

The 2009 Colorado Court Security Conference: Breaking Down Barriers to Build Better Teams

Colorado's inaugural Court Security Conference was held June 10-12 in Montrose at the Montrose Pavillion. Judges, sheriffs, deputies, court personnel, county commissioners and other elected officials spent the better part of two days sharing information and learning from one another.

"I was stunned by the historic nature of the conference" said Summit County Sheriff John Minor. "Never before have sheriff's officers, county commissioners and judges come together and that was just great."

Conference attendees broke the ice Wednesday evening with a casual meet and greet reception before beginning the real work Thursday morning. The conference opened with a 10-minute video featuring members of the judiciary and sheriffs' departments discussing very real security threats and outcomes. The video also showed a re-enactment of an ordinary day in court thrown into chaos during a child-support hearing in which a gun was drawn and the judge held hostage. Members of the Adams County Sheriff's Office SWAT demonstrated their skills in effectively and efficiently handling the situation. Adams County Sheriff Doug Darr followed up with a discussion of security incidents at courthouses around the state.

The bulk of the first day was spent in team-building exercises. Dr. Brenda J. Wagenknecht-Ivey facilitated a spirited discussion on "Strengthening Local Security Teams: Taking Your Team to the Next Level." In the late afternoon, conference-goers could choose to attend two of four breakout sessions: "What Can the State Court Administrator's Office Do for You?," "How to Prepare for High-Risk Cases," "Using Videoconferencing to Improve Courthouse Security" and "How to Build a Successful Security Team."

The next day, conferees returned to the Montrose Pavilion for a work session titled "Introduction of the Colorado Court Security Officer Training Program."

Before hitting the road home, attendees wrapped up the morning – and the conference – with the presentation, "2010 Grant Cycle and How to Apply Online for a Court Security Grant," headed by Colorado Judicial Department Court Security Specialist Steve Steadman, who demonstrated how to try to find the funding necessary to implement the best practices.

"That was probably the best-run, most informative conference I have ever attended," said John Sandoval, chairman of the Conejos County Board of Commissioners. "Moreover, I now want to work to incorporate many of the ideas I learned into Colorado Counties Incorporated's future meeting agendas."

The conference doubled as the County Sheriffs of Colorado conference, which proved to highlight the importance of courthouse security as an everyday issue. Many attendees hoped for more such opportunities in the future.

"This was a wonderful opportunity for judges, county commissioners and law enforcement to come together in order to make Colorado's courthouse safer," said Eighteenth Judicial District Chief Judge William B. Sylvester. "I look forward to more opportunities to continue this dialogue."

For more information on the Colorado Courthouse Security Program, including grant application information and submission access, please visit:
<http://www.coloradocourthousesecurity.com/grant>.