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COUNTY'S NEW EFFORT TO FIGHT CRIME MADE PUBLIC IN ASBURY PROGRAM OFFERS CASH REWARDS FOR TIPS THAT LEAD TO ARRESTS

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By Jill Bartlett

Monmouth County officials announced their involvement in a national crime prevention program at Tuesday's National Night Out celebration in Asbury Park.

The Monmouth County Crime Stoppers program aims to enable county residents who may be hesitant to contact local police officials about a possible crime with a way to do so anonymously.

Asbury has one of the highest per-capita crime rates in Monmouth County and was chosen as the location for the campaign's initial roll out, said acting Monmouth County Prosecutor Christopher J. Gramiccioni.

"I get that there is a fear of retaliation, I get that, and I understand sometimes there is a distrust of law enforcement. We are here to change that," he said.

Instead of calling local police, county residents can now call, text, or send a tip via the internet on the program's website. The tip is collected anonymously and filtered through a national crimes stoppers network.

"If you are not willing to talk to us," Gramiccioni said, "then talk to the crime stoppers, because they aren't affiliated with us."

While Gramiccioni focused his speech at the National Night Out celebration on the county's desire to get individuals to help solve the Monmouth's 12 unsolved homicides, the crime stoppers program will accept any information about crime or dangerous activity.

"Federal efforts are great, but they start at the local level," he said. "They start with everybody in this town, caring about what's happening in this town."

At the time a citizen provides information to the tip line, they are issued a unique code number to act as their identity, according to one of the program's pamphlets. After the tip is given, callers are then instructed to call back after the tip is investigated. Tipsters who offer information that leads to an arrest can earn up to \$5000 cash, no questions asked.

Dollar amounts will be decided upon by the Monmouth County Crime Stoppers board of directors.

"It all depends on the quality of the tip," Gramiccioni said.

The fund's initial start-up costs were provided by the prosecutor's office, the New Jersey State Policeman's Benevolent Association and other donors. Since the Monmouth program has gained non-profit status, money to fund it will now come from contributions made by businesses and individual citizens, he said.

For more information, visit the **Monmouth County Crime Stoppers** website.

Photo at top: Surrounded by local dignitaries, acting Monmouth County Prosecutor Christopher J. Gramiccioni [holding microphone] announces the county's new crime stoppers program at Asbury Park's National Night Out celebration held in Municipal Plaza.

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