Meeting Notes – Nov. 22, 2021

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, November 2. Chambers County Sheriff Sid Lockhart was responsible for this week's program. He invited Chief Deputy Richard Carter and Captain Tommy High to speak about the aviation unit and they arrived in style in a helicopter! Chief Deputy Carter has had a lifelong interest in police work and aviation. His father was the first police pilot in Colorado Springs, CO. Chief Deputy Carter received his pilot's license in 2005. HIs training started with the Air Force.

The need for an aviation unit in Chambers County became evident in 2007 when the Chambers County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) was asked to help locate an Auburn University student who took off for home in Tennessee and never made it. The sheriff's office rented a plane out of LaGrange and helped in the search.  The department continued to rent planes and would use them to transport prisoners from other states back to Chambers County, which was economically more feasible that driving to pick the prisoners up, due to the reimbursement guidelines from the state.

In 2012 the Etowah County Sheriff's Office contacted Sid about a plane they had that they weren't using and wanted to sell. They were able to negotiate a very reasonable price and purchased the plan for half of its value. Later, our sheriff's department was also able to get a helicopter, courtesy of another county. Eventually, the CCSO was able to purchase two more helicopters from surplus, one to fly and one for parts. Once they had two flying helicopters, they were able to sell the plane for more than they paid for it. The plane was sold to use in mission projects.  The profit was used to upgrade the avionics in the helicopters. The goal is to have a flare system and spotlight for the helicopters within the next month or so.

The helicopters are operated at no expense to taxpayers. Proceeds from the rodeo and drug money are used to maintain the help maintain the helicopters. The helicopters are used in search and rescue missions and in surveillance.

Diane Sherriff