

CRIME PREVENTION REVIEW

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The CRIME PREVENTION REVIEW is a professional forum for the Criminal Justice System in California designed to provide discussion of varied concepts and issues of crime prevention and useful resources for the practitioner in the field.

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Community Based Crime Prevention Project

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Lieutenant Ed Stout is Commander of Administration and Services. He has 15 years of service in the Fontana Police Department.

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Paul R. Curry is a Detective in the San Bernardino County Sheriffs Department. He has served nine years with the department and organized the San Bernardino Sheriffs Department Crime Prevention Unit. He is an instructor in crime prevention.

INTRODUCTION

It is a well known and disturbing fact that while a great deal of program and technical data is available regarding effective crime prevention programs, frequently such information is poorly utilized or, when implemented, often loses its effectiveness after a short time. This is true even of such celebrated burglary prevention programs as Neighborhood Watch.¹

The purpose of this article is to document how this problem of ineffectiveness can be conquered using the example of a two-year demonstration project in the formerly high crime area of Fontana, California, once affectionately known as "Felony Flats."

The project was named the greater Fontana Community-Based Hi-Impact Crime Prevention Program.

It was initially conceived and designed under the leadership of the California Attorney General's Crime Prevention Unit in cooperation with the State

¹ For further discussion of the failure of elaborate crime prevention programs with heavy federal funding and sophisticated technology, see Hi Impact Crime Prevention Program, LEAA, 1976, Part I Grimes and Anests. National Level Evaluation

Department of Justice's Division of Law Enforcement, Crime Patterns Analysis Section and the Bureau of Criminal Statistics. The implementing leadership was the responsibility of Jim Hulin, who was given the assignment as project director.

Briefly, the project may be defined as an in-depth approach to crime prevention involving the citizens and agencies of the entire community, as opposed to segmental crime prevention techniques and strategies which too often have short term effects and do not become integral parts of community crime prevention structures. It is a program where the local citizens have a highly significant role and are not merely appendages of the law enforcement agencies, performing minor tasks.

It is a program stressing interagency cooperation and the best use of available resources. The program did not rely on government funds nor on elaborate imported bureaucratic domination. It was a people's program—a viable alternative to the vigilante mentality that is often the reaction to growing crime problems in our state and nation.'

PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

The project was conceived in January of 1977 at a meeting between the Crime Prevention Unit and the Crime Patterns Analysis Section.

Upon reviewing materials supplied by the Division of Law Enforcement's Bureau of Criminal Statistics, it was obvious that crime victimization was rapidly moving to the smaller rural and semi-rural areas of the state, and needed the immediate attention of law enforcement and community.

It was decided that the Crime Prevention Unit would approach a small semi-rural community facing serious crime encroachment and join in partnership with them to develop a community based crime prevention model that hopefully would prove an effective deterrent to criminal victimization.

The Selection of Fontana as a Target Site

Fontana was selected as the project target site for three major reasons:

1. There was a high crime victimization rate. In 1975, the Part 1 crime rate (major felonies) topped the national average by 121% with a per capita crime rate exceeding that of Los Angeles and New York City. Serious crime rates were 60% above the county average, 56% above the state average, and 121% above the national average.

In 1977, when the crime prevention project began the situation had not improved. Burglary, for example, was at an all time high of 1054—an increase of 30% over the 1976 rate.

In 1977, Fontana ranked seventh in population size compared to the other 13 cities in San Bernardino county, but its Part 1 crime rank was third.

Its burglary rate per capita was the highest in the entire county. There was no question; Fontana had a serious crime problem, especially burglary.'

On the subject of techniques to overcome public apathy, see "Experiment in Cooperative Crime Prevention," Richard Moore, *Crime Prevention Review*, California State Department of Justice, Volume 3, July 1976.

¹ *Crime and Delinquency in California 1913-1977*, California State Department of Justice, Division of Law Enforcement, Bureau of Criminal Statistics.

2. Fontana was selected, also, because there was evidence of some willingness to face the crime problem squarely and to do something about it. The citizenry in 1976 had passed a tax override to bring the police personnel up to minimum strength standards, but they realized that more police alone could not solve their crime problem. A massive community-wide attack was necessary.

They were looking for direction and the best use of their limited resources. Exploratory conversations between the Crime Prevention Unit, the city of Fontana, and related San Bernardino county officials indicated a willingness to cooperate with each other and the state office. Such cooperation is absolutely essential, for even the best efforts of the citizenry are frustrated if interagency jealousies and politics undermine a program. These agencies also expressed a willingness to work cooperatively with the citizen group.

3. Finally, Fontana was selected because of its size, semi-rural character, location and accessibility to interagency cooperation on the local and county level.

It was hoped that Fontana might become a model crime prevention demonstration project that other small communities might utilize.

Several assumptions were accepted as to how the project would be presented:

1. It would be a citizen-oriented program in focus and actual implementation.
2. It must be completely sanctioned and supported by local government and law enforcement agencies.
3. No money was to be promised nor was the program to be one heavily dependent upon funding.
4. Sophisticated statistical measures and controls were to be involved right from the start to enable us to unambiguously evaluate the success or failure of the project model. Statistical facilities of the Bureau of Criminal Statistics would be continually utilized to monitor the project development.

In March 1977, contact was made by the Crime Prevention Unit with officials of the city of Fontana: the mayor, city manager, city council, and police chief. All agreed to participate.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Because the project was targeted toward community involvement, citizens were solicited to volunteer for membership on the steering committee. Applications were screened by representatives of the Attorney General's office, the Fontana City Council, and the Fontana Police Department. A careful effort was made to assure that appropriate demographic and organizational cross sections of the community were represented on the committee. Staff representatives from city and county justice agencies serving the Fontana area, as well as a representative from the Fontana Unified School District, were also requested to serve as regular members of the committee. The Fontana City Council then reviewed the nominations and gave official approval.

The committee was designed to include more citizen representatives than public officials and a lay chairman was elected by the committee members.

The committee was commissioned to work in cooperation with law enforcement and to report its findings and recommendations to the city council. It was, however, given a relatively free hand to inquire into matters affecting the crime problems of the community.

Because the committee realized that the crime problems of Fontana *were* not confined to the city limits, its geographic scope of concern was expanded to the surrounding county area, roughly defined by the Fontana Unified School District. This involved the Fontana substation of the San Bernardino County Sheriffs Department and the inclusion of their Crime Prevention Unit in the project.

Subsequently, the committee was designated "The Greater Fontana Crime Prevention Committee."

To gather victimization data and to maintain close communication with the greater Fontana community, one of the committee's first major acts was the preparation and distribution of a crime survey questionnaire to every home in the target area (8500 homes). These were mailed or hand delivered depending upon the area and its expected response. Approximately 25% of the surveys were returned, again illustrating the level of community concern. The response covered a good demographic distribution, giving a high degree of credibility to the results and pinpointing geographic victimization areas. An opportunity was given to respondents to volunteer their services in neighborhood crime prevention or other ways. Over 33%% (800) of the respondents volunteered. These volunteers later became the basis for the area neighborhood watch groups. Communication was established between these volunteers and the committee.

The Bureau of Criminal Statistics assisted the project director in processing the data from the survey. A great deal of useful information was retrieved about citizen attitudes, fears, victimization levels and areas, proposed solutions to crime, police citizen relations, etc., and motivation to be a part of the solution.

The survey data, along with detailed statistics supplied by Chief Joseph Uhalley of the Fontana Police Department, was studied by the crime prevention committee. Lieutenant Stout, Commander of Administration and Services Division and, subsequently Crime Prevention Officer Mike Moore, both of the Fontana Police Department, were assigned liaison duties by the chief. Their well-organized data and very competent participation was a great assistance to the committee in laying out its goals. As the program developed and moved into the surrounding area under the sheriff's jurisdiction, equally valuable participation developed.

Because burglary was found to be excessive in both the city and surrounding area, this particular crime was targeted as the primary concern of the GFCP committee.

While the committee's major efforts initially were directed toward burglary prevention, via Neighborhood Watch development, security surveys, Operation I.D. and other related programs, it also turned its attention to other types of victimization. Subcommittees were established to gather data and help initiate positive actions in the area of motor vehicle theft, youth

delinquency, crimes against women, and business crimes.

The Neighborhood Watch became a citywide organization with block captains and a central coordinating board of its own beyond the committee. The Neighborhood Watch program has over 600 participating homes and the rate of increase of participation is growing each month. One of the reasons for its continued success is attributed to the fact that it has been tied into other projects of concern in the neighborhoods. For example, there has been active coordination with the PTA/police department/block parent program related to the schools. There is also intensive and regular communication with the Neighborhood Watch organization by the Fontana Police Department. They provide on-going indepth information on crime trends and incidences in the local neighborhood. The police department also provides a wide variety of protective service information and training to the block captains and in neighborhood meetings. Further, the Neighborhood Watch organization has its own inter-neighborhood newspaper, which performs a similar function within their organization for the police.

The Neighborhood Watch organization became the vehicle for many crime prevention efforts. For example, a Neighborhood Watch member who had been alerted about the growing motor vehicle theft problem, was responsible for helping the police break up a truck stealing ring in the community.

Crime Prevention Officer Mike Moore, under the direction of Lieutenant Stout and Chief Uhalley, devoted extensive manhours in training Fontana Police Department officers to be speakers at Neighborhood Watch groups on a wide range of community public safety concerns, as well as doing an excellent job of helping develop the neighborhood units. Gus Ripley, a citizen member of the GFCP committee was selected by the watch captains as chairman of the citywide Neighborhood Watch organization. As such, he assists in citywide program expansion and represents the Neighborhood Watch organization at community functions.

An important element of the program from the start was the active participation of the three county/city newspapers covering the area. Quite often crime prevention committee actions were front page news. The importance of the news media coverage is described by Crime Prevention Officer Mike Moore:

The important role of the Neighborhood Watch was the manner in which they served to multiply the efforts of the police department through a cooperative and coordinated attack on the criminal element, and as a focal point of community attitude and resistance against crime. The principles of the Neighborhood Watch organization were published repeatedly through the news media. They were undoubtedly adopted by many citizens who had never actually attended a Neighborhood Watch meeting but changed their attitudes or took one or more positive steps either in home security or a general upgrading of their everyday alertness towards possible criminal activity.

PROJECT RESULTS

The test period for this community based crime prevention project ended January 1, 1979, approximately two years after its initiation. The results are positive and indicate that the project model is an effective crime prevention instrument. This conclusion is based in the following statistical and programmatic data:

Statistical Data

1. Fontana's residential burglary rate dropped 25.8% in 1978 compared to 1977 despite a 4% increase in population.
2. The residential burglary rate was pushed back to the 1973 level.
3. Based on the statistical trends of the past six years, the Bureau of Criminal Statistics had projected a burglary rate 18% higher than the actual rate experienced. These predictions take into account various demographic considerations as well as past crime rates.
4. As compared to four demographically similar control cities previously selected in other geographic areas with similar burglary crime rates, Fontana demonstrated over a 25% reduction in burglary victimization while each of the control cities experienced an increase ranging from 10% to 25%. Other city population increases were less than Fontana's in all instances.
5. Not one of the 600 homes actively participating in the Neighborhood Watch burglary prevention program was victimized in 1978, even though many had been victimized the prior year, before the project began.
6. In the months of June, July and August 1978, when the burglary rate is usually very high, Fontana was actually able to reduce the residential burglary rate 41% as compared to the same months in 1977.

Program Results

In addition to the statistical reduction in the burglary rate, a number of significant crime prevention structures and programs were established:

1. The greater Fontana Crime Prevention Committee has developed into a permanent local city council commission, and a county-wide crime prevention structure is in the making. Both of these structures will continue and expand the original crime prevention program.
2. A strong cooperative relationship has developed between all agencies of the city and the county justice system.
3. An ongoing citizen-run citywide Neighborhood Watch organization now exists to monitor and expand the burglary prevention program in the community.
4. The major city and county newspapers have developed an active interest in crime prevention and publish regular columns and news items on the subject.
5. A large number of citizen volunteers and private civic groups have taken an active interest in crime prevention and have offered funds and manpower when needed.
6. Close cooperation and understanding between law enforcement and the community has developed. For example, the local crime prevention officer of the police department is the chairman of the United Way drive this year. The United Way in turn has offered its expertise and facilities to aid the Neighborhood Watch organization to become a permanent entity and develop its program.
7. The crime prevention committee has expanded its interests to crime concerns beyond burglary. Efforts are now under way to deal with

motor vehicle theft, domestic violence, city planning for environmental security and community youth problems. The Neighborhood Watch organization, in cooperation with law enforcement, has become the vehicle for an expanded community awareness of a comprehensive view of crime prevention. All of this has been done with very minimal amounts of money, but with a lot of citizen dedication.

EVALUATION AND CONTROL

In order to accurately measure the effectiveness of the community based project and be relatively certain that our statistical data proves what it appears to establish, elaborate control mechanisms were built into the program. The project results were measured against the following statistical controls:

1. Bureau of Criminal Statistics projections of anticipated 1978 crime rates based on victimization and demographic data for the six previous years.
2. Residential burglary statistics from the Fontana Police Department back to 1972.
3. Four carefully selected control cities outside the Fontana area which had similar demographic characteristics and highly correlated burglary rates with Fontana prior to the inception of the project.
4. Control data on population increases which might distort the victimization level.
5. Crime victimization levels in surrounding San Bernardino county cities.
6. Careful search for other factors which might have accounted for the dramatic drop in residential burglary victimization.

CONCLUSION

Elements of a Successful Crime Prevention Program

We began this project and this report by describing how many crime prevention efforts fail in spite of their technological sophistication. It was our hope not to invent a new super technique but to find ways to make what we already knew effective.

In conclusion, we wish to summarize some key elements essential to successful implementation of a crime prevention program:

1. A sincere intention by public agencies and government that the program shall be community based and primarily controlled.
2. Utilizing extensive surveys and other means of public input to get a thoroughly representative feedback from the community.
3. Establishing a demographically representative committee with official city council sanction, and with participation of key law enforcement representatives, chaired by a citizen member with a citizen majority.
4. Close partnership with the area newspapers to maintain public interest and to inform the public of crime prevention methodologies being implemented.
5. Establishing a structure that can continue and expand the initial project accomplishments.
6. Not allowing the methods and programs of the crime prevention

project to be used politically.

7. Committee crime prevention programs should be coordinated with other public safety programs to provide a broad community base, for example, the combination of the crime prevention program, P.T.A. and neighborhood block parent structures.'

Observations

Included below are some observations from the major participating agencies in the program. Lieutenant Ed Stout of the Fontana Police Department:

Funding may have been initially desired, but we are better for the fact that it was not done. The inspiration to show and prove that a non-funded community based crime prevention program could work is priceless in our case. There is one primary recommendation we would give to any law enforcement agency about to enter the area of community based crime prevention for the first time. Line personnel must be convinced of the worth of such an approach. Once the decision is made to undertake such a program a hard line "will do" approach must be taken, while not alienating those who must be won over from old ideas.

Police community relations, according to the participating officers, dramatically improved. As the crime rate dropped, the police gained greater appreciation for the role of the citizens in crime prevention and the Neighborhood Watch members saw the police as concerned friends and respected, competent protectors of the public safety. When serious police budget and program decisions were being made in the community, the citizens made their interest in public safety known, especially in the wake of Proposition 13 projected reductions.'

Detective Paul Curry, Director of the Sheriff's County Crime Prevention Program with active assistance of Deputy Robert Beck, aggressively implemented the Neighborhood Watch program in the greater Fontana county area. Speaking for the sheriff, Detective Curry observed:

The success of the greater Fontana Crime Prevention Committee has led to requests for similar programs throughout the entire San Bernardino county area as well as the implementation of a new proactive approach to solving the crime problem which, up until now, has been steadily increasing yearly. In the wake of Proposition II, all police agencies must find methods of decreasing the crime rate and be able to function within decreased budget limitations. No longer can law enforcement afford the costly ways of yesteryear but rather they must leap into the future and capture the spirit of citizen involvement with law enforcement in crime prevention. The greater Fontana Community Based Crime Prevention Program has shown that citizens are ready and willing to assist.

The following are some recommendations by Wayne Evans, chairman of the Greater Fontana Crime Prevention Committee (endorsed by the State Attorney General's Crime Prevention Unit):

It is our recommendation that the city form and maintain a commission to continue the work started This commission would be more directly involved with all areas of public safety and would be answerable to the city council In addition, it is felt that the county should form a regional committee, responsible to the county supervisor, to coordinate crime prevention programs in the county as well as

¹ On the object of the broader basis for crime prevention, see "Perspectives on Crime and Crime Prevention", Victor I. Cazumkas, *Crime Prevention Renew*, California State Department of Justice, Voume 1, October 1919.

² For detailed discussion of how the police and community can work together on crime prevention programs and better police/citizen relations, see *The Pollee in the Cal/kwna Commuzuty*, Report of the Attorney General's Advisory Commission on Community Police Relations, Office of the Attorney General. 1973. Also, see *CrimePrevention Review*, State Department of Justice, Volume 5, October 191'1.

adjoining cities. It is felt the interagency benefit could be more effective on a regional basis.

There is a new spirit in Fontana. The "Felony Flats" image is dying. New residents and businesses are moving into the city and city beautification programs are underway. Fontana is becoming a safer place to live and to conduct business enterprises.