lives of students to be the most important resource that we have. They are our future. It is a high priority for us and will remain so. It is one of the highest priorities for us and will remain so. Although events can be tragic, it's important that all concerned parties that have interaction with the student population work together to identify and address any concerns."

Sheriff Farris is looking into the creation of, "Protect Me Program", a program that will utilize retired law enforcement personnel to augment security at local schools. This will include specific and continual training in firearm certifications and have a very defined and specific mission. All personnel utilized will be vetted, trained, and readily identified through use of a designated ID and uniform.

Coordination and teamwork is essential. The public should be mindful that the Sheriff's Office and all safety officials, school administrators, parents, and SROs are always working together to better protect our children. PCSO would like to thank all of the parents and educators who have given tips. This is made possible due to the strong working relationship of our SROs and our student body. It's always better if you see something to say something.

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