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## 'Extraordinary acts of kindness'

BY ELIZABETH DORSEY

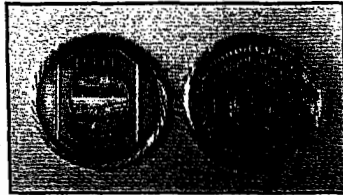
*Times Record Staff*

### BRUNSWICK

As part of an ongoing effort to forge stronger ties with the community, the Bath and Brunswick police departments will soon start handing out commemorative coins to people who demonstrate extraordinary acts of kindness.

"It will recognize people for helping out with our mission, which is public safety," said Bath Police Chief Pete Lizanecz. "It's a way of breaking down the barriers a little bit."

Beginning on Saturday,



TERRY TAYLOR / THE TIMES RECORD

**A VIEW** of the front and the back of Brunswick's coin that will be given to citizens observed doing good deeds.

police officers on patrol in the two communities will carry with them coins embossed with their departments' patch. When an officer witnesses someone aiding a fel-

low citizen or committing a noteworthy act, the officer can award the coin in immediate recognition of the kind deed.

"We need to recognize that the community needs us and we need the community," said Jerry Hinton, chief of the Brunswick Police Department. "That's what community policing is all about."

What deeds will be rewarded is up to the discretion of the officer.

"It's all in the heart of the officer and the eyes of the beholder," Hinton said.

Please see **KINDNESS**, Page 14



TERRY TAYLOR / THE TIMES RECORD

**BRUNSWICK POLICE CHIEF** Jerry Hinton on Tuesday afternoon at the Brunswick Police Station displays one of the coins that will be handed out to people who demonstrate extraordinary acts of kindness.

### Are we Pavlov's dogs?

To the editor:

I couldn't believe my eyes when I read the article "Extraordinary Acts of Kindness" Wednesday. Are Americans nothing more nor less than animals to be rewarded like Pavlov's dogs for good deeds? Such a policy of animal training could create a citizenry which will only do good deeds if there is a reward forthcoming.

And, in regard to the criteria for awards, do we really want to leave this decision up to the discretion of the police?

In addition, I am very disturbed by the last paragraph of this article: "The departments will keep track of who receives the coins, and the institute will monitor the success of the program during the next year."

What is the definition of success? Does that mean that the number of coins awarded will reflect success in conditioning citizens to do what the government wants?

In my opinion, the whole community-oriented policing system should be reconsidered. It resembles programs used in totalitarian countries. There are many good policemen in the United States of America who are totally opposed to and appalled by this program.

Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt  
Bath

11/27/03  
The Times Record  
Brunswick, Me.

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## KINDNESS

*From Page 1*

The coin program comes out of a partnership between the Maine Community Policing Institute at the University of Maine at Augusta and seven police departments throughout the state. Other participants are the Maine State Police, the Augusta and Lewiston police departments and the York and Waldo County sheriff's departments.

The concept of a commemorative coin is new for Maine police departments, but such coins have been in existence for decades, especially in military organizations.

After World War II, organizations like the Army Rangers and the Flying

Tigers began minting coins for personnel to carry as mementos of military service. The medallions were referred to as "challenge coins" because veterans would challenge each other to produce them on demand. Someone caught without his coin would owe the other man a beer.

Within the last several years, law enforcement agencies began minting coins as a way to promote the departments and reward citizens.

In Maine, the concept evolved out of the annual meeting of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association last year. Richard Mears, director of community justice projects at the institute and a former deputy chief in Brunswick, formed the coal-

tion between the institute and the seven Maine police departments in an effort to test the idea in Maine.

The idea of recognizing a citizen's role in public safety aligns closely with the philosophy of community policing taught at the institute and practiced by police across the country.

"It's police and citizens working together at solving community problems," said Laurent F. Gilbert Sr., the coordinator of the Maine Community Policing Institute. "Crime is a community problem and it needs a community response."

This approach contrasts sharply with the practice of law enforcement in decades past.

"We were trained about 25

to 30 years ago that we should be nailing and jailing people and not correcting the problems as we went along," said Hinton. "(Community policing) is a different paradigm. It's not just black-and-white law."

Funding for the coins was provided in part by the Community Policing Institute and in part by the participating departments, which each chipped in \$250 for the 500 coins. In Brunswick, the money was provided by an anonymous donor. In Bath, the funding came from a department expense account.

The departments will keep track of who receives the coins, and the institute will monitor the success of the program during the next year.

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