

## Overall Rochester Crime Down So Far

By Megan DeMarco Overall crime was down 8.7 percent in Rochester compared to the first six months of 2012, and police say community cooperation, long a source of frustration, is beginning to improve. There were fewer homicides, rapes, car thefts, and aggravated assaults than this time last year, said Police Chief James Sheppard. The only category of violent crime that has increased this year is robberies, which are up 14.4 percent. Sheppard attributed the decreases to national trends in crime reduction, as well as more collaboration with the community. "While traditionally we've struggled to get cooperation from the community, we believe the tide is turning," he said. "The first six months of the year has shown positive reductions in every category of violent crime with the exception of robberies." Violent crime - homicide, aggravated assault, rape and robbery - is down 2.4 percent in 2013. There were 16 homicides in the city during the first six months of the year, compared to 21 homicides last year, a decrease of 23.8 percent. However, the city has seen an increase in the number of shooting victims compared to the first six months of last year. In 2012, there were 95 shooting victims by this time. This year, there have been 109. Deputy Chief of Operations Michael Wood said police are trying to address retaliatory violence and disputes. "In order to calm these disputes, we either have to mediate them or law enforcement has to intervene," he said. "The goal here is simple - prevent shootings." He said part of prevention is knowing when fights are breaking out. "Awareness of these disputes is critical. We oftentimes find out about these things after the bullets are flying and we're playing catch-up," he said. "We need information. We need to know these things are brewing." On the increase in robberies, Sheppard said the rise may be due to cellphone thefts. "We have young kids, 12, 13 years old who may get robbed for their cellphone that traditionally they wouldn't be victims," he said. "That's where we believe a significant amount of our increase has been found." He said the phones can be sold for cash. "They have value and they can be flipped very easily," he said. Peter Pullano, a Rochester defense attorney with Tully Rinckey, said robberies can range from serious violent crimes to just a step above petit larceny. "We hear that there's an uptick in robbers, we immediately think these are gunpoint threats or even use of physical violence," he said. "I don't think it's a reason to panic." Mayor Thomas Richards said he is pleased with the progress, but the numbers aren't anything to celebrate. "Any amount of the kind of activity we measure here is unacceptable," Richards said. "We don't take solace in the fact that the numbers are good."