

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NORTH

Shaler's Gally heads police chiefs association

By Matt De Reno

When Jeff Gally became an Allegheny County deputy sheriff in 1967, new officers were not given much more than a badge and a gun, he recalled.

As the new president of the Allegheny County Chiefs of Police Association, Gally said he would work to ensure that new officers continue to be better prepared than he was when they hit the streets.

Gally, chief of police in Shaler since 1994, was sworn in Thursday as president of the chiefs association.

He succeeds Chief Jack Lennon of Kilbuck.

The association has 240 members representing 127 municipalities.

Gally, 54, said one of the greatest barriers to effective law enforcement was negative public perceptions of police. Police are too often shown in a bad light by newspapers and television, he said. It is rare when the public meets with police officers on "positive ground," he said.

Programs such as Shaler's Citizens Police Academy, however, will help to dispel misconceptions about the police, he said.



Police Chief Jeff Gally

The academy, similar to programs offered in Wilkesburg and Pittsburgh, is run in cooperation with the chiefs association. It is designed to show residents the kinds of challenges police face on the job.

"We want the public to know who we are, what we do, and why we do it," Gally said.

Twenty-three civilians of varied ages and occupations took part in the eight-week Shaler program, he

SEE NEWS, PAGE NW-2

Shaler's Gally heads county police chiefs association

NEWS FROM PAGE NW-1

said. Police officers, crime lab technicians and lawyers volunteered to instruct about subjects ranging from "The Use of Deadly Force" to "What is Required of a Civilian During an Arrest."

Participants seemed enthusiastic and interested, he said. Sessions scheduled for two hours routinely ran as long as four, he said. Similar civilian academies are being planned by chiefs in other municipalities, Gally said.

Gally is all for using modern technology, and he predicted that municipal costs could be cut by using up-to-date computer, video and surveillance equipment.

Offering one example, Gally said he would like to see introduction of a video arraignment system. Under such a system, district justices would be allowed to conduct the initial proceedings in a criminal case using two-way television cameras. The district justice would never have to leave his office, and the defendant would not have to be transported from jail. This procedure would save thousands of dollars in police travel costs and overtime, he said, and it would release police officers to spend more time on patrol in their communities.

Gally also favors greater use of video cameras in patrol cars. Such devices can protect both police offi-

cers and civilians, he said.

He favors adding sound recorders to patrol cars, but that would require a change in state law. In Pennsylvania it is illegal to record conversations without the consent of all individuals involved.

Most police like having video cameras in their cars, Gally said. Videotapes can be a powerful tool in drunken-driving cases when suspects can be seen stumbling around their cars, he said.

Gally said he regarded Shaler as the best kept secret of the North Hills. He has lived most of his life in the area. Gally and his wife Julie have two children, Jeff and Todd.

Besides his police duties, Gally has played a role in community

affairs.

Gally serves on the advisory board of the Cops for Kids Charities, which raises money for poor children through golf outings and other activities. He also serves on the boards of the Crime Prevention Officials of Western Pennsylvania, Shaler Area Emergency Medical Service and Beatlie Technical School.

Gally joined Shaler police as a patrolman in 1969. He was later promoted to criminal investigator. He was made a lieutenant in 1987 and a captain in 1988.

Matt De Reno is a free-lance writer.