

BALTIMORE

Sheriff who nabbed suspects using phony promises is lauded at surprise ceremony

The stinger feels the sting

BY JUSTIN FENTON
(SUN REPORTER)

With promises of phony tax refunds and Valentine's Day gift deliveries, Anne Arundel County Sheriff Ron Bateman has made good use of gimmicky stunts to track down suspected criminals.

So when the local delegation decided to honor his efforts, a standard awards presentation wouldn't do.

Bateman was lured to the Lowe House Office Building in Annapolis yesterday under the guise that he would provide input for a House bill dealing with law enforcement.

Instead of a legislative work session, the delegates surprised Bateman with a citation recognizing his continuing efforts to reduce the number of outstanding criminal warrants in Anne Arundel County.

"He was shocked," said Deputy Harry L. Neisser, a spokesman for the agency who accompanied Bateman. "I saw his face, and he was like, 'Uh, OK, you got me.'"

Bateman could not be reached for comment.

Since he took over as sheriff in 2006, Bateman has cut the number of unserved warrants from about 12,000 to 10,000. More than 1,000 new warrants come in each month.

Last year, Bateman decided to get creative. In October, his office sent out 500 letters telling criminal suspects that \$572.26 tax refund checks were theirs to pick up at the state comptroller's office. Forty people were arrested in the sting.

On Valentine's Day, Bateman had deputies phone suspects and arrange for a delivery time for roses or gift baskets from "Flowers by Ron," with the slogan: "An arresting bouquet." In-

stead of finding they had secret admirers, the suspects were handcuffed and served with warrants.

"He made a commitment during his campaign that if he were elected sheriff, he would work diligently to get that backlog served," said Del. Donald H. Dwyer Jr., a Glen Burnie Republican who masterminded yesterday's event. "You think about some of the tactics he's used to get these warrants served and they're certainly nontraditional, but they're also very effective — and very funny."

Bateman has said the stings are more than stunts. They cut down the amount of time it can take a deputy to track down such suspects, he said, by having the suspects come to them or agree to be somewhere at a specific time, even if the promise isn't exactly honest.



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