**Wheels for May 2, 2013**

*by William Summerhill*

**The Power of One**

**Sean Slover,** a 15-year veteran of the Amarillo Police Department, provided us with an informative overview of the history and work of Crime Stoppers in our area. First begun in 1976 as a result of the efforts of an Albuquerque mother to find the murderer or her son, this movement of concerned citizens has grown into an international program. Crime Stoppers is an effective collaboration of law enforcement professionals, media outlets willing to help disseminate information, and citizens who are willing to share what they know about criminal activity in their neighborhoods.

Amarillo Crime Stoppers was created in 1979 and is run by a 24 member Board as a non-profit. The Board is responsible for fund raising and establishing and reviewing reward payments for those who provide tips to the police. Income for Crime Stoppers comes from fund-raising events like “The Big Boo”, ID Cards for kids, Amarillo Bull’s jersey auction, sporting clay shoots, community document shredding services and solicitation letters. Other income to pay for personnel and communications software comes from probation fees paid by those who have been sentenced for a crime.

Since 1979 Amarillo Crime Stoppers has handled 13,377 tips, including 1600 last year alone. Over 4,000 arrests have been made thanks to citizens participating in Crime Stoppers, in addition to over $2 million in recovered property and $1 million in seized narcotics. Rewards for tips range in size from $50 to $5000 depending on the nature of the crime under investigation. **Cpl. Slover,** who is essential the sole employee of Amarillo Crime Stoppers, reported that 60% of those who call in a tip never collect their reward, although $415,000 has been paid out in tip rewards during the past 34 years.

**Cpl. Slover** noted that Crime Stoppers provides a valuable means by which concerned citizens may share what they know about a crime while avoiding publicity. Tips are processed through a communications system that routes them through Canada, thus avoiding any legal possibility of having tip records used in court. Rewards are also handled discreetly, preserving the anonymity of those supporting the efforts of our law enforcement professionals.

Thanks to those who helped run our meeting today, including:

**Renee Wilson**, our President, who presided over the meeting

**David O’Dell**, who led us in the national anthem and pledge of allegiance

**John Early**, who offered the invocation

**David Ellis**, who introduced our visitors and guests

**Rick Matchett**, program chair for March, who introduced today’s program.

While today’s drawing did not result in the drawing of the ace of spades, it did yield winners who went home with beef jerky and Papa Murphy’s pizza coupons.

At our next meeting, **May 9**, we will welcome Jutta Matalka of the Amarillo Convention and Visitor Council to present our program.