

## **WIFLE FOUNDATION RESEARCH FOCUSES ON STRESS FACTORS**

Many of you may not know WIFLE incorporated the WIFLE Foundation in 2006. The foundation works in tandem with WIFLE, Inc. to promote and support women in federal law enforcement and serves as the educational entity by providing for the Annual Leadership Training Conference, the Scholarship Program, research, and other programs. Through the WIFLE Foundation research projects, we will better serve our membership and all women in the federal law enforcement community by:

- Assisting agencies to improve recruitment, develop better retention rates, and provide training to help promote women in federal law enforcement.
- Identifying barriers to hiring, promoting, and retaining women in the law enforcement professions.
- Monitoring the progress of agencies in the hiring, promotion, and retention of women in law enforcement and recommending methods for improvement.
- Enhancing the image of law enforcement in the communities we serve.
- Promoting the value of collaborative and cooperative leadership styles.
- Establishing and maintaining an information-sharing network.

We are proud to announce that as a Foundation, WIFLE conducted its first research project at the recent 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Leadership Training Conference in Tucson, Arizona. The research focused on the types of stress experienced by women in federal law enforcement and, in particular, focused on the gun carrying members of the federal law enforcement community. Over 225 women attending the conference participated in the research. As far as research projects are concerned, this is an excellent response rate.

You may be asking yourself - why study stress? Everybody seems to be studying it. In actuality, the majority of stress research on law enforcement focuses on men and women in the local law enforcement community and, while their lives are certainly stressful, they suffer different forms or combinations of stress than federal law enforcement officers. At least this is the assumption. Since we in federal law enforcement are an understudied group, no one really knows what combination of stressors causes the most problems. In turn, agencies cannot develop effective policies and procedures to specifically combat the problems.

This year's study focused on four areas of stress:

- 1) Organizational stressors which relate to the administrative and bureaucratic demands of federal law enforcement;
- 2) Operational stressors caused by the law enforcement job;
- 3) Personal stressors caused by factors outside of work; and

- 4) External stressors which are caused by the external environment affecting your agency, such as those resulting from other agencies or the public. Each stressor has its place in our list of things that really hurt us health wise and make it harder for us to succeed in our careers and enjoy life.

To better identify those stressors that affect each of you as women in federal law enforcement, we forged an alliance with the Marymount University Graduate Program of Forensic Psychology. Marymount University is located in Arlington, Virginia. Dr. Jason Doll, Chair of the program, and a group of his graduate students volunteered to take on this responsibility. The role of the School of Forensic Psychology is to blend the requirements of the criminal justice system with the world of psychology. Marymount's student body enrolled in the Forensic Psychology major are predominately women seeking careers in the field of law enforcement and the criminal justice system, making them an ideal partner for WIFLE.

The WIFLE Foundation's Executive Summary of this important research effort is expected in January 2010. WIFLE will publish the results of the research project at our next training conference in Nashville, TN, in June 2010. We will also post the research project information on the WIFLE website.