

CRIME PREVENTION

Message On Crime Still Strong After 25 years

NewsUSA

(NU) - It began as a simple idea. An animated dog in a rumpled trench coat, uttering the words, "You don't know me yet. But you will."

Twenty-five years and three generations later, people still recognize McGruff the Crime Dog as an American icon that is "taking a bite out of crime."

In the early 1970s, most people thought it was strictly up to law enforcement to prevent crime. However, a group of concerned private citizens and government leaders believed that working individually and collectively, in tandem with the police, could aid in crime prevention.

Fast-forward to 1980, when an ad campaign — created by advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi and distributed by The Advertising Council Inc. — introduced McGruff the Crime Dog to the American public.

Originally, the National Crime Prevention Council's iconic brand targeted adults with common-sense messages about everything from home security to neighborhood safety.

Over the years, he extended his reach to teens and children, teaching them how to protect

themselves against the dangers of drug abuse and gun violence, and more recently, how to handle bullies and surf the Internet safely.

Since his debut, McGruff has been instrumental in showing adults and youth alike how their involvement can reduce crime. Today more than three out of four Americans believe they can personally do something to prevent crimes from occurring.

While crime in general has been reduced from the highs seen in the 1990s, it remains a reality in communities across the nation every day. To this end, it is clear that even with a more diverse, older, technology-savvy nation, McGruff the Crime Dog still has a job to do.

In the past quarter-century, McGruff has become more than just a familiar face. He is a true piece of Americana, even appearing in trivia questions on "Jeopardy" and "Wheel of Fortune," in movies such as "Mystic River," and on VH1's "I Love the 80s Strikes Back." More than \$1 billion has been donated to help spread McGruff's message that together, we can all "Take A Bite Out of Crime."

For more information about McGruff's 25th anniversary, visit www.ncpc.org.

