



2024

PENNINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF ANNUAL REPORT

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SHERIFF'S MESSAGE



It remains my great honor to serve as your sheriff, making public safety our top priority while the county continues to grow. Our deputies are proactive and continue to actively engage with citizens. This year we saw a decline in nearly every major crime category and we remain focused on strategies to address incarceration and addiction with our “hand up” versus “hand out” philosophy.

At the Care Campus, we are reducing Safe Beds while increasing Detox services for the addicted homeless population. We are holding clients accountable for their behavior, not tolerating aggression towards staff or destruction of our facility.

Our efforts to address recidivism in the Pennington County Jail with the IGNITE (Individual Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education) initiative are full steam ahead with the new Sheriff’s Work Program and expanded jail education offerings.

Moving forward, we need to address expansion at the Pennington County Jail. We have \$35 million worth of infrastructure issues in the existing towers. Our jail population has been over operational capacity since 2014 and Pennington County has outpaced national population growth. We simply cannot afford to delay the expansion of our facility, and it is essential that we do it correctly.

We are grateful the Pennington County Commission allowed us to implement a new wage scale, prioritizing competitive wages for the men and women who serve in the Pennington County Sheriff’s Office. This allows us to hire and retain unparalleled employees.

Finally, I thank the men and women who serve our community at the Sheriff’s Office and remain grateful for our community’s unwavering support!

Sheriff Brian Mueller

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Care Campus Director Tony Verchio, Administrative Assistant Steph Born, Chief Deputy Willie Whelchel, Sheriff Brian Mueller, Chief Deputy Mark Hughes, Jail Commander Corey Brubakken, JSC Commander Joe Gutierrez

Employees by Division

Jail:
178

Law Enforcement:
138.75

Juvenile Services Center:
52.25

Care Campus:
71.5

24-7 Sobriety:
7.5

Pivot Point:
3

TOTAL 451



Accountants Sammi Tivis, 24/7 Program and Search & Rescue; Courtney Rehberg, Law Enforcement; Jessica Mooney, Jail; Lyne Banning, JSC; Melissa Reckling, Care Campus; Mikki Mogensen, Jail

Pennington County

Population: 115,903 (Census)
156,329 MSA (Elevate)

Area: 2,784 square miles

Median Age: 39.6 years

Individual Median Income: \$38,951

Median Household Income: \$67,823

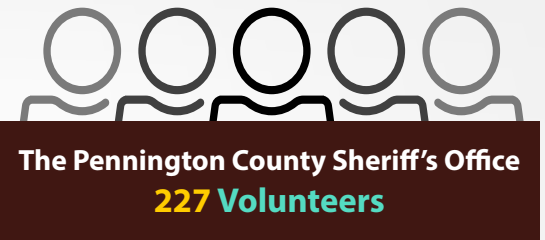
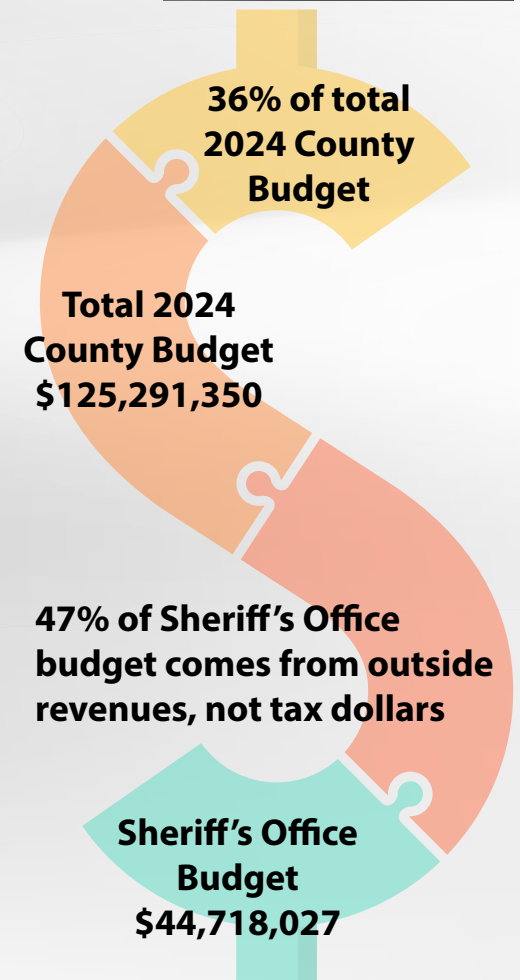
Median Home Price: \$210,900 (Sept 2023)

Persons in Poverty: 16,574 or 14.3%

Education: 94% high school diploma
33% bachelor's degree or higher

* Source: US Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1 Year Estimates, Elevate Rapid City

PENNINGTON COUNTY ABOUT US



YEAR IN REVIEW 2024



Big community show of support for law enforcement over the July 4th holiday



Sheriff's Office handles pre-evacuations at First Thunder Fire in August



Jeremy Danley and Sherin Harris launch Sheriff's IGNITE Work Program

AWARDS 2024



Taylor Muhlbeier, National Certified Corrections Supervisor Certification



Nicholas Graese, Savanna Warren
National Certified Corrections Supervisor Certification



Abraham Wheeler
Respect for Law Optimist Award



Baron Juhl
2024 Patrol Deputy of the Year



Jail Staff 2024
NIJO Detention Facility Innovation Award



Joe Gutierrez
Liberty Bell Award



Pennington County Jail
JailCon24



Kurt Clark, Zachary Hackman
Meritorious Service Award



Brian Blair
Citizen Award



Kurt Clark
Nat'l Certified Corrections Supervisor

PATROL



CAPTAIN KRAIG WOOD In 2024, the patrol section focused on proactive community engagement, maintaining the highest standards while ensuring public and employee safety. This approach led to increased traffic enforcement and education for our citizens. The same proactive efforts also appear to have played a role in reducing misdemeanor and felony crimes, making Pennington County safer overall.

Patrol sergeants and deputies met every goal set for them at the start of the year. The captain and lieutenants are extremely proud of the deputies' dedication and strong work ethic in serving the community.



All patrol deputies cross deputize as deputy coroners

CALLS FOR SERVICE



Sheriff visits with patrol on July 4th holiday

Calls for Service 2024

Citizen Initiated	22,590	Drones Deployed	26
Deputy Initiated	37,049	Warnings	5,497
Arrests	3,844	DUI	283
Case Reports	4,776	Community Policing	4,539
Vehicle Stops	11,780	Warrants Served (by Patrol)	2,813
Citations	1,297		

Fatality Accidents

Car/Pedestrian	0	Motor Vehicle	7*
Motorcycle	4	UTV/ATV	0

**12 Fatality Deaths – 2 in one accident*



Deputy Jim Waldrop gives free "pay it forward" holiday ticket to appreciative motorist



Amazingly no injuries in a roll-over after a packed vehicle loses its brakes

BOAT/UTV MOTORCYCLE RALLY

Boat/UTV Patrol

Deputies enjoy summer months patrolling Sheridan Lake, Pactola Reservoir and Black Hills trails, helping when needed and ensuring citizens follow the laws on land and water.

We spent over 200 hours this summer patrolling trails and lakes in Pennington County.

These patrols helped support incidents such as missing persons, special events, and organized enforcement operations. The overall goal is to ensure citizens and visitors are safe while enjoying the beauty of Pennington County.

274 Contacts made
14 Warnings
0 Citations



After rescuing a family, Deputy Chaz Foss and Sergeant Gordon Larsen look for sunken boat in Pactola Reservoir



Deputy Jordan Decker, Patrol Sergeant Amanda Swanson and Deputy Jonathan Zamora during rally in Keystone

Sturgis Rally Recap (August 4-12)

Pennington County Rally Tally	2022	2023	2024
Calls for Service	1,242	1,188	1,481
Motorcycle Accidents	13	29	35
Injury	9	23	17
Non-injury	4	6	18
DUI Arrests	4	3	12
Fatalities	1	1	1

CENTRAL STATES FAIR

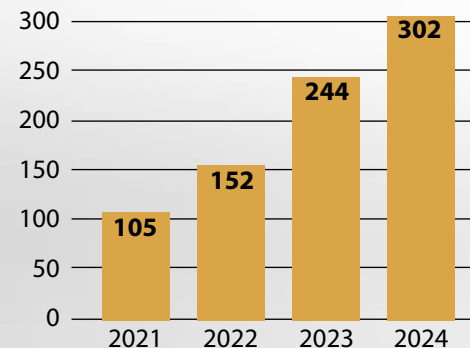


The 2024 Central States Fair saw large crowds with a significant law enforcement presence to ensure the family-friendly event was a safe and fun environment for all attendees. Proactive policing, in partnership with the Rapid City Police Department, Court Services and Central States Fair staff and security, helped maintain low incident numbers with little to no impact on the event.

Central States (August 16-24)

Calls for Service	302
Assault	44
Suspicious behavior	20
Subject and vehicle stops	20
Fight	16
Medical call	13
Lost child/missing person	12
Disturbance	8
Alcohol/Intoxication	6

Comparison Calls for Service



Deputy Herra enjoys patrolling and working with youth at the fair



First Responders are recognized at the PRCA rodeo



A big contingent of deputies and police officers work busy nights at the fair

CONTRACT COMMUNITY HILL CITY



Hill City has its roots in the Black Hills mining rush. Founded in 1876, it is the oldest community in Pennington County. The discovery of gold in nearby French Creek prompted homesteaders to form a settlement beside Spring Creek. Although little gold was found, this town with under 1000 people thrives on tourism, timber, and wineries.

Three Deputies and a School Resource Officer are assigned to Hill City. Our four contract communities are a cost savings to Pennington County taxpayers and taxpayers in each community. It's a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Deputies James Waldrop, Doug Kimball, Keith Fenner, Chaz Foss

CONTRACT COMMUNITY KEYSTONE

Keystone is a town in the Black Hills with a population of 240. It had its origins in 1883 as a mining town, and has since transformed itself into a resort town serving the needs of the millions of visitors to the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, which is located just beyond the town limits. Deputy Chris Lindquist serves in Keystone year-round. A second Deputy is added during the summer months.



CONTRACT COMMUNITY NEW UNDERWOOD



New Underwood got its start circa 1906, named after cattleman John Underwood. The economy still revolves around agriculture but now is also home to the state's largest solar farm. Deputy Jeff Jones lives and works in New Underwood, a town of 660 residents. A School Resource Officer is stationed in New Underwood School.

Wall was platted in 1907 when the Chicago and North Western Railroad was extended to that point. The town was incorporated in 1908, named for the “natural wall” in rock formations by the Badlands National Park. Wall is most famous for the Wall Drug Store, which opened as a small pharmacy in 1931 during the Depression, but eventually developed into a large roadside tourist attraction. Four Deputies are assigned to Wall, a city of approximately 700 residents.



Catlyn Cordell, Andrew Nyblom, Brian Austin, Will Christopherson

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS



CAPTAIN DUSTIN MORRISON: I am proud of the men and women in the Criminal Investigations Division (CID). Our team again stepped up in big ways in 2024. We pride ourselves on taking a victim-centered approach, meaning we prioritize the rights, safety and well-being of victims. We start by believing and treating those we serve with empathy and respect.

The CID team consists of a lieutenant, four sergeants, 15 investigators, two victim specialists, a crime intelligence analyst, a computer forensic examiner, an investigative assistant, three Rapid City Police Department detectives who assist with domestic violence and sexual assault cases, and a staff assistant.



Back row: Scott Sitzes, Kiley Kintigh, David Dross, Marc Davies, Jesse Fagerland, Damon Baker, Joe Lupher, Parker Frederick, Ethan McManigal, Morgan Slanina, Clayton Johnson. Front: Alix Whittle, Rio Shearer, Josie Frank, Becky Elger, Paul Stevens, Dustin Morrison, Jorge Salas, Brittany Vogel, Catlyn Cordell, Karen Olson, Thomas Mossman

Pennington County Sheriff's Office Crime

	2022	2023	2024
Murder	1	2	1
Sexual Assault	51	71	49
Aggravated Assault	82	70	82
Robbery	1	2	3
Burglary	55	77	58
Theft	333	316	253
Stolen Vehicles	46	47	29
Assault on LE	55	40	42

Overall Crime Data in Pennington County

	2022	2023	2024
Murder	9	7	10
Sexual Assault	263	260	216
Aggravated Assault	601	578	597
Robbery	70	104	92
Burglary	538	531	415
Theft	3,054	3,157	3,180
Stolen Vehicles	537	541	397
Assault on LE	166	162	154

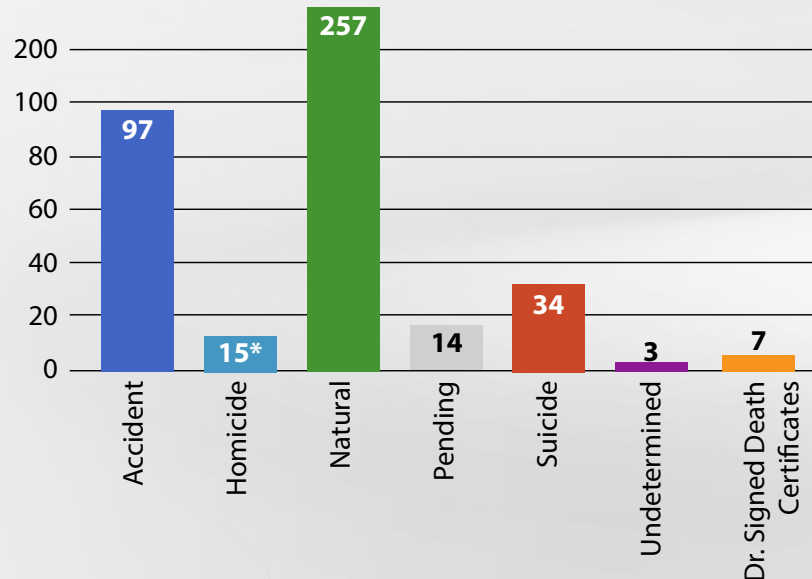
(includes Box Elder, Rapid City and Pennington County combined)

Domestic Violence

2022	2023	2024
1,854	1,690	1,690

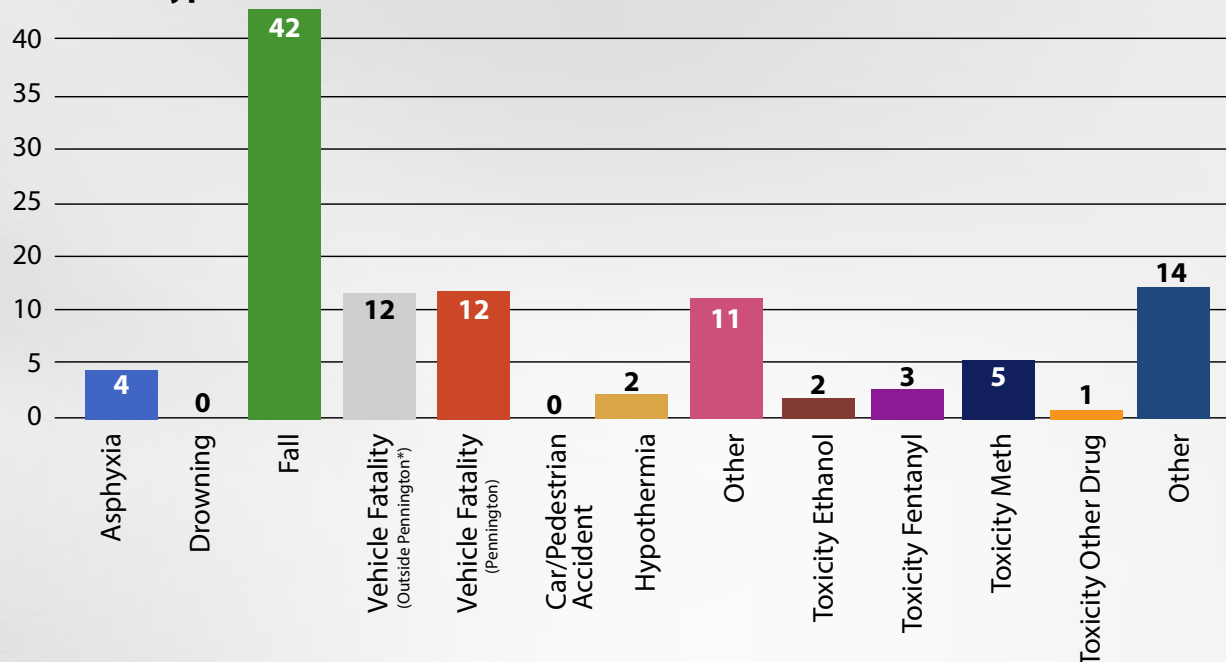
(Single cases including Box Elder, Rapid City and Pennington County)

Coroner Cases by Types



*10 Homicides in Pennington County and 1 Officer Involved Shooting in Pennington

Accident Types



*Monument Hospital in Rapid City is a regional hospital. Many decedents are transported to Monument Hospital that pass away requiring coroner review from the Sheriff's Office.

INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN



SPECIAL AGENT BRIAN FREEOUF The Pennington County Sheriff's Office assigns Investigator Jodi Glasgow and Forensic Analyst Hollie Strand to the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force. This task force is among 61 in the nation that investigates and prosecutes perpetrators who exploit children online.

The local task force is led by the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigations and includes the Rapid City Police Department. They work closely with local law enforcement, and federal partners like the FBI, Homeland Security and the US Attorney's Office.

The team faces challenges with evolving technology, encryption and large data loads, but through ongoing training and innovative techniques, they continue to protect children in our community and region.

204 **20**
Cases **Arrests**

ICAC Case Examinations

500 Devices
80 Terabytes data

Community Outreach

50 presentations
Approximately 5,000 attendees



Forensic Analyst Hollie Strand, Special Agents Adam Egger and Brian Freeouf, Investigator Jodi Glasgow, Detectives Elliott Harding and Matt Almeida



UNIFIED NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT TEAM



Confiscated meth, heroin and mushroom candy bar

SERGEANT THAD MASON

The narcotics situation remains similar to previous years. Meth is still the most commonly abused drug in our community, while fentanyl continues to be a major concern, arriving in larger quantities. Although reported overdoses seem to be decreasing, we suspect this is due to the wider availability of naloxone, allowing users to recover without seeking emergency help.

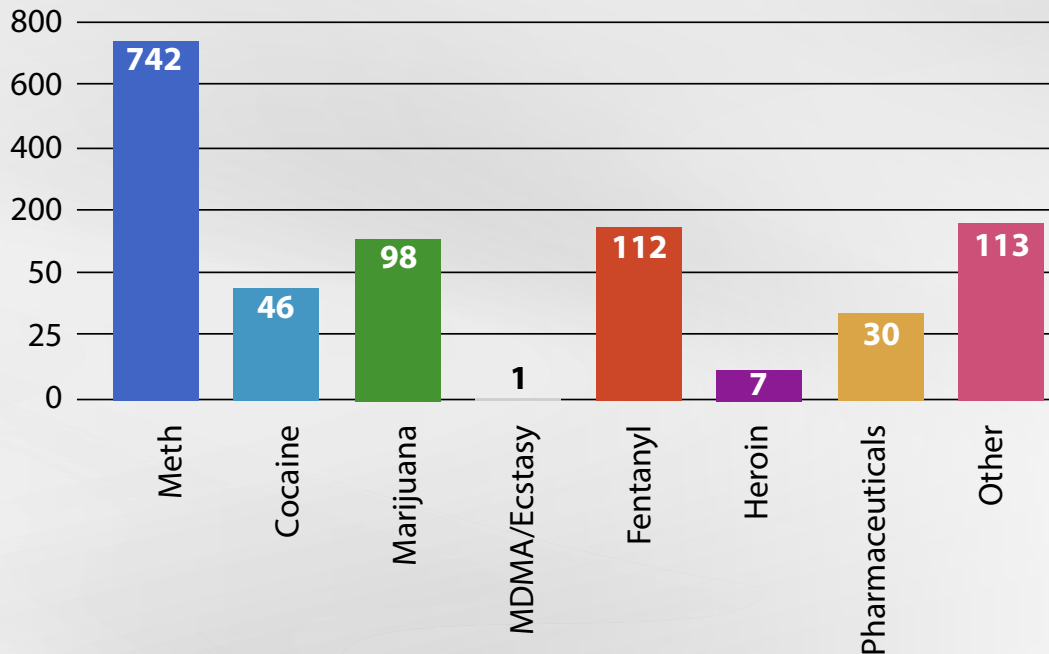
UNET has been working hard to hold fentanyl dealers accountable. When their actions result in a death, it leads to separate charges in federal court. Over the past year, UNET has successfully prosecuted multiple individuals in

federal and state courts for fentanyl-related deaths, with most receiving sentences of 20+ years.

This year we have seen out-of-state groups collaborating with locals to establish drug trafficking operations. UNET has been relentless in identifying and dismantling these groups before they become entrenched.

Search warrants executed	165
Cash seized	\$308,011
Real property seized	\$78,000
Firearms seized	48

2024 Arrest by Drug



Confiscated cash from drug investigation

VICTIM SPECIALIST PROGRAM

THE PENNINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE Two victim specialists work out of the joint Criminal Investigations Division of the Pennington County Sheriff's Office and the Rapid City Police Department. They work with victims of violent crimes and become involved at or near the time of the crisis event. Victim Specialists work to address immediate needs, navigate the criminal justice system and help start a victim's unique healing journey. Our Victim Specialists partner with other local system-based advocates, community-based advocacy and support agencies.

345 TOTAL VICTIMS

315 assigned cases

VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS

- Crime victim compensation applications
- Emotional support and safety services
- Emergency assistance: food, clothing
- Transportation and housing needs
- Criminal/civil justice court system advocacy
- 911 cell phones and security cameras
- Community presentations



Victim Specialists Jeanne Mann and Rebecca Elger



Great response in cell phone drive for victims



Domestic violence awareness campaign with local coffee shops



Domestic violence awareness month in October with partner agencies

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS



SERGEANT JEREMY MILSTEAD oversees the Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer (SRO) program. SROs play a key role in the schools of Rapid City, Douglas, New Underwood, and Hill City, partnering with each district to ensure safety, provide education, and serve as positive role models. Along with their regular duties, they are increasingly focused on addressing online safety and social media concerns.



Box Elder Officer Jason Brown, Deputies Jayson Herra & Abraham Wheeler at Douglas



Deputy Cody Rhoden teaches back-to-school safety at New Underwood



Deputies Keith Fenner, Chaz Foss in Hill City Schools



Rover Ryan McMurray moves to schools as needed



Deputy Abigail Pi at East Middle School



SROs at Rapid Valley's Trunk or Treat



Thad Schmit in costume at Stevens

SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM

THE SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM was called on five separate situations to assist with high risk incidents in 2024. The team's mission is to save lives and safely resolve dangerous situations with the minimal amount of force necessary.



The Special Response Team includes members of the Pennington County Sheriff's Office (PCSO), Rapid City Police Department (RCPD), Rapid City Fire Department and Emergency Services Communication Center. They work closely with the South Dakota Highway Patrol SWAT Team. RCPD Captain Andy Becker is the team's commander and PCSO Captain Taylor Sperle is the team's deputy commander.



2024 Pistol Permit Applications

Received	1,534
Denied	52
Regular Permit	1,257
Enhanced	218
Gold	7

South Dakota is a Constitutional Carry state, but obtaining a pistol permit gives the cardholder additional benefits. An application must be filled out in person at the Sheriff's Office.

Papers Served

2022	7,424
2023	8,046
2024	7,491

Tax Warrants

2022	\$104,234
2023	\$83,459
2024	\$88,229

Protection Orders

2022	1,631
2023	2,035
2024	2,016

Civil Fees

2022	\$215,831
2023	\$227,428
2024	\$206,869

No Contact Orders

2022	1,305
2023	1,517
2024	1,393

Sheriff's Sales on Executions

2022	4
2023	4
2024	6

Money Collected:

Executions	
2022	\$310,625
2023	\$312,503
2024	\$527,871

CAPTAIN CHRIS HISLIP supervises the Civil, Warrants and Transport Divisions. Civil deputies are tasked with notifying individuals when they face legal action in a court of law or administrative court. These delivered documents may include summonses, complaints, subpoenas, writs or other legal paperwork from the courts, attorneys or citizens. Fees brought in by the Civil Division support the Sheriff's Office budget.



From left: Randy Johnson, Marie Romano, David Douma, Tammy Ellison, Bob Sanders, Eric Bangayan, Niki Kruse, Phillip Rivera, Brooke Kruse, Sgt. Keith Carlson



SHERIFF
DEWELDER COUNTY



WARRANTS

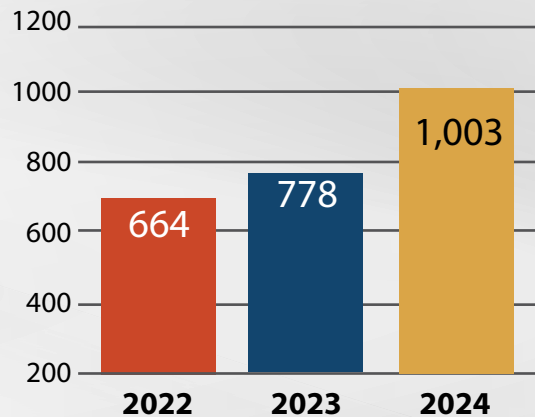
2024 Warrants Processed

Felony Received	2,761
Misdemeanor Received	7,224
City Received	363
Other Received	301
Domestic Violence	164
Felony Drug Arrests	1,370
Warrants Cleared	10,885
Fees Collected	\$132,430.44
Self-Turn-in People	1,003
Self-Turn-in Warrants	1,299
Extraditions	15

Total Warrants Received

10,649

Self-Turn-In People



The self-turn-in process is an opportunity for citizens with eligible warrants to turn themselves in paying only the \$25 warrant fee and attend court the same day to satisfy the warrant.

The Warrants Division focuses on arresting suspects wanted for violent crimes in the community. The deputies and sergeant are members of the US Marshals Federal Task Force which allows our agencies to combine resources to safely and efficiently arrest wanted suspects in the region. Staff assistants processed 10,163 felony and misdemeanor warrants into federal and local databases. They also manage the Northwest Shuttle which transports inmates throughout the Western United States back to Pennington County to face criminal charges at a minimal cost to taxpayers.



From left: Sgt. Jeromey Smith, Steve Hardy, Abbee Griese, Dustin Meyer, Natalie Bailey, Marcus Isakson, Nichole Dubbs, Adam Mooney

TRANSPORT

Adult Court _____ **9,313**
Juvenile Court _____ **102**
Adult Medical _____ **569**
Juvenile Medical _____ **227**
Inmates on the bus _____ **9,571**

Round-trips to
Sioux Falls _____ **100**
Trips to Health &
Human Services _____ **38**

Deputies and Transport Officers transfer adult and juvenile inmates to court appearances, medical appointments, and to and from the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls. This is also a service to other counties, offering a cost-effective method of moving inmates across South Dakota.



*Front row: Billy Davis, Christine Heying, Kent Holland, Skye Row, Jane Cheesman
Middle: Eric Mendez, Glenn Miller, Jim Gentile, Jose Romero, Neal Hofer
Back Row: Dave Ricke, Bob Willins*

SECURITY

Personnel from the Transport Division also perform security duties at the Pennington County Courthouse, Jail and Administration Building. Their mission is to provide a safe environment for employees, inmates and the public. In 2024, they screened 137,744 people entering the Courthouse and detected/prevented 290 prohibited items from entering. They also provide a presence inside and outside the courtroom and courthouse to deter and detect criminal activity in the area.

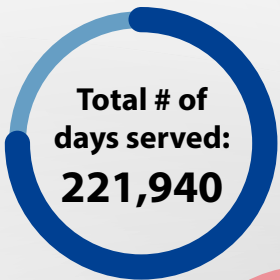


*Back row: Eric Petersen, Jesse Huschle, Shawn Stalder
Front: Joe Wallin, Matt Chalk*

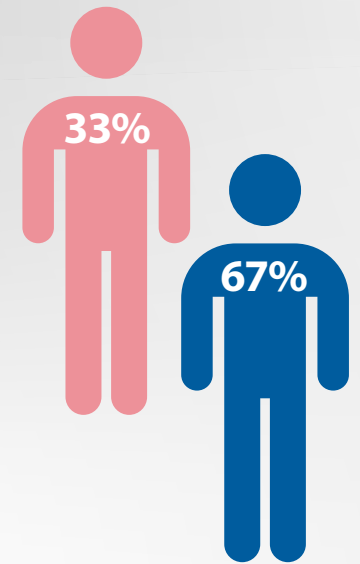
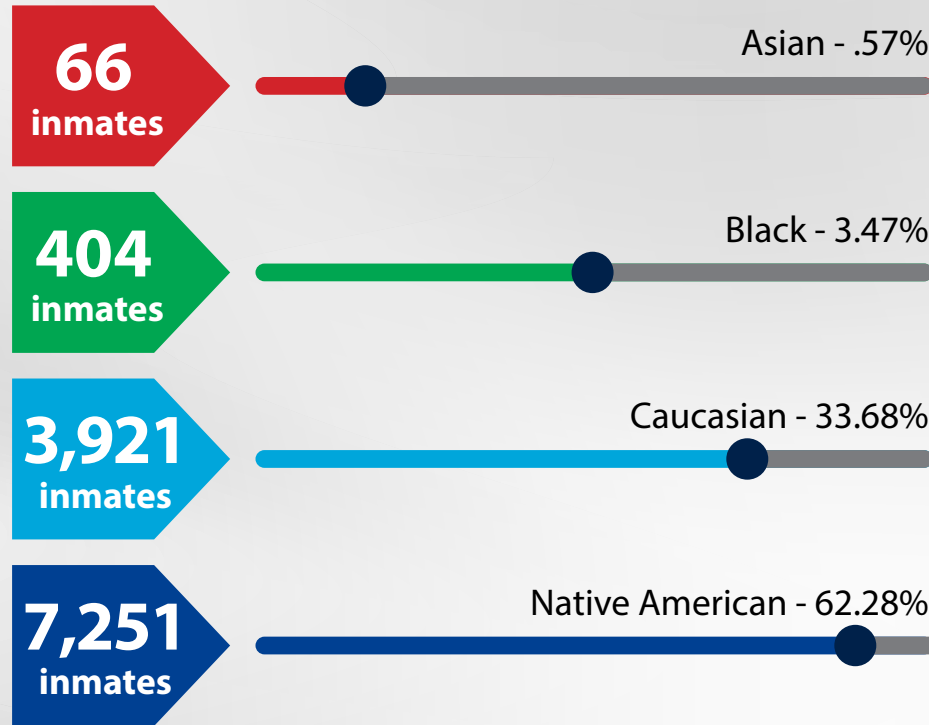
JAIL

COMMANDER COREY BRUBAKKEN The Pennington County Jail is committed to maintaining a safe and orderly environment for both staff and inmates. As a central component of our criminal justice system, our staff must be ready to handle the daily challenges they face with professionalism and fairness. They serve as protectors, counselors, educators, disciplinarians, and role models.

Since May 2024, I have had the privilege of serving as Commander of the Pennington County Jail. In that time, I have seen firsthand how complex the operation is, but the most crucial element is the dedicated staff. Every day, they make what seems impossible possible. It is our staff's commitment and excellence that keep the jail running at the highest standard. On behalf of a grateful Commander, I say thank you.



RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS



GENDER

Female:	Male:
3,782	7,771
inmates	inmates



Jail command staff: Office Manager Donell Welch, Capt. Casey Munsch, Maj. Wade Anderson, Commander Corey Brubakken, Lt. Ken Wilson, Lt. Taylor Muhlbeier, Lt. Kathleen Houston



Correctional Officer Adam Johnson, Sgt. Matthew Johnson, Booking Tech Jada Rouillard, Correctional Officer Kayla Amerena



Celebrating anniversaries with the Pennington County Jail: Field Training Officers Tucker Smith, Moses Brave Heart and Correctional Officer Jaerek Thorn



Booking Techs Amity Wilde, Bobbie Rice and Field Training Officer Jeremy Comrie

JAIL INITIATIVE IGNITE



Jessica Afrank, Programs Officer Andrew Diro, Teacher Kayla Quenzer

COORDINATOR JESSICA AFRANK The IGNITE (Individual Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education) Initiative has expanded significantly this year, offering GED, Literacy, Creative Writing, Life Skills, yoga, and more, with programs covering essential topics like substance abuse, domestic violence, parenting and financial awareness.

The Sheriff's IGNITE Work Program also launched, allowing eligible participants to earn good time for each successful day. From GEDs to job certifications, the program aims to prepare individuals for life beyond incarceration.

Additionally, Pennington County Jail hired its first teacher, Kayla Quenzer, who now teaches about one-third of the jail population. Over 250 inmates participated in GED education at the jail in 2024.



Jeremy Danley and Sherin Harris supervise the Sheriff's Work Program



Teacher Kayla Quenzer teaches and mentors students at their own pace



PROGRAM DIRECTOR LUCAS OYLER Late in 2024, the 24-7 Sobriety Program was restructured in an effort to increase efficiency and further reduce the jail population. These changes still hold participants accountable for their sobriety while allowing them to remain members of the community.

24-7 is staffed by two full-time county employees and nine part-time employees. They provide a variety of testing that includes breath tests, urine tests and remote monitoring. The program has been successful since its inception and in 2024 maintained a 96.65% passed rating for those testing breath and urine samples combined.



Seven nights a week at 6pm, a line forms to test program participants



Bracelets offer remote monitoring options

ALCOHOL BREATH TEST

Status	Count
Passed	72,076
Missed	1,035
Failed	439

DRUG URINE ANALYSIS

Status	Count
Passed	21,172
Missed	2,938
Failed	319

CARE CAMPUS

In 2024 we developed a coordinated winter plan to support the homeless population, bringing together key stakeholders such as the Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Rapid City Police and Fire Departments, Journey On, Woyatan Lutheran Church, Wambli Ska, Cornerstone Rescue Mission, Pennington County Human Services, and the City of Rapid City. This unified effort emphasized teamwork, open communication, and shared resources to ensure safety during our harsh winter months.

Additionally, the Care Campus made progress in collaborating with organizations like Wambli Ska and Woyatan Lutheran Church to provide some cultural programming to the individuals utilizing our Safe Solutions program.

Over the past year we reduced Safe Solutions beds and increased our Detox beds. This change allows more of our clients the time to become sober, meet with a counselor who provides education on substance use, encourages treatment attendance and connects them with other community resources.

Bi-weekly coordination meetings averaged 25 agency representatives from community agencies in attendance, showcasing a strong commitment to addressing pressing local challenges. Additionally, the summer expansion of detox beds increased access to treatment, with Detox and Safe Solutions programs meeting the high demand for these services in our community. By year six of operation, the Care Campus had 143,825 admissions, serving 9,000 unique individuals, with 66% self-referring – reflecting their trust in our facility.



Care Campus Command Staff: Director Tony Verchio, Housing Director David Oster, Office Manager Melissa Reckling, Clinical Director Deanna Nolan, Clinical Supervisors Dawn Riter and Amanda Whelchel, Chief Deputy Willie Whelchel



We reduced Safe Solutions beds and increased Detox options to better address the needs of the homeless who have substance use disorders



Jenna Kautzman, Amber Kirkpatrick and Sara Meadows work with clients to meet their unique needs



CARE CAMPUS

20,233 Total admissions

DETOX

Detox admissions 8,247

SAFE SOLUTIONS BEDS

Safe bed admissions 11,986

ADDICTION TREATMENT SERVICES

Individuals in 12-hour DUI class 116

Treatment assessments 934

Residential Treatment 238

Outpatient Treatment 246

**CARE CAMPUS
PIVOT POINT**



West River Mental Health PIVOT POINT

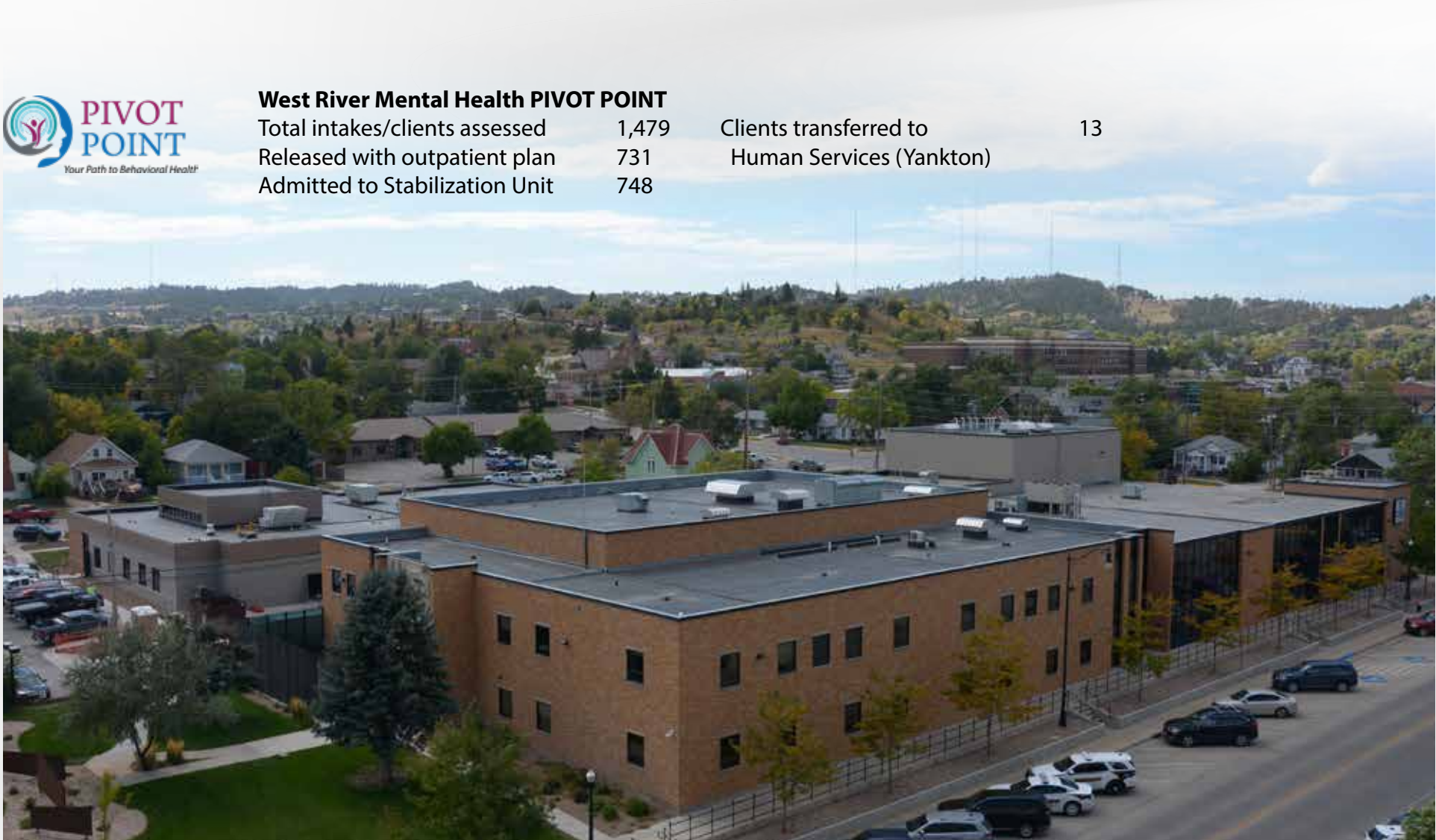
Total intakes/clients assessed 1,479

Released with outpatient plan 731

Admitted to Stabilization Unit 748

Clients transferred to 13

Human Services (Yankton)



WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA JUVENILE SERVICES CENTER



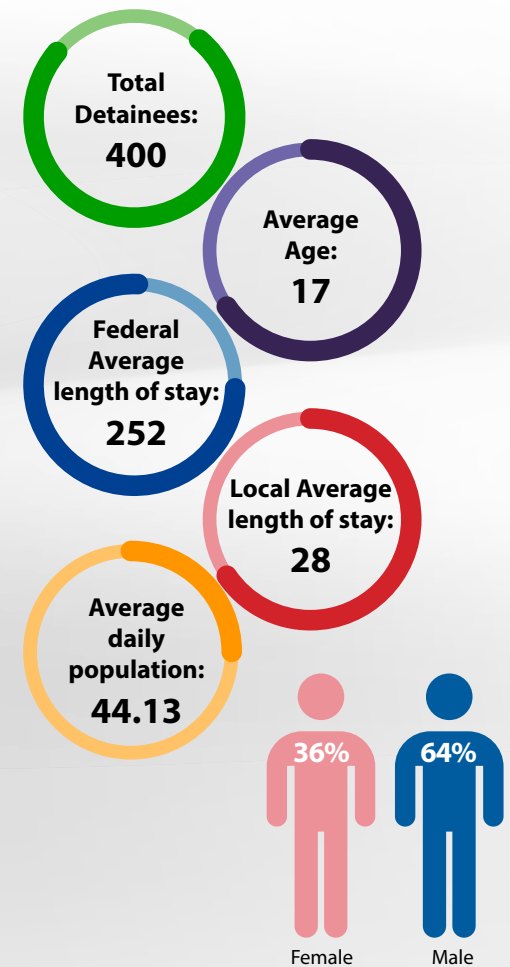
COMMANDER JOE GUTTIEREZ The Western South Dakota Juvenile Services Center (WSDJSC) continues to operate as one of the premier Juvenile Detention Facilities in the country. It has been nationally accredited by the American Correctional Association since 1999 and serves as a federal, state, and regional holding facility.

Education is the single most important factor in the rehabilitation of youth in custody. With a goal to change the trajectory of lives, WSDJSC offers weekly programming to include corrective thinking, life skills, education, religious services, and vocational/ career development. Some detainees also receive mental health counseling, chemical dependency and sex offender treatment.

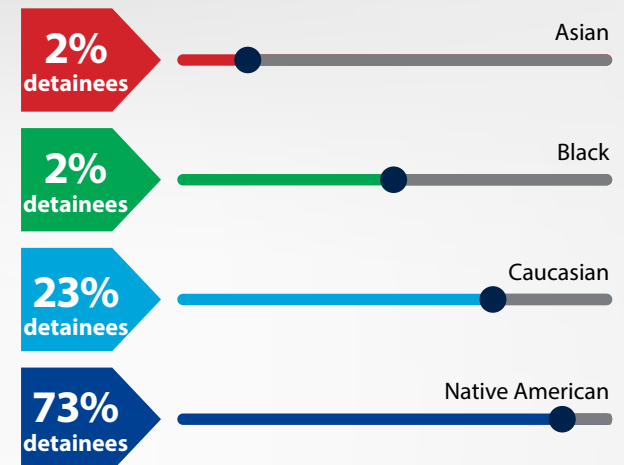
As an alternative to secure detention, the Juvenile Services Center continues to offer electronic monitoring. With approval from the courts, the juvenile may remain in the community while they await court or serve a sentence. Lutheran Social Services continues to run a reception center, homeless and runaway shelter on campus as another alternative.



JSC command staff: Lt John Martin, Office Manager Lyne Banning, Lt Heather Wood and Commander Joe Gutierrez



RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS



WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA JUVENILE SERVICES CENTER



Correctional Officer Chance Kerner at shift change



Correctional Officers Llewelyn LongWolf, Nick Wright and Melorie Miner



Correctional Officer Isaac Simmons in a housing unit

HUMAN RESOURCES

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER NIKKI FARRAR AND GENERALIST YOVANA ESTRELLA JOHNSON had a busy year in 2024. Innovative recruitment and outreach solutions were utilized to attract top talent, and retention efforts were broadened to maintain a stable, experienced workforce ensuring community protection. There was a significant reduction in vacancies and unfilled positions compared to previous years:

Unfilled Positions	2022	2023	2024
	48	28	13

A county-wide internal wage study was completed resulting in increased wages effective January 2025. Representatives from each division formed a recruitment work group. A recruitment marketing campaign was expanded and a 12-week internship was launched. Participants gained hands-on experience across our four divisions with the help of COPS grant funding.

2024 OFFERS	NEW HIRES	EMPLOYEE RECLASSIFICATIONS & PROMOTIONS
341	112	48



Human resources recruitment workgroup strategizes hiring and retention efforts



Summer interns spend time at the shooting range



Chadron State jail tour

EXPLORER PROGRAM

THE EXPLORER PROGRAM gives young men and women exposure to a career in law enforcement. In 2024, Explorers spent 2,302 hours training and volunteering in our community. It builds character through physical fitness, leadership and community service.

We encourage youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 21 to apply to be part of the Pennington County Sheriff's Explorer Program. Contact us at 605-394-6113 for details.



Deputy Keith Fenner oversees tourniquet training



Explorer Tally Green clears the hallway



Top row from left: Hayden Bowman, Brooke Kruse, Hailey Thompson, Emily Ragains. Bottom row: Braydon Spear, Gordon Larsen, Nick Wheeler, Tally Green, James Garcia

WELLNESS



ROBIN MCCOOL-DENEKE WELLNESS COORDINATOR

The mission of the PCSO Wellness Program is to support our employees and their families by promoting overall well-being. Public safety careers—whether at the CARE Campus, in Law Enforcement, at the Pennington County Jail, or the Western SD Juvenile Services Center—demand a 24/7 commitment to the community. This constant dedication can significantly impact employees' self-care and family life.

The Wellness Program addresses these challenges by providing wellness education and resources through activities and Peer Support, focusing on the five pillars of wellness: physical, emotional/psychological, financial, environmental and spiritual. With the combined efforts of the Wellness Coordinator, Peer Support Team, and Chaplains, we offer a comprehensive network of resources to assist employees and their families.



Our wellness coordinator works closely with PCSO Chaplains sponsoring fun employee events like a Halloween pumpkin carving contest



Nurse practitioner Heather Courage provides all pre-hire mental health evaluations, peer support, counseling and other psychiatric services for the Sheriff's Office, Rapid City Police and Fire Departments and South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation

CHAPLAINS



2024 PCSO Christmas party hosted by our chaplains

The purpose of this unique group is simple: to serve the employees and families of the Pennington County Sheriff's Office. Over the past 11 years our Chaplains Program has put down strong roots and continues to grow.

Through generous financial contributions from donors, the Pennington County Sheriff's Office Chaplains provide special and fun opportunities for fellowship, support and guidance.

2024 Chaplains

Amber Wichmann
Chris Swarhout
David Piper

Todd Lynch
Evan Fowler



Chaplains hosted a division-wide chili cookoff. Yovana Estrella Johnson won the people's choice best chili!



Chaplains organized our first staff recognition of Addiction Professional Week. Meals were provided at the Care Campus to recognize their important work.

TRAINING



RUSTY SCHMIDT TRAINING MANAGER 2024 was another incredibly busy year with near record-setting pre-service trainings. One was an intensive investigative course that not only brought law enforcement from all over the United States, but some from as far as Brazil.

Placing a high value on training, the Sheriff's Office makes a large investment in the future success of our employees.

Sandwiched before and after a 13-week law enforcement academy, a new deputy receives six weeks of in-house pre-service training to include domestic violence, constitutional law, use of force and more. After the academy, the deputy receives an additional 16 weeks of field training before venturing out on his/her own. A new correctional officer receives ten weeks of training to include three weeks of pre-service and seven weeks of field training.



LAW ENFORCEMENT BASIC ACADEMY

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office had nine deputies graduate from the Law Enforcement Training Academy in Pierre over three 13-week sessions in 2024.



Peter Boschetti receives Coler Williams Award, March 1



Jeremiah McKnight receives Inspiration Award, March 1



Nov 22: Gunner Hanzel



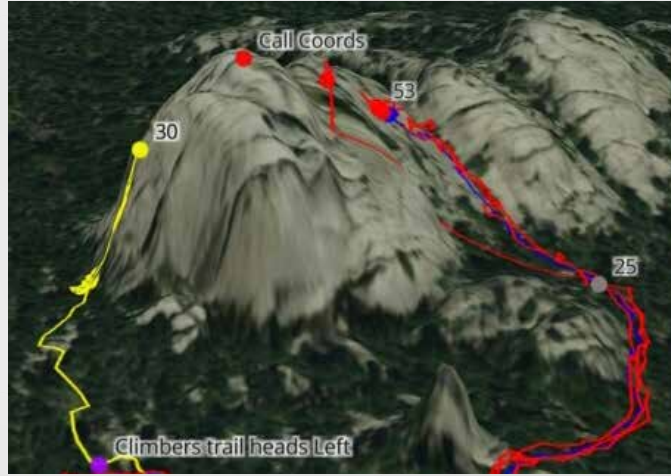
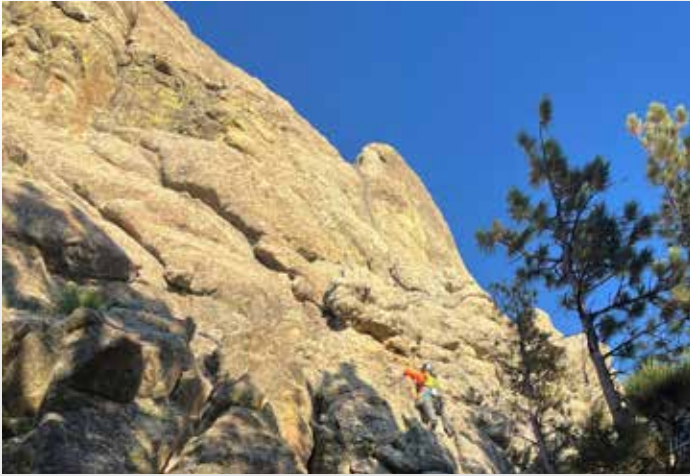
March 1: Chris Brown, Peter Boschetti, Jeremiah McKnight, Tyrell Zahn



May 31: Travis Leeson, Kyle McSherry, Austin Sorensen, Timothy Montgomery

SEARCH AND RESCUE

The Black Hills are becoming a hot spot for climbers, attracting both seasoned veterans and those newer to the sport. This growing popularity has given our Search and Rescue teams more chances to put their specialized skills to the test. One recent rescue at Old Baldy is a great example. We deployed vertical rescue teams to the summit and a climbing team from the base, working together seamlessly. With the help of advanced mobile mapping and tracking software, command staff received real-time position updates, allowing them to make quick, informed decisions and ensure the best possible outcome.



2024 CALLS

- 21 - Vehicle Extrication
- 26 - Search
- 10 - Carry-Out
- 5 - High Angle Rescue
- 13 - Water Rescue
- 3 - Winter Rescue

Hippie Hole continues to challenge and surprise many visitors, often leading to injuries and mishaps. The hike is far more strenuous than most anticipate, resulting in sprains, fractures, exhaustion, and even lost hikers. Pennington County Search and Rescue, alongside the Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department and other local teams, face the difficult task of navigating the rugged terrain while carrying hundreds of pounds of rescue equipment. Their mission is not only to manage the challenging hike safely but also to locate and extract those in need of urgent medical attention.



RESERVE DEPUTIES



Michael Goering



Levi Woodard



Ian Bridge



Jonathan McCary



Caleb Willard



Jason Lind



Donald Lampert



Jonathan Zamora



Nicholas Kollias



Mark Bartik



Kevin Sosa



Devin Cherry

Twelve men volunteered to serve as reserve deputies. Most have full-time jobs and still find time to give back to the community by serving and assisting the mission of the Pennington County Sheriff's Office. Reserve deputies provided 1,528.75 hours in 2024 including patrolling our lakes and trails, and working at the Central States Fair and the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

OUT IN THE COMMUNITY



Donut delivery at Black Hills Tire to benefit Working Against Violence



Community engagement meetings in Keystone, Hill City, Wall and New Underwood



Search & Rescue worked with Pine Ridge law enforcement in 50-year-old cold case



Police Week annual softball challenge with Ellsworth Security Forces



Special Olympics Cops on a Donut Shop



Polar Plunge fundraiser to benefit Special Olympics South Dakota



Hooked on Hardwater fishing event for youth at Club for Boys



Memorial for Fallen Law Enforcement in Washington DC



National Night Out at Canyon Lake Apartments



Badges for Hope Christmas shopping for families in our community



Shopp'n with a Sheriff annual Christmas event for Douglas School families



Sheriff's old hot rod kicked off Rapid City's Festival of Lights parade

PENNINGTON COUNTY RETIREMENTS



*Tom Heitsch, 29 years
Fleet Manager*



*Brooke Haga, 26 years
Correctional Officer*



*Tim Malone, 24 years
Jail Training Manager*



*David Rubins, 23 years
Correctional Officer II*



*Jason O'Cilka, 23 years
Patrol Sergeant*



*Trent Nelson, 20 years
Deputy II, Lead Coroner*



*Rob Yantis, 16 years
Jail Commander*



*Lisa Bellew, 15 years
Records Specialist III*



*Steven Klock, 14 years
EMT Specialist*



*David Switzer, 10 years
Patrol Lieutenant*

Staff Hiring/Retention Wage Adjustments

A new wage study and pay adjustments for staff are taking effect in 2025 to stay competitive in the market and region. Our hiring and retention numbers improved in 2024 and competitive wages and benefits allow us to hire and retain the best candidates to serve in all four divisions. We will continue to work closely with the Pennington County Commission and other elected officials and department heads on strategies to keep our wages and benefits competitive in the region. Public safety staffing remains the backbone that keeps our community safe.

Jail Expansion

With Pennington County Jail's population at or above operational capacity for more than a decade and the need to fix critical infrastructure, the Pennington County Commission is considering an expansion to the existing jail. A design team has been working in conjunction with the Pennington County Commission for the past two years. This spring we will continue with in-depth public meetings to provide education on the proposed project options and receive feedback from those we serve in our community. Adequate jail bed space is crucial to advance our public safety strategies with all of our partners in Pennington County.

IGNITE Initiative

Our staff will continue in 2025 to support the educational, job and life skills, and addiction services for individuals in our facilities. Pennington County continues to partner with community organizations and businesses to enhance these initiatives. Pennington County and Rapid City are in year two of two-year pilot program for an in-house sentenced work release program intended to increase accountability and lower recidivism with repeat offenders in our community. We were seeing positive results at the end of year one and look forward to continue to improve on this concept and the outcomes through the second year.





MERCURY

SHERIFF
PENNINGTON COUNTY

SD 1195 AE