

Small Car Has Big Impact For RCMP

By Veronica Russell



Cpl. Patrick Webb in the driver's seat of the Beetle cruiser.

Photo by Veronica Russell, Prairie Girl Photography

The appearance of a police cruiser in a rear-view mirror is enough to make any driver sit up straight — even if the lights aren't flashing.

But there is a law enforcement vehicle sharing the road that makes most drivers and pedestrians do a double take, and then laugh.

It is the Southern Alberta District RCMP Volkswagen Beetle cruiser. And everybody notices it.

The diminutive car is fully equipped with standard equipment, light bar, radio and RCMP decals. Though its appearance often leads observers to the conclusion that it is a community awareness tool — which it is — don't be fooled into thinking it can't be used for fighting crime. It may not outrun you, but its driver is fully capable of issuing a ticket for an offence.

At a recent Calgary automobile show, the car

drew young and old in for a closer look. The atmosphere around the Beetle was energetic as kids jostled for a position to cup their hands to the window, and get a look into a real RCMP cruiser.

Safety Bear, the RCMP's mascot, was on hand to greet car show attendants and dispense neon yellow "Think and Drive" key chains.

Enthusiastic kids and smiling adults are what the RCMP is looking for when they go out into the community. The car serves a purpose — to draw people in to learn about issues ranging from drug awareness and counterfeit money to business scams.

Cpl. Patrick Webb of the RCMP calls it proactive policing.

"We're trying to get ahead of the game," he said referring to the decreased workload for the Force if people are more aware of risks around them.