
The Posse and Reserves

Track Down “Deadbeat Parents”

“We have a responsibility to do whatever we can to make deadbeat parents live up to their obligations.”

*Sheriff Joe Arpaio
Maricopa County,
Arizona*

Unfortunately, many of our families today are in trouble. Half of all married couples divorce. Half our children are growing up in single-parent homes. Kids are dropping out of school or getting involved in gangs and drugs. Juvenile violence is at an all time high.

Among the things so harmful to the family unit today is the parent who, though ordered by the court, shirks his or her financial responsibilities, leaving the spouse and children strapped for money or destitute. These people are called “Deadbeat Parents” and the Maricopa County Sheriff sends out his posse and reserve volunteers to find and arrest them.

In this program, the posse and reserves work closely with the Warrants Division. Once an operation is initiated, the posse, reserves and deputies begin backgrounding the suspects. They research where he or she has lived in the past, who the friends and

associates are, and who the previous employers were. They also contact the Motor Vehicle Department and the Department of Economic Security; run a criminal history check; and review the jail and prison rosters all in an effort to locate the suspect and know what they’re walking into when they go to make an arrest. Backgrounding the suspect is time consuming but vital. It ensure everyone’s safety and success in locating the parent.

On the day of the operation, the county is divided into sections and the warrants are divided among the teams of posse and reserves according to location. Perhaps because of the nature of the operation, perhaps because many of our volunteer are parents themselves, our “Deadbeat Parent” sweeps are popular with posse members. Frequently as many as 150 volunteers show up to participate.

Most “Deadbeat Parent” operations begin early in the morning hours to heighten the probability of the suspect being home. Teams depart at a set hour and are expected back with the first wave of arrests within a two or three hour period.

Once the suspect is located and arrested, the team of posse and reserves transports

the arrestee to a centrally located command center where all the processing and booking is done. Once enough suspects are rounded up, they are then transported to the county jail.

The roundups usually attract quite a bit of local media attention. The Sheriff encourages the media coverage saying that the embarrassment of being portrayed on television as a “deadbeat parent” may make some of them live up to their duties as parents.

Each operation initiated by Sheriff Joe Arpaio has so far netted between 25 and 60 arrests.

“We do a lot of excellent posse programs here, but few are more popular with the public than this one,” Arpaio says. “This operations cuts to the hear of nearly everyone.”

“No one likes an irresponsible Mom or Dad,” the Sheriff says, “so if we can help society, especially kids, by making deadbeat parents live up to their obligations, then that’s exactly what we should do.”