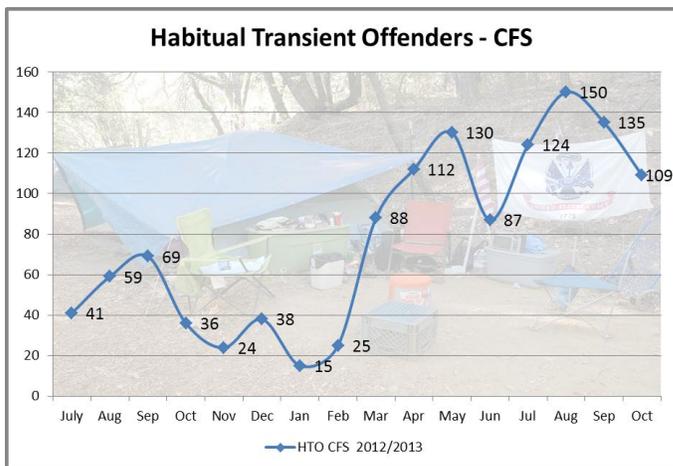




## Habitual Transient Offender Contacts on the Rise

First and foremost let me begin by saying homelessness is not a crime. The homeless in crisis and in need of immediate and temporary shelter as a result of a financial and/or personal tragedy do not generally break the law. Rather, they accept a temporary *hand up* to their feet until they can reintegrate into society. That said, there is a group of chronically homeless individuals that choose to avoid and ignore societal norms and structured services offered, yet look for a *hand out*. Many of these individuals battle chemical dependency and mental health issues on a daily basis. As a law enforcement agency we place our focus on those individuals choosing to habitually violate the law by aggressively panhandling, trespassing, illegally camping, engaging in arson, urinating/defecating in public, using and abusing alcohol and narcotics in public, and creating a chronic public nuisance for our community. We term these violators Habitual Transient Offenders, due to their constant violation of public nuisance laws and their status of being voluntary homeless. We predominantly respond to these individuals by connecting them with mental health resources and/or enforcement options, i.e. arrest.

The Placerville Police Department began tracking contacts with Habitual Transient Offenders based on observed and reported criminal activity in July of 2012. From July 2012 through June 2013, there were 724 contacts, averaging 60 contacts per month. From July through October

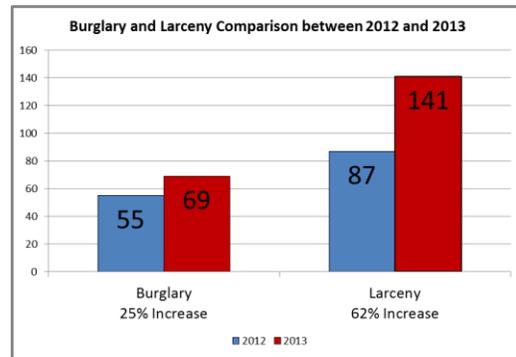


of this year there have been 458 contacts so far, averaging 115 contacts per month. This equates to a 92% increase year over year. The graph to the left shows the increasing trend; the occasional dips likely explained by an offender being in custody for a period of time and seasonal fluctuations. Overall the numbers continue to trend upwards when you compare the months from 2012 to the months of 2013. This has placed an enormous amount of

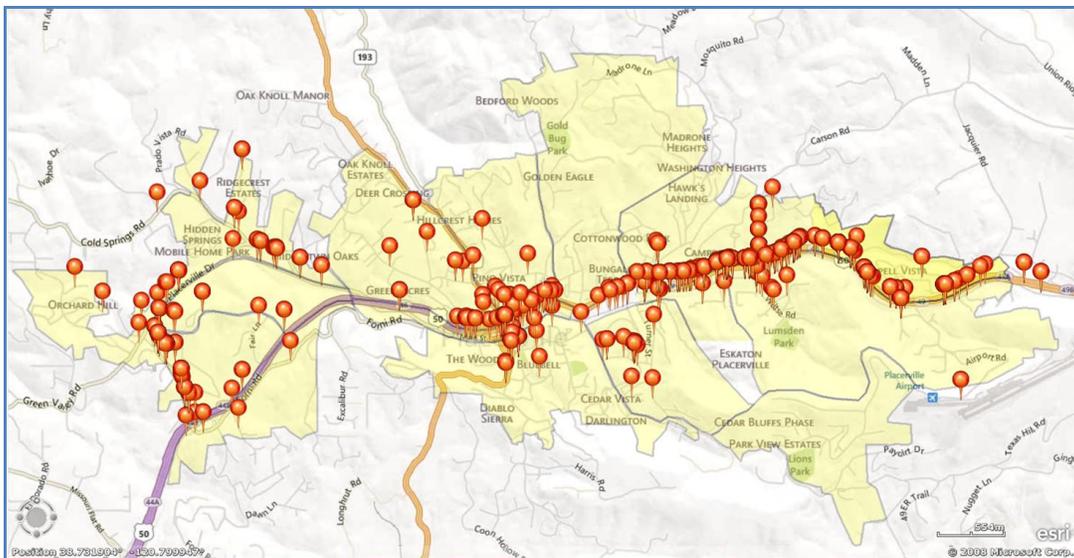
pressure on police and community resources. The majority of Habitual Transient Offender contacts are occurring along Broadway Dr. (584 contacts), followed distantly by Main St. (92 contacts), and Placerville Dr. (88 contacts). Again, these numbers only represent Habitual Transient Offenders and not the overall homeless population. To compound this increasing demand on our resources, we are also seeing a significant increase in property crimes

(burglaries and thefts) with the majority occurring along the same corridors. Burglaries have increased by 25% this year compared to last year and general thefts (larcenies) are up 62%.

The bottom line is there is a significant increase in Habitual Transient Offenders that are not Placerville residents. These individuals do not differentiate between legal and illegal camping. Nor do they consider the public safety dangers of hillside open flames for heat and cooking. These individuals have chosen to “live in the wild” by night within city limits and walk the streets committing nuisance violations during the day. Again, these are not residents of Placerville that have recently become homeless in need of temporary shelter. The police department has very few contacts with local Placerville homeless in crisis. However, a review of contact data reveals a substantial number of individuals from outside our region and state migrating to our area as voluntary homeless. As your police department we are choosing to actively engage this challenge. We need the community’s support and assistance if we are going to succeed in reducing the impact of Habitual Transient Offenders on our community. We need to maintain a balance of assisting the temporary homeless in crisis, addressing mental health issues when applicable, while at the same time not accommodating or becoming complacent in regards to the Habitual Transient Offenders negatively affecting our community.



This requires vigilance. If you own or manage a business, do not tolerate nuisance violations call the police and prosecute. Likewise, businesses and citizens alike need to avoid the urge to give cash or food to panhandlers. This is a temporary solution that only encourages the behavior to continue. A better recommendation would be to give to a charitable organization that assists those in need with resources, and refer those seeking food and services to already existing food closets, the Community Resource Center, Upper Room, etc. Together, we can improve the quality of life in our community... **Scott Heller, Chief of Police**



**Habitual Transient Offender Contacts / Calls for Service since July 2012**