



Photo by Erin Sanchez

The new Robinson R44 Raven II is owned by Dave Lawler, a Warren businessman who volunteers his services for the Macomb County Sheriff's Office Aviation Division. The Sheriff's Office will now have use of the four-seat helicopter that Lawler has purchased.

Flying high

Sheriff's Office gets use of new helicopter

**By Sarah Cormier
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MOUNT CLEMENS — Thanks to a local businessman, the Macomb County Sheriff's Office has one more resource available to help stop the bad guys.

At a press conference held July 1, Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel announced that Dave Lawler, owner of Tank Truck Service & Sales Inc. in Warren, would be donating use of his new Robinson R44 Raven II four-seater helicopter to the Sheriff's Office.

Lawler, who has already been volunteering his helicopter services for the past five years to the Sheriff's Office with a two-seater helicopter, is part of the Macomb County Sheriff's Aviation Division. The sector includes 19 pilots and four observers who volunteer both their time and their aircraft to help the Sheriff's Office with investigations.

“Those are people that want to volunteer their time by getting involved in something,” said Hackel, who said the Sheriff’s Office has 250 reserve officers that work in every department, from marine to bike patrols.

Those in the Aviation Division are used to help find suspects eluding police, with issues on Lake St. Clair, or even for crowd control at local festivals.

“There are many different reasons why we would want this,” said Hackel.

Hackel said that Lawler’s upgrade from a two-seat to a four-seat helicopter will be even more useful.

“This is going to take it to a whole new hype, if you will,” he said.

So long as Lawler is not out of the area, he is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“Any time we need him ... he will make himself available,” said Hackel.

“If I’m up (in the air), I can be anywhere in the county in about five minutes,” said Lawler.

Lawler said the Robinson R44 Raven II flies at a top speed of 150 mph and costs about \$160 an hour to use. He purchased it four months ago in California.

“It is the most popular helicopter in the world,” he said. “It is one of the most capable helicopters in the world, too.”

So far, Lawler estimates he has flown about 650 missions for the Sheriff’s Office.

“It’s been a passion of mine, and I’m fortunate enough to be able to use it,” he said.

Lawler said he started flying because he was scared to do so and thought it would be a great way to overcome that fear. He added that he loves providing free services to help keep residents of Macomb County safe.

“Macomb County is a great place to be. It’s just been a place where I’ve wanted to be and work,” he said.

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