

**2010 Rocky Pomerance Award Winner
Small Agency Size
Gulf Breeze Police Department**

“Coastwatch Program”

Our successful Volunteers in Police Service Program was the basis of a marine **Coastwatch** response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill catastrophe that threatened our community. Based upon the success of using volunteers to drive our marker patrol cars, we expanded the duties to marine patrol. VIPS are trained to operate our boat and are an early warning team to detect oil sheen and globs in the water before it strikes our shore. They also helped prevent theft of floating boom that was been placed to protect the sensitive environmental areas of the city.

Our experience partnering with the community to reduce crime is extraordinary. Volunteers have driven marked Gulf Breeze Police Department vehicles on a daily basis for 5 years to calm traffic, assist motorists and reduce crime. These volunteers have reduced crashes, assisted motorists and directly aided the patrol force as well. Since 2005, citizen volunteers have driven marked Gulf Breeze police vehicles primarily on Highway 98, where the majority of our crashes occur. Their efforts have contributed to a **17.31% reduction** in crashes in the past six years.

The success of our VIPS program spawned our Coastwatch program. It helped prevent the theft or vandalism of the boom has been placed in environmentally sensitive areas of the city. Shortly after the first boom placements, 1800 feet of boom was reported missing. The boom costs \$20 per foot and the supply has been exhausted nationally as 3.5 million feet has been purchased for deployment across the Gulf of Mexico coastline. It was an attractive target and the loss of the boom alarmed our citizenry. Coastwatchers operated the Police boat, were highly visible, in direct communication with our police dispatch, and had GPS. Our Coastwatch checked the boom 3 times a day 7 days a week. They protected the boom, searched for oil approaching the city, and responded to calls of oiled wildlife to confirm reports. By obtaining accurate GPS coordinates, they expedited response.

For more information on Gulf Breeze P.D.’s Coastwatch Program, please contact Chief Peter Paulding at paulding@ci.gulf-breeze.fl.us.