Silent Observer

2012 Annual Report

**History**

For the past 40 years, Silent Observer has been a key partner in assisting law enforcement in solving crime. Our track record speaks for itself - more than 2,500 cases have been solved since 1996 through tips to Silent Observer including 40 homicides. Our goals are simple; to help stop, solve and prevent crime and make the greater Grand Rapids area a safe place to live, work and play.

**Program Outcomes**

**In 2012, tips to Silent Observer assisted police in solving 201 crimes.** These cases spanned the entire Kent County community and led to **the arrest of 163** individuals. Seventy nine of these cases took place on school campuses. These crimes may not have been solved had it not been for tips to one of Silent Observer’s anonymous tip lines. Silent Observer received **2056 tips** which is a 4.75% increase over last year. The number of web tips increased by 18% while text tips increased by 32%. Silent Observer **authorized $12,000 in reward money** for crime-solving information called into our tip line.

**Cases Solved**

**Violent Crimes**

Tips to Silent Observer led to the persons responsible for the shooting of a pastor at Streams of Hope Ministry. Additionally six people responsible for 13 armed robberies at three Huntington Bank branches, two Fifth Third branches, My Personal Credit Union, six gas stations and two party stores were solved thanks to Silent Observer tipsters. And, the person who stabbed another man multiple times outside of the Ritz Coney Bar in downtown Grand Rapids was identified through a tip to Silent Observer.

**Robbery**

A Silent Observer tip led police to the man who robbed four motels and hotels in southeast Grand Rapids.

**Fugitives**

Apprehending fugitives and parolees continues to be an important directive of the Silent Observer Program. In 2012, 16 people wanted for crimes such as aggravated assault, aiding and abetting, larceny, home invasion, retail fraud, receiving and concealing stolen merchandise, and sex offenders not in compliance were arrested due to tips called into Silent Observer. Because of these tips, some dangerous criminals are off the streets of the Kent County area.

**Narcotics**

Drug dealing continues to be a problem in this area. Thanks to tips, 23 people were arrested for selling meth, cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. Police were able to remove $214,000 worth of drugs from our streets thanks to tipsters using Silent Observer as their avenue to report crime.

**Fast 50 Campus Program**

Silent Observer’s *Fast 50 Program* is in middle and high schools in 18 different school districts as well as Calvin College and Grand Rapids Community College. Fast 50 tips led to the confiscation of 9 knives, an airsoft gun and drugs like Adderall, Vicodin, Marijuana, LSD, K2, and Spice along with bottles of alcohol.

**Reach of Silent Observer**

Positive tips were confirmed by police agencies including the FBI, the US Marshal Service, East Grand Rapids Public Safety, Grand Rapids Police, Kent County Sheriff Department, Wyoming Police, Walker Police, Metropolitan Enforcement Team, Kentwood Police and Sparta Police. Our goal is to ensure that people have access to Silent Observer whenever they need it. That is why we offer various ways to contact Silent Observer….by phone….by web…by text messaging.

**2012 Overview**

Silent Observer was extremely busy in 2012 as we added some new initiatives and programs to meet the needs of the community members we serve. The events we held include:

**Rock The Mic: Artists Against Violence** - Young people, ages 13-25, were given the opportunity to submit an original song that spoke to the anti-violence movement, respect, healthy living, settling disputes in a positive way, standing up for what is right, self-respect and dignity. All music genres were accepted from rap to hip hop, rock & roll, to the spoken word and a panel of judges narrowed down the field to 10 finalists who performed live at Celebration North Cinemas where the top three winners were announced. Silent Observer launched this project knowing that there was no better way to get an anti-violence message across to young people then to provide young people the opportunity to share this important message with their peers.

**Light The Night Against Crime 5K Run/Walk** – August 9 – Calvin College - Light the Night Against Crime was a fun night for our community to come together and take back the streets of Grand Rapids. Over 175 people participated in this event even though it was raining pretty hard. We received great feedback and the runners/walkers loved the course on Calvin College’s campus. This event was dedicated to solving three tragic unsolved homicides:

• Janna Kelly – disappeared in December of 2007 and was found murdered in March of 2008.

• Erica Sevigny – killed by a hit and run driver in April of 2010

• Lee Priester – shot and killed in July of 2007

**Day of Remembrance and Hope** – Tuesday, September 25 – Silent Observer held a candlelight vigil in remembrance of all victims of crime. We read out loud the names of victims of crime that wanted to be remembered and recognized. A beautiful granite bench was dedicated to all victims of crime and now sits in the courtyard of the Kent County Courthouse. The Prosecutor, Sheriff and GR Police Chief all gave words of encouragement and hope. So many people came out to comfort each other and to remember lives touched by crime. It was a beautiful event.

**Recognition**

Silent Observer was one of WOOD TV’s Finalists for their Connecting With Community Award.

**Fundraising Events**

Silent Observer hosted two events in 2012 with the goals of raising funds for our felony reward program, community outreach activities and increasing tips to our tip line.

**The Coldwell Banker Charity Outing -** Monies raised at this 16th annual event helped Silent Observer continue to play a significant role in keeping Grand Rapids a safe environment in which to live, work and play which is essential to our economic vitality. Silent Observer so appreciates the Coldwell Banker agents who volunteer to host this annual event for us year after year.

**40th Anniversary Gala Event –** November 13, 2012 – Amway Grand Plaza Hotel – Called the “Comeback Tour”, this event featured past roast recipients; Michelle VanDyke, Sarah Smolenski, Diana Seiger, John Canepa, Mike Jandernoa and David Van Andel. Additionally, those giving testimonials about the effectiveness of Silent Observer included Chief Kevin Belk, Larry Johnson (GRPS) and Tom and Ruth Friars (lost two loved ones to homicide).

**Outlook for 2013**

Goals for 2013 include increasing positive tips to our tip lines through outreach to the community, upgrading our web site and social media activities and empowering students to play a role in making their campuses safer.

**Crime Stoppers USA 3rd Annual Training Conference** – August 11-15 – Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. The Kent County Silent Observer Program is privileged to have the opportunity to host the Crime Stoppers USA Training Conference again this year. Because of the excellent training delegates received when we hosted this conference in 2011 and because everyone absolutely loved Grand Rapids, we were asked to host this conference again. Delegates, coming from all over the United States, will include corporate partners, board members, law enforcement personnel, and volunteers all dedicated to running effective Crime Stoppers organizations in their communities. This conference will provide participants a premier training and networking experience. Delegates will come away energized with renewed passion for helping victims of crime in their communities find justice.

**Coldwell Banker 17th Annual Charity Golf Event** – June 19 – Sunnybrook Country Club. This annual event has raised over $240,000 for the Silent Observer Program.

**Rock the Mic: Artists Against Violence** – October 2013. Details to come.

**Silent Observer**

Tip Line – 774-2345

Text A Tip – Text 138 plus your message to CRIMES (274637)

Web Tips - [www.silentobserver.org/reportacrime.asp](http://www.silentobserver.org/reportacrime.asp)

Web site for more information – [www.silentobserver.org](http://www.silentobserver.org)