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Despite legal woes, Inkster chief proud of statistics

'We're reducing crime' he says

*BY CECIL ANGEL
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Inkster Police Chief Gregory Gaskin says the Police Department has a lot to be proud of since he was hired in 2005 as an assistant chief.

The city's homicide rate decreased from 14 in 2005 to seven in 2006, four in 2007, and just two in 2008. So far this year, there have been two homicides. Auto theft is down 39% from 2005.

"We must be doing something right here," Gaskin said. "We're reducing crime, and we're reducing violent crime in the city."

Gaskin remains focused on the positive, even though Sgt. Scott Rechtzigel and Officer Robert McArthur are scheduled for preliminary examinations on Sept. 14 in 36th District Court in Detroit, on charges of conspiracy and perjury.

Retired Wayne County Circuit Judge Mary Waterstone and former Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Karen Plants have been charged in the matter, which involves the concealment of a police informant's identity in a 2005 cocaine case in circuit court.

Gaskin said he suspended the officers without pay immediately, pending the outcome of the case.

The image of the department also was hurt by two lawsuits alleging racial discrimination. A federal jury awarded Thomas Diaz more than \$250,000 in February 2007 after he said he was denied a promotion because he is Hispanic and not black.

In the second lawsuit, filed in November, an officer who testified in Diaz's civil trial, Lt. Kevin Smith, is alleging racial discrimination and a violation of the state's Whistle Blower Protection Act. He named the department and Gaskin, who is African American, as defendants.

Smith said he was removed as supervisor of detectives and reassigned to oversee patrol officers after his testimony. An African-American officer replaced him as head of the detectives, he said.

Smith said he was forced to go on medical leave because of stress. He is asking for more than \$25,000 in damages.

Gaskin said Smith, whose pay was not changed, had more experience running patrol, and there were officers who needed training in running the detective bureau.

"I'm not going after anybody," Gaskin said. "My objective is to make this department better."

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