

Chief:

In light of the recent events concerning the troubling information that resulted from the Evan Ebel case, is there anything we can be doing to make our community safer?

Dear Concerned Citizen:

The concerns brought to light in this case are indicative of a system that appears broken; Ebel is only the tip of an iceberg in terms of system failure. There are several opinions as to why our systems are failing. One perspective is that we (criminal justice system) lack the necessary resources to be successful within our systems and approaches. Although I believe there is great truth to this; I would argue that we have also become so caught up in approaching criminal behavior with treatment and mental health programming that we sometimes forget the value of incarceration. This can all be debated, but I think it's perfectly clear to all of us that we can do better.

Let's face it, criminal justice is a business and our business purpose is to keep our community safe. In most businesses, a data-driven approach with measurable outcomes is used to determine success, failure, and opportunity. We are no different; but unfortunately many times we rely on the wrong data sets, such as whether or not an offender successfully completed a treatment program, or a term of probation or parole. Instead, shouldn't we be tracking and evaluating offender data that follows successful completion of programming and when offenders are no longer under supervision? One data set that is valuable is the fact that approximately 50% of offenders released from our state prison system reoffend and return to prison within 3 years of their release? This says a lot about our systems and approaches. There are a multitude of reasons that explain this data point; I would argue that it demonstrates current resources are insufficient and/or said resources are systematically or programmatically ineffective.

To this point, did you know that in Alamosa we have a jail designed for 50 inmates, yet we house about 100 and routinely send another 40 to other county jails at an annual cost of about \$400,000 to \$500,000? What message does this send? Did you know that we have probation and parole officers who are supervising offender caseloads ranging from 20 to 70 offenders each? What type of supervision is really occurring? Did you know that the City of Alamosa has the highest crime rates of comparable-sized cities in Colorado for the last 5, 10, 15 years? Did you know we are unable to provide valuable data concerning recidivism rates of offenders who have been alternatively (no prison) sentenced or treated?

Enough doom and gloom. In Alamosa, opportunities for positive change do exist. Later this year the Alamosa Police Department will be empaneling a public safety advisory task force of local residents (not system stakeholders) for the purpose of brainstorming and identifying possible solutions that can later be shared with systems stakeholders and elected leaders. By taking a data-driven approach and by engaging unbiased minds with differing perspectives; we can make a difference.

As community members, I urge you to send your thoughts and ideas about these topics and our local systems to me directly and I will share them with task force members once we convene. Information can be sent to [cdodd@ci.alamosa.co.us](mailto:cdodd@ci.alamosa.co.us).

Craig Dodd, Chief of Police