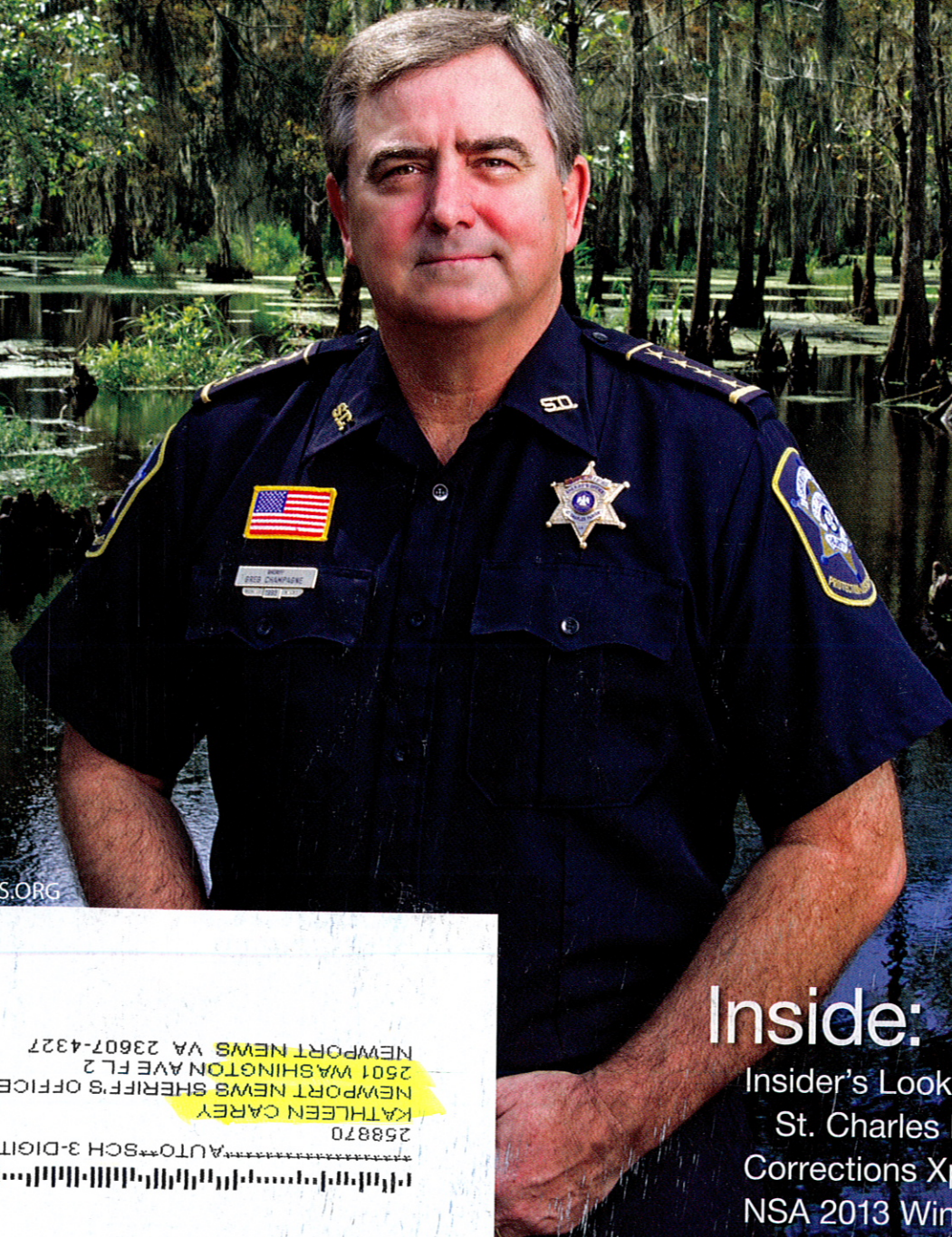




# DEPUTY AND COURT OFFICER

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## ST. CHARLES PARISH...WE'VE GOT MORE THAN JUST ALLIGATORS.



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# EFFICIENCIES AND SAVINGS GAINED BY EMBRACING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

By Lt. Kathleen Carey, PIO, Newport News, Virginia  
Sheriff's Office

Like so many localities across the country, the City of Newport News, Virginia is looking to save money. And they have found an innovative approach that places this city on the cutting edge. They are turning to propane vehicles, starting with the Newport News Sheriff's Office (NNSO).

"I love it," exclaimed Jerry D. Farmer, Vehicle Services operations superintendent. "At today's price of gas, we are saving about \$1.28/per gallon. We upgraded the engines of twenty-two vehicles to burn propane autogas and calculate an annual savings of \$22,000." Essentially, that is the purchase price of a new car. Running on an alternative fuel is aiding in the replacement costs of city cars. Higher gas prices increases the rate of savings.

A Buy Green Expo was held locally on March 21, 2012. The Department of Vehicle Services said at the expo that the conversion cost of \$5,800 per vehicle was funded entirely by a Southeast Propane AutoGas Development Program grant administered by James Madison University and Virginia Clean Cities.

The NNSO was the first city agency to use the propane cars. Two were issued in 2011 as part of a pilot program. Deputies assigned to these test cars were instructed on how to gather information that would later be used as the research to expand the program citywide. The city has since rolled out a fleet of propane vehicles: 12 Ford Crown Victoria's and 10 Chevrolet Silverado 2500s. There have been no drawbacks to using propane. The Crown Vics operate with the same power and acceleration as the standard gasoline fueled unit. However, with two fuel tanks, it can run much longer before having to be refueled. This can be essential to the NNSO when transporting prisoners on long highway runs between correctional facilities.

Chris R. Perry, Vehicle Services fleet administration manager, noted that vehicles using propane autogas can go 750 miles without refueling. The range increase is due to having two tanks of fuel in the vehicle. When the propane tank is empty, the engine automatically switches to the gasoline tank. Perry said, "We have gained operational efficiencies with propane fueled vehicles. You can drive for a longer distance without having to stop for gas. Also, they reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 20%." Not only is the city saving taxpayer dollars, it is reducing air pollution. Additionally, propane is an American made fuel which means less dependency on foreign oil.

The Newport News Sheriff's Office runs a fleet of forty-six vehicles that are operated over a variety of assignments. For example, civil enforcement deputies are operating primarily on city roads; transportation deputies drive both in the city and on the highway. So far, only four Sheriff's Office units have been converted to propane autogas. However, the NNSO and Vehicle Services have found another avenue for savings. They are turning to the purchase of the V6 Dodge Charger for an estimated 32% better fuel economy compared against the traditional V8 Crown Victoria. There is a big difference between the older 4.6 liter V8 engine in the Crown Vic and the new and improved 3.6 liter in the V6 Charger. "That's just







*The Dodge Charger V6 engine runs more fuel efficiently than its V8 predecessor.*

it," said Perry. "A lot of people don't realize that in a fleet, the best way to move towards sustainability is to replace all your older equipment with today's technology. Using a proper replacement cycle will allow us to replace outdated technology and do so with notable savings."

The EPA fuel economy for a 2011 Crown Victoria is 16 city/24 highway. The EPA fuel economy for a 2012 Charger is 18/24. Those are the published numbers. Remember, however, police applications are much different than your civilian consumer. Cars are left idling; they are driven harder with quick starts and quick stops; and motors are turned on and turned off with great frequency. Under those conditions, a Crown Vic gets closer to 8 to 12 city miles per gallon compared to a Charger's 12-15 city miles per gallon. Over time the fuel efficiency calculates to a significant savings in tax dollar money.

"I am a public servant," said Farmer. "And my guys are public servants... my team. We feel like we own these cars. We treat them that way and care for them like they're ours. We are always trying to do things as efficient as possible without sacrificing safety. It's our tax money, too." ★

*Deputy Robert Forest is assigned to one of the propane autogas vehicles.*

