

Sheriff Antionette V. Irving - Responses to Richmond Together 2021 Candidate Questionnaire

1. What motivates you to pursue the Office of Richmond City Sheriff?

I was born and raised in Richmond. My motivation is knowing that I can give back to the city I love. I grew up in Creighton Court, in the same community as many of the people who are in our jail. **I understand the backgrounds** of many of the residents of the Richmond City Justice Center and the communities and challenges they are returning to. I want to provide incarcerated individuals with opportunities to become **productive, contributing citizens**. This is the platform I ran on in 2017, and I have fulfilled this commitment, including **securing \$3.5 million in grant funding for services that include mental health and substance recovery and inmate job readiness**.

2. From your viewpoint, what is the role of the Richmond Sheriff's Office, and what best qualifies you for the role in leading in this office?

The Code of Virginia says that the Sheriff, which is a constitutional office, is responsible for jail administration and service to the courts, including civil process service and court security. The role of the Sheriff's Office and the Sheriff is to **ensure the life, health, and safety of those in the care and custody of the Justice Center**; to ensure that staff members are trained and equipped to perform at the highest level; and to build relationships and partnerships that will help us meet our goal of reducing recidivism and helping residents return to their community as productive citizens. In addition to all of this, our office also provides support services to senior citizens and individuals with intellectual disabilities by making visits to their homes to ensure they are okay.

The role of ensuring life, health, and safety has become my mantra:

LIFE: There have been NO deaths at the Richmond Justice Center during my tenure as Sheriff, which was not the case for the former Sheriff or my opponent, who was one of the former Sheriff's top deputies.

HEALTH: I have been praised by the Virginia Department of Health for my strong, proactive management of the Justice Center response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

SAFETY: Law enforcement agencies nationwide are facing staff shortages, addressed in more detail in these responses. I have maintained the staffing ratios necessary to maintain safety and order in the jail, even if it meant paying overtime that would exceed our baseline budget. I had a decision to make, and I chose safety.

Prior to my first term as Sheriff, I worked at various levels in the Henrico Sheriff's Office including supervision, management, and administration. I worked every job in jail operations. I had over 26 years of law enforcement experience prior to becoming Sheriff of Richmond. I have established excellent working relationships with elected officials, community partner organizations, local clergy, and citizens of Richmond.

I also understand the role of the Sheriff is that of a **servant leader**, building relationships with the people who live in the communities that you serve. Building relationships is not like turning on a light switch when you put on the Sheriff's uniform; it takes time and work. I have been serving my community for decades as a volunteer and board member of the **Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club**. I also started the AVI Foundation in 2004 to help meet the needs of the youth, elderly, and vulnerable citizens in the underserved and marginalized communities in Richmond.

I have also aligned my educational and training with my experience and service. I have a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice; Masters in Administration; and Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration with specialization in Criminal Justice. Many of the residents in jail have mental illness disorders and have experienced childhood traumas because of their family situations and how they grew up. I am also a **certified Trauma Informed Care professional** and trained in **Mental Health First Aid**.

I believe in restorative justice and restoration. I have dedicated my life to serving the community I grew up in and I am dedicated to my profession.

3. How would you describe your management style and style of leadership as it relates to public safety?

I set **high standards and expectations for professionalism, performance, and cooperation** for the staff of the Sheriff's Office. I lead by example and strive to ensure that staff has the training, equipment, and motivation they need to perform their mission safely and at the highest level. The \$3.5 million in grant funding mentioned above includes staff training and safety equipment.

It is especially important to me that the **deputies have a clear path of advancement**. When I was a deputy, I was able to earn my rank, which is why I was the first woman to advance to major in Henrico County for both the Sheriff's Office and the Police Department. It was not easy, but there was a path for me to achieve it. As a leader, I want everyone to know what is expected of them, what they need to do to be good at their jobs, and how to advance their careers. One of the first things that I did as Sheriff was to work with my Human Resource Department to establish a **professional development and career path program**.

4. What should the working relationship between the Mayor's Office, the Sheriff's Office, and other components of the city's government look like?

The Sheriff's office must have a positive and cooperative rapport with the Mayor's office, various offices of the city government, City Council, and the court system to ensure a smooth working relationship and the **accomplishment of our overlapping public safety goals**. I actively cultivate these relationships. I have a particularly good partnership with our Mayor, and I appreciate his confidence in me with his endorsement of my re-election. When I took office, one of my goals was to strengthen the relationship between the Sheriff's Office and the city's government. **For the first time, I ensured that the Sheriff's Office participated in the city's strategic planning process**. We identified the specific objectives of the One Richmond Plan that were critical to the Sheriff's Office and submitted a strategic plan to the Mayor's Office to address them. This office has its first strategic plan since I took office. It is within the city's strategic plan for the first time and we publish the results in our **annual report**.

I understand **one of the best ways to build relationships is to be present**. Prior to the pandemic, I regularly attended City Council meetings to show my support and to also gain first-hand knowledge of the challenges facing the council members. I also meet with the judges, clerks and Commonwealth Attorney regularly to discuss the challenges faced in the courts. Relationship building does not end at the local government level; I meet regularly with the Attorney General's Office to address **collaborative re-entry initiatives**. I also appreciate the confidence our Attorney General Mark Herring as placed in me with his endorsement of my re-election.

5. Who do you view as a role model or leader in the realm of law enforcement or generally and why? What makes a good leader? Are there other jurisdictions in the state that you view as being particularly innovative with their law enforcement and support apparatus?

Sheriff Vanessa Crawford of Petersburg is an excellent leader and role model in law enforcement. We share information, best practices, and partner on community projects.

When I first took office, I also looked to the work of **Sheriff Stacey Kincaid**, who has been the Sheriff of **Fairfax County** since 2014. Fairfax is another large jurisdiction, larger than Richmond and Henrico. I like the resource fairs Sheriff Kincaid put in place that connect inmates with the help they will need to find shelter, employment, medical care, and behavioral health services upon their release. We held similar resource fairs at the Justice Center prior to the pandemic, and I am looking forward to doing them again now that we see a clear path forward with vaccine availability and new guidelines from the CDC.

Sheriff Beth Arthur has been the Sheriff of **Arlington County** since 2000. She continues to focus on programs to enhance substance awareness and staff education and development.

Sheriff Alisa Gregory has been Sheriff of **Henrico County** since 2020. She continues to enhance programming in mental health and substance abuse.

I have also met with **Sheriff David Hines of Hanover**, who has been in office for 30 years. I like the youth programs and partnerships he has initiated.

I have also met with **Sheriff Karl Leonard of Chesterfield**. He has been in office 2014 and works to ensure substance abuse recovery programs are available for residents.

Sheriff Gabe Morgan has been Sheriff in **Newport News** since 2006 and he is committed to service and changing laws to promote justice for all.

Through participation in the **Virginia Sheriff's Association**, my staff and I, share and benefit from best practices and innovations with our counterparts throughout the state. I also look for best practices from jurisdictions beyond the Commonwealth of Virginia. My office is one of only 7 localities in the country that received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, a \$500,000 grant for our Second Chance Re-Entry Program. We **share our best practices with the Justice Department, and we seek best practices from them and from the other localities** in the country that received the grant funding.

6. Please describe your philosophy on law enforcement and what led to your decision to pursue law enforcement as a profession?

Growing up in Creighton Court shaped my drive to succeed in law enforcement and my commitment to give back to the community. I have always believed in **restorative justice and restoration**. Creighton Court is where I became a big dreamer, always wanting so much more out of life, dreaming of the possibilities of what my life could and would be. **Growing up in a home of substance abuse and domestic violence, not knowing or understanding what PTSD was, I knew that I wanted more.** I knew that whatever I was going to be was going to take a lot of work. I feel that it gave me a drive to have a determined work ethic.

This **work ethic** that I learned early in life paid off in college. At the age of 14, I had one coach tell me I would never play for him and would never be a basketball player. I did not allow that to discourage me, but instead it pushed me to work harder to become the basketball player I wanted to be. Eventually I played high school and college basketball and was inducted into the Armstrong High School Athletic Hall of Fame and the Shaw University Athletic Hall of Fame.

With my childhood experience, I understand the importance of **trauma-informed care** in this field. I am a **Certified Trauma-Informed Care professional** with a certification also in **Mental Health First Aid**. I ensure my staff gets this training and it will be a greater emphasis moving forward as we face individuals in our jail who have increased behavioral issues.

7. Sheriff's deputies are exposed to highly stressful situations and environments on a regular basis. What mental health and support resources would you provide or advocate for within the Richmond City Sheriff's Office?

This is an area that is especially important to me. I am **proud of our Human Resource Division** and Community Outreach Division. Our human resource team does an exceptionally good job of ensuring our staff have access to activities and resources to help with stress. We also have **employee appreciation** activities throughout the year to help reduce the stress. In fact, we just expanded our employee appreciation week to two weeks because we recognize the past year has been incredibly stressful for everyone.

We routinely educate our employees about the **mental health care services** that are available to them through the **Employee Assistance Program**, and we encourage employees to take advantage of them. There is no stigma in maintaining good mental health, especially in our profession. I started my weekly Pulse Check videos last year so that I could carve out a specific time to walk around and talk to both my staff and the residents to ensure that people are okay and determine what additional support I need to put in place. Nothing is better than personally talking to the staff and I am being very intentional about that with my **weekly Pulse Checks**. My Human Resource department support my efforts with weekly communications about available services and activities. Our outreach team also encourages our staff to participate in activities within the communities and in schools that serve as support and encouragement to others. **I have committed to increase trauma-informed training for my staff that includes the importance of mental health care for themselves.**

8. Why do you believe so many sheriff deputies abruptly leaving their appointments, and what can be done to better retain them?

This is a complex issue without a simple bandaid fix. Law enforcement has changed, especially over the past year, and the pandemic has exacerbated the situation. **Retention is a growing issue nationwide** for public safety, law enforcement, corrections, public safety, and emergency services personnel. In the environment of the past several years, civil unrest, use-of-force issues, lack of public support, low pay, increases in violent crimes, and the pandemic are contributing factors in many choosing to leave the field and lower numbers entering the field.

All of these factors must be addressed to make this a desirable career path once again. The **Virginia Sheriff's Association** advocates with the Governor and General Assembly to increase salaries, enhance retirement, and improve conditions for deputy sheriffs because it is a growing problem across our Commonwealth.

When I took office in 2018, there were 85 vacancies in the Sheriff's Office. **My turnover rate of 11-12% is lower than the state's average of 25-35%**, which speaks to how big an issue there is currently statewide; it is going to require collaborative, innovative solutions. We are doing many things right, and we continue to enhance our efforts, especially around **mental health support and pay equity**. My deputies are largely African American and people of color. Starting pay in Richmond is 8-10% lower than the starting pay of their counterparts in neighboring jurisdictions. This gap continues throughout their careers. Not only does this impact retention, but it spotlights the larger pay equity problem in our country. It is difficult for some to hear my opinion on this issue, but I can't ignore it. **I will always advocate for my staff to have equity in all areas, including pay equity.**

9. What accomplishments within the Sheriff's office are you most proud of in the past five years? What issues require more consideration?

Since taking office in January 2018, I am enormously proud of the **reduction in deaths, lawsuits, and assaults on inmates or staff as compared to previous administrations. No deaths have occurred in the Richmond City Justice Center during my administration.** The pandemic has compounded an already challenging job, and I am proud to say that through close coordination with the Virginia Department of Health and the commitment of all our staff we have done a very good job. We have **received praise from VDH for our stringent protocols and successful management of COVID-19** among inmates and staff, and our protocols are being used by other facilities statewide. We have created a **robust promotional and training program** to enhance staff development. During my tenure, we have secured **\$3.5 million in grant funding** for mental health and substance recovery, inmate job readiness, staff training, and safety equipment.

A big goal of ours is to assist incarcerated individuals in becoming **home ready, career ready, and community ready**, so I am very proud to see that ex-offenders are leaving the Justice Center with **trade skills** in Serv Safe (food industry), Culinary Arts, Barbering, Cosmetology, Nail Technology, Carpentry, Electrical, OSHA, HVAC, Plumbing, and Landscaping. These are new programs that have started since I took office; some of the residents have even received their certifications. We deliver these programs because of the grant funding that we received since I took office. These new programs are delivered by partners certified in delivering vocational training. **I am proud of this because these programs lead not just to jobs but to careers in the community that will help keep people from coming back to our facility.** I have already secured over \$3.5 million in private, state, and federal grants to address much of this. During my next term, I will continue to seek funding, outside of the budget process, to ensure that people incarcerated in our facility have the opportunity to leave to become productive citizens and not threats to our community.

An issue requiring more consideration is addressing the factors impacting retention as outlined above in question 8.

10. What do you view as the most critical failure at the city's jail and one of the important successes?

One of the **most important successes** recently has been the **management of an unprecedented pandemic**, the impact of which had the potential to be catastrophic. When I look at the problems and deaths that have occurred in facilities across the country, I am immensely proud of our team here at the Richmond City Sheriff's Office. I am happy with the strong relationship we have with our medical provider, Mediko, and the rapport we have with VCU Health Systems and area hospitals. I am pleased

with my decision to reach out and partner with the Virginia Department of Health at the very beginning of the pandemic. We knew that we would not be able to prevent coronavirus from entering the facility, but we could control it and we could ensure people did not get severely ill or die.

The most critical observation at RCJC is identifying the change in incarceration and the individuals housed in the facility. Just as there has been an **increase in violent crimes and behavior in the community**, that same type of behavior is also seen within the facility as individuals make their way through the judicial system. Running a jail is very different from policing in the community. **This presents one of the biggest opportunities for the Sheriff's Office.**

I have been doing this and only this for 30 years. I see a shift in the population of the individuals that we house, and this shift has been dramatic over the past 12-18 months. It coincides with the pandemic and social unrest. There is a shift in the type of offenders who come into our facility. In Richmond, we have had an increase in violent, gun-related crimes over the past year or more. The individuals that are coming through our doors are more violent and have a disregard for human life. We are encountering more individuals who do not think through the consequences of their actions, but justify such actions. **The nature of the work we do has changed and we must change with it as well. The types of programs that we offer must be innovative and targeted to reach these individuals. A return to past styles of jail management is not the answer.**

I am taking a **three-step approach** to address this. First, I am reaching out to the Mayor to ensure I am **at the table with him, the Police Chief, other city leaders, and the community** to address this issue. Secondly, I am **going beyond Richmond for answers**. My office already has **positive attention from the U.S. Justice Department**, and I am leveraging that to identify facilities in other cities that are facing the same issues to collaborate with them, starting with the other 6 facilities in the country that received the same federal grant that we received for our re-entry program. Additionally, my third initiative is to **partner with someone who has specifically been successful with this population**. We must get to the root cause of these issues and behaviors in order to understand how the environment and trauma have impacted individuals and will continue to impact them and others, if not revealed and addressed.

A few years ago I established a relationship with **Andre Norman, a former gang leader who has completely transformed his life** and is now a lecturer at Harvard University and the London Business School. More importantly, he has developed a highly successful program to address the problem that we are facing. His **Academy of Hope** is globally recognized as a **best practice program to reduce violence in incarceration facilities**. In particular, his program in South Carolina DOC has been particularly successful in not only dramatically reducing violence, but also in transforming individuals. Andre Norman has visited our facility as a speaker for community leaders as well as the inmate population. I am bringing Andre and his program to the Richmond City Justice Center. We are currently finalizing the structure of the program, which will be customized to meet the needs of our facility and our population. Andre will be here on June 14 to establish the **program that will start on July 12, 2021.**

Additionally, the **vocational and educational programs** that we implemented over the past two years are successful for individuals who are ready for that type of programming. They are learning trades, getting their GEDs and vocational/trade certifications, and leaving our facility ready for careers. That is our success; however, our greatest lesson is recognizing that our current re-entry program does not meet the overall needs of the population. We need something different. We need some more. I am looking forward to bringing the Academy of Hope to Richmond City Justice Center.

11. What are your public safety priorities in Richmond?

One of the greatest public safety priorities over the past year has been to ensure that we do everything we could do to **contain the pandemic** within our facility and help reduce the spread in the community. We did this through ongoing testing, quarantining residents, and offering the vaccine to residents and staff on our premises. Moving forward, we need to continue to **protect our most vulnerable citizens** from victimization. We do a lot of work in this area with two of our programs, the **Are You Okay Program** and the **Project Lifesavers Program**, where we provide services to the elderly and to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Another major public safety concern is **substance abuse**, particularly the opioid epidemic. We offer a safe place for people to dispose of prescription medications, with no questions asked. We also partner with **Richmond Behavioral Health Authority** and with **OAR-Richmond** to provide **mental health services** to the residents. It is voluntary; however, we offer the services to everyone. We also implemented a new **substance abuse recovery program, GRACE.**

I also think it is important to mention that we find many of our **homeless population are also vulnerable**. We partner with agencies to provide emergency shelter to homeless citizens, especially when low temperatures threaten their lives.

And finally, we need to stop the recycling of people with criminal behaviors. We must address the behaviors while we have them in the facility by providing them with our programs. People with criminal behaviors and dysfunctional attitudes tend to escalate and that poses a constant threat to public safety. These behaviors create an environment of discomfort for others within the facility. **In many ways, our facility is the last or even best opportunity for some of the residents to get access to education, vocational training, mental health care, substance recovery programs, and connection to services that will aid them in being successful upon release.** We are not going to have success with every offender; however, we need to provide access to a second chance to each of them. **We are doing that, and I want to continue doing it and build on our successes in my second term.**

12. What do you view or understand to be the primary reason the Richmond City Sheriff's Office has seen cost overruns within its budget?

To provide context, I will make the distinction between our operational budget, which has not seen cost overruns, and our overtime budget, which has seen overruns **in the interest of maintaining safe staff-to-inmate ratios**. When I took office, we had a vacancy rate of 85 deputy positions and overtime spending was minimal because it was not available for staff members. **I believe that staff members need to be paid for working, especially outside of their normal work hours.** The overtime budget is less than 10% of the funding needed to ensure that inmates and staff are safe. **I will not sacrifice the lives of anyone.**

This was one of the first things that I addressed with the Mayor and the Chief Administrative Officer when I took office because I knew what the ratio of deputies to inmates needed to be to run the office effectively, and we did not have enough funds in our initial budget. I have been very vocal from day one about this. **You cannot reduce the staffing ratio to meet the budget and have a commitment to the life, health and safety of the residents and the staff. Abandoning safe staffing levels could ultimately prove to be more costly than the budget overages necessary to uphold them. This is not "wasting taxpayer money" as my opponent refers to it, but in fact is just the opposite.**

To meet the safety guidelines required overtime, and that was not built into the budget. In my second and third year, I submitted a request for a budget that more accurately reflects the staffing needs for an office of our size. I am not naïve; I also understand that the City cannot increase my budget immediately. I continue to advocate for a larger budget for this office. In the meantime, I am very transparent with where the shortfall is occurring. It is with the overtime to meet the staffing ratio needs. We manage the funds that we receive from both the state and the city very carefully. **We continue to be audited and we receive the top audit scores for our financial management process.**

In addition, I identified other financial resources to pay for programs, training, and safety equipment needs that we do not have in the budget. My office does an exceptionally good job at that. We have secured over **\$3.5 million in federal, state, and private grant funding**. In addition, we also obtain grants for things in the budget, such as weapons and vests. When we get funds from other sources to cover these expenses, then the funds that we had in the budget go back to the city.

I welcome questions and conversations about the budget, but it has to be considered in its complete context, not misrepresented for a soundbite opportunity. In fact, the more dialogue we have about this as a community, the closer we will get to obtaining the financial resources we need. With that said, it is also important to recognize the funds that we save the city by identifying other financial resources to provide programs and meet the day-the-day needs of the Justice Center.

13. As Sheriff, how would you increase access to drug treatment for people charged and convicted of low-level offenses?

Growing up in a home with substance abuse, **I understand how important access to drug treatment is. Grant funding and community partnerships are our main methods for increasing access to substance recovery.** During my tenure we have secured \$3.5 million in grant funding that included mental health and substance recovery. We have also established **over 250 community partnerships** to help prepare residents of the jail for re-entry into the community, including substance recovery. Two of our strongest partners are **Richmond Behavioral Health Authority** and **OAR-Richmond**. We work in

collaboration with them to provide our **Mental Health Program**. We also introduced our **GRACE program, which focuses on substance recovery**. The pandemic has impacted our ability to provide in-person programming and we are eager to return to more robust in-person programming.

14. Do you support sending young offenders to restorative justice programs and other avenues that divert young people out of the juvenile justice system and toward new opportunities? If so, what would you do as Sheriff to promote these programs?

Yes, I do support such programs. I have been a longtime supporter of restorative justice and I am a **past president of the Virginia Center for Restorative Justice**. Participating as a **community facilitator in diversion programs and alternate solutions** is an important goal of my administration. I speak on this topic in the community and I want to continue to be at the table to bring about this needed change.

15. Do you support civilian oversight of law enforcement? How would you encourage community participation in law enforcement oversight? Many people are too intimidated to go into a Sheriff's Office to file a complaint. How would you reduce this barrier to community feedback?

I support thorough review of incidents to ensure that all individuals are treated humanely and fairly. I encourage community collaboration and participation that focuses on the betterment of the community and not on perpetuating negative relationships between law enforcement and citizens.

To reduce barriers to community feedback, we must continue to build rapport and trust through visible, positive participation in community and school events. Also, the publicly accessible prescription medication disposal unit in the lobby of the Richmond City Sheriff's Office provides a **helpful and non-threatening introduction to our office** for many citizens. The disposal unit was secured under my administration by a grant from CVS.

Prior to the pandemic, we trained volunteers about our services, programs, and the operations within the facility so that they could be **informed advocates**. We reduced volunteer access during the pandemic; however, with the Governor lifting the restrictions, we look forward to the volunteers returning to the facility. Also, I want to address new approaches regarding accountability discussed over the past year. **I am looking to neighboring jurisdictions and to our own Richmond Police Department to identify best practices and to collaborate on initiatives.** Additionally, I am conversing with community leaders and advocate groups to enhance awareness of what we do at the Sheriff Office and how we address concerns of inmates and family members.

16. Do you support rehabilitation programs in prison, jail, and in the local community? If so, how would you advocate to continue expanding funding for these programs in our current environment?

Absolutely, **re-entry and recovery programs are the cornerstone of my mission** as Sheriff. Advocacy for funding from the Commonwealth is accomplished by my relationship with the **Attorney General's Office and other grant sources**. During my tenure, we have secured **\$3.5 million in grant funding** that includes **mental health and substance recovery and inmate job readiness**. I am proud of the new **Second Chance Re-Entry Program** I was able to introduce and the **vocational certification programs** that can lead to careers for individuals when they are released.

I very recently established a new relationship with **LiUNA**, which is a trade union. They have endorsed my re-election and I am looking forward to working with them to identify specific jobs for individuals upon release. **I am pleased to continue the programs we have in the community and with groups and organizations that support rehabilitation programs.**

We have worked diligently to continue our programming virtually during the pandemic. The pandemic will be behind us soon and we will be ready with more in-person programming.

17. What is your opinion of the national debate about law enforcement, particularly the call to "defund police?"

Defunding the police will not achieve the desired goal because it will reduce the availability of the **training resources needed to ensure the humane treatment of all citizens**. Increasing funding for training and non-policing forms of public safety is needed in addition to building better relationships with the community.

We need to take a collaborative approach that includes **social services, law enforcement, education, health services, and the community**. I want to be at the table, and I want to be an active agent to bring change to how we do policing and law enforcement overall.

I grew up in Creighton Court, a public housing community right here in the City of Richmond. I know just how much we need police reform. I know profiling is real, and I know there is a real threat to black and brown lives. We need real reform that includes **reallocating funding within law enforcement to address training and de-escalating measures** as well as addressing other areas within the system that need funding too. **We need to ensure that mental health and social services are an active part of solving issues and work with law enforcement and public safety.**

18. As Sheriff, how do you guide your office in managing the intersection between mental health and crime?

We currently have a **mental health program (CHANGE)** within the Richmond City Justice Center. The program, thanks to a \$500,000 grant that we have, specifically provides mental health resources and services. Many of the individuals incarcerated suffer from mental health issues. **If they leave without addressing their mental illnesses and/or their substance abuse, they will be back.**

19. What resources do you provide to incarcerated persons to reintegrate them into the community to ensure a safe transition and prevent future arrests?

We have secured **significant grant funding and community partnerships** to provide the **mental health and substance recovery and inmate job readiness programs** necessary for successful re-entry into the community as contributing citizens. The wrap-around services include education, employability skills and vocational training, financial literacy, health and human services, housing, and transportation.

I should also mention that **the process to establish a partnership with our office is relatively easy**; however, it does require providing information about your program or services and capacity. Then we must document an official agreement. Not only is this a **good business practice**, but we are required to have an official process in place because our programs are grant funded. We must provide monthly reports about our programs and the partners to the agencies providing the funding. Sometimes potential partners do not understand the process, but we cannot risk our funding by not performing a **due diligence process** for the partners we use.

20. How can the Sheriff's Office play a more active role in providing housing and job opportunities for post incarceration?

I grew up in the Creighton Court housing project and believe it is time to go back to their original intent as temporary housing while residents receive vocational and education training that will equip them to move elsewhere. **The employment training and skill development starts for incarcerated individuals while they are at the Justice Center.**

21. The events of the past year have shown a spotlight on the growing deficit of public trust in the work of our city's prosecutors, police, and their relationships with the community. How would you approach these concerns and use your role to rebuild trust in the community?

We must continue to build rapport and trust through **visible, positive participation in community and school events**. For example, each year I host a **Day of Hope**, where we bring the community and faith leaders to the Sheriff's Office on January 1, a day that we can all come together to have compassion. Although the public could not join us this year in-person, we did invite our faith leaders and we aired the event virtually for the community.

We do **outreach activities** to provide support to the community, especially with the youth. Each week, my office performs community outreach. This was especially the case prior to the pandemic, but we continue to do it in a virtual environment. Not only did we participate in various walks and events, but we also hosted events for the community, including our annual Halloween **"Trunk or Treat"** festival, where we have dozens of agencies and businesses in our parking lot with us to show the kids we care. We have a similar event for **back to school to give out supplies** and during the **holidays to give out toys and**

food supplies. This turns our facility into a community support center, something more than a just a place where we jail people. We have become an important part of the community through growing partnerships, which is required for building trust of those in the community.

I have held public forums at our Justice Center featuring **panels with others in law enforcement and prosecutors.** These are opportunities to have direct dialogue. Even during the pandemic, I continue to participate in these types of activities to talk to the community virtually.

I have also invited our non-profit partners to our facility not only to learn about what we do, but also to participate in training when we have speakers. Again, it is about **building relationships and building trust.**

I've been criticized by my opponent's campaign for participating in community events, but it takes leaders within law enforcement being present and visible and talking to people about what we do and getting their feedback. When I first took office, people told me not to give out my direct telephone number. I disagreed with that. **How can I build a relationship with the community if the people do not have access to me?** Being present and providing access are critical to building trust with the community. **Presence in the community is important all the time.**