

The Times-Picayune

Rewards offered for those who didn't file
Saturday, May 03, 2008

By Allen Powell II

Crimestoppers is offering citizens \$500 to help local law enforcement agencies locate sex offenders who have failed to keep up with the requirements of Louisiana law.

The new ad campaign was announced Friday by the agency, along with the New Orleans Police Department, the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office and Kenner police. The group released the names, pictures and charges of more than 50 people who have not registered and who will appear in an ad in The Times-Picayune on Monday.

Officials said that it is a struggle to keep up-to-date records on the location of sex offenders, and that 231 people in the three jurisdictions are not in compliance. Often, the individuals do not notify law enforcement agencies about their current addresses or they give bad addresses.

Darlene Cusanza, executive director of Crimestoppers, said the organization is using the ad as a pilot program based on similar programs in other cities. Residents can receive a \$500 reward for information that leads to an arrest. If the initial advertisement is successful, Cusanza said the notices could become a monthly practice.

"This is an important project for us and we hope that the citizens will take this seriously," Cusanza said.

Jefferson Parish Sheriff Newell Normand said his agency welcomes the assistance because Hurricane Katrina has made it difficult to locate and register sex offenders, who are required to keep their information updated. Periodically, law enforcement agencies will try to verify the information given them. However, because of the transience caused by the storm, many offenders have not registered, and their previous addresses are no longer valid, he said.

"We've been struggling for the last couple of years getting our hand around this problem," said Normand, who estimated that about 90 to 100 sex offenders are unregistered in his parish. "We are very excited that Crimestoppers continues to work at innovative ways to assist law enforcement."

Cusanza said the police agencies selected the scofflaws for the advertisement, which will be changed as needed. Authorities said they considered the severity of the offenders' crimes and the length of delinquency in their registration, among other factors, to decide who to include on the list.

Cusanza said the list of names and pictures will remain on the Crimestoppers Web site at www.crimestoppersgno.com. In addition, the names also are available on the Sheriff's Office Web site at www.jpso.com.

.....

Allen Powell II can be reached at apowell@timespicayune.com and (504) 826-3793.