



City of Lakewood

Police Department

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Police Executive Research Forum
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It is with a great deal of pride that I nominate the Lakewood Police Department POSSE (Protect Our Schools and Students' Education) for the Police Executive Research Forum's first annual Problem Solving Award which will be presented in November at the International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego.

As you can see from the attached resume, the POSSE program was well supported by various segments of our community. I am grateful for that support, and I am thankful that Lakewood High School officials and other citizens recognized the importance of a "no tolerance" attitude of drug abuse for Lakewood schools.

Community Policing has always been a very positive and effective service of the Lakewood Police Department. It is Lakewood citizens working together to solve mutual problems such as this one. The participation of one or more elements of the community rather than the police acting alone leads to a positive and proactive approach. We will continue to identify, analyze, and respond to problems that affect the City of Lakewood.

Also enclosed is a copy of a videotape of the positive news coverage of this event which I believe will give you a true perspective of the positive value of their program.

If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call our department.

CHARLES JOHNSTON
Chief of Police

ACY/tb
Enclosures

PROBLEM SOLVING AWARD

1. WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

Description of Problem:

There had been a growing concern by school officials and students at Lakewood High School that there was a large drug problem with students and non-students congregating in an off-campus adjacent area on the west side of the school campus. It was apparent that the students and non-students were engaged in Marijuana and probable LSD usage on a daily basis. There was an identified core of 20 - 30 students who engaged in repeated drug activity. In addition, there was a group of 30 - 40 students who associated with these users. The non-students were comprised of approximately 10 - 20 people. Students regularly smoked Marijuana during the course of the school day and then returned to the campus to attend classes.

2. FOR WHOM WAS IT A PROBLEM?

The problem impacted the following:

- *The business community around the school
- *The homeowners near the school
- *Lakewood High School staff and students
- *Parents of students attending Lakewood High School
- *Lakewood Police Department

3. WHO WAS AFFECTED BY THE PROBLEM AND HOW WERE THEY AFFECTED?

The Problem Affected:

School personnel were impacted by truancy and students attending classes under the influence of drugs. This behavior was destructive and negative for students and staff alike.

The owner of Rocky Mountain Sports indicated to an agent that he thought the operation was a great success and that it sent a strong message to the students. The drug usage was the worst he's seen in the area of the high school in twenty years. (This is the sports equipment/ski rental shop used during the surveillance.)

The owner of an acrylic fashion nail business, Nail Obsession, stated that the police did a good job and that it was a very worthwhile project. She has seen a big decrease in the number of students congregating by her business. The previous large number of students had been a problem to her customers and to herself, and she was afraid of it negatively affecting her customer revenues.

Owner of Heinrich Marketing welcomed the police intervention because of the increasing level of disruption the students were causing in the business's parking lot, e.g. smoking Marijuana and throwing rocks at parked cars of employees. (This business was also involved in the surveillance.)

4. HOW DID THE DEPARTMENT HANDLE THE PROBLEM IN THE PAST?

Problem was previously handled by enforcement action when a violation was encountered by beat units. Police presence in the area pushed the problem into other areas around the school.

5. WHAT INFORMATION WAS COLLECTED ABOUT THE PROBLEM?

Information was developed concerning the problem by having meetings with school officials and owners of businesses near the high school. A surveillance was conducted to verify activity and to identify the location and extent of the problem. Police department computer data was available concerning calls for service at and near the school.

6. WERE THERE ANY DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING THE INFORMATION?

We did not encounter any difficulties obtaining information. Everyone that we contacted welcomed our efforts to resolve the problem.

7. WHAT WAS THE GOAL OF THE PROBLEM-SOLVING EFFORT?

The primary goal for this project was the reduction and elimination of the 9900 block of West 8th Avenue as a gathering place for drug usage by students and non-students.

8. WHAT STRATEGIES WERE DEVELOPED TO REACH THAT GOAL?

Strategies:

Police surveillance was used to determine the degree and extent of the problem. Use of the previous recorded videotapes were later played back to the students and their parents. In regards to the students, this resulted in twenty confessions and twenty convictions. The videotapes that were played back to the parents pointed out the magnitude of the drug problem at Lakewood High School.

Result: Identified three groups of juveniles.

(1) Those guilty of unlawful behaviors;

(2) Those who were only peripherally involved but destined to be the next generation of juveniles likely to be involved in the same destructive behavior of drug involvement, truancy, etc; and

(3) a group of non-students.

The surveillance also identified clearly what juveniles were involved and exactly what unlawful and potentially dangerous activities they were engaged in.

The Plan for Arrest was developed as a result of the surveillance. it was decided to make the arrests very visible to the school and the

community utilizing the media.

Municipal Court, including the prosecution and probation teams were "on board" and ready to receive these juveniles and to process them according to the menu of diversion programs which were developed by Lakewood TNT (Tying Neighborhoods Together), and offered to the court for application to these high schools youths ("diversion" was also determined by each youth's background and history). Lakewood TNT is a grass roots organization which is part of the community policing program.

It was decided that a six-month period would be allowed for accomplishment of diversion, followed by a review by the court and the school to identify progress and behavioral modifications. It was also determined that the POSSE steering committee would need to frequently evaluate the effectiveness of the various diversion programs and approaches and to continually seek innovative and effective programming.

A Forum ("Advisement") for Lakewood High School's Student Body:

Another important aspect of the overall plan is creating within the school itself an opportunity for the non-involved students to openly express their opinions and concerns about the arrest incident at their school and the behaviors of the arrested students and resultant publicity. Lakewood High School administrators quickly implemented such forums in small classroom settings for the student body on the Monday following the Friday arrests (November 24, 1992). (See Exhibit M.)

A Re-Entry Program for Arrested Students:

Also important was the manner in which the school administrators created means for re-entry of the arrested students to quickly and

easily return to classes and begin to get direction and make progress.

Counseling Assistance from the High School

Meeting with school administrators and counseling assistance were offered by the high school for involved students and parents.

Key to the POSSE Program are the Following Determinations:

(1) A Program for Healing and Treatment.

The arrests were only the beginning. From this point, the POSSE Program deviates from the traditional solution of "arrest and court processing". It is our strong opinion that mere arrests will not change behavior and will not have lasting impact on the behavior of juveniles--merely arresting students will change nothing.

Through this strong community oriented policing effort, the POSSE Program works to provide answers to parents' frustration after a son or daughter has been arrested by responding fully to the parental question of, "Now what do we do?"

(2) A Program for Prevention.

This police/community partnership also works hard to develop interesting, informative forums with a strong prevention focus, to schools, students, and families.

The Family Night Program, Hosted by the POSSE Steering Committee.

A "family night" concept was developed as a means of involving the parents and the entire family in the solution and the healing process. This event also allowed the community to express its support and encouragement without being judgmental.

The Family Night Program was designed to provide parents and youths with clear and graphic information about drug and alcohol abuse and the

resultant long-term destructive impact on lives. The program encourages family acceptance of the problem without fingerpointing or blaming, but working strictly on "helps" and solutions to "get past" whose fault it may be (a non-productive deadend).

The Family Night Program was also designed to encourage dialogue between students and their parents about substance abuse, other behaviors, and issues that concern youths and families.

9. WHAT AGENCIES ASSISTED THE POLICE DEPARTMENT IN ACHIEVING THE GOAL?
WAS THE GOAL ACCOMPLISHED?

Agencies Assisting:

Lakewood High School Personnel:

Marcia Goldin, Principal

Pat Campbell, Vice Principal

Ann Enslow, Security Staff

Jane Urschel, Jefferson County School Board President

Lewis Finch, Jefferson County School R-1 District Superintendent

Bob Sparks, Area Superintendent

Students at Lakewood High School

Businesses on the Periphery of the School Campus:

Rocky Mountain Sports, 790 Kipling - Roland Proett

Sunshine Car Wash, 800 Kipling - Ron Rosa

Nail Obsession, 780 Kipling - Lisa Beringer

Vicker's, 722 Kipling - Tony Pruitt

Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, 920 Kipling - Jan Krakow

Heinrich Marketing, 830 Kipling - George Heinrich

Other Agencies:

Jim West, Criminal Justice Specialist, Channel 4, Denver, assistance with surveillance news coverage and follow up coverage of diversion programs,

Connie F. Hieb, Lakewood TNT, Chairperson (A Prevention, Intervention Program for Families and Youth - Lakewood Division of Jefferson County TNT),

Cenikor of Lakewood, drug rehabilitation center, Eugene Strauber, Director, and Bonnie Kissling, Program Director,

Jefferson County Mental Health, John Eachon, Director

City of Lakewood Agencies:

Lakewood Police Department, Charles Johnston, Chief of Police

Lakewood Police Department, Tom Waddill, Victim Assistance

Lakewood Municipal Court, Probation Supervisor, Dave Risher
(Probation and "SHAPE-UP" Program)

Lakewood Municipal Court, Judge Thomas Elliott

Lakewood City Attorney's Office, Kristie Hansson, Prosecuting
Attorney

Lakewood Police Department, Janet Young, Legal Advisor

Lakewood Police Department, D.A.R.E. officers, Sergeant Al Padilla,
Agent Rollie Inskeep, and Agent John Mackey

Lakewood Police Department, Intelligence Division, Narcotics
Section

Lakewood Police Department, Patrol Division, Special Enforcement
Team

We are optimistic that this problem will have a long term positive impact on the entire community. The program can only continue to expand in many creative directions--with the involvement of Lakewood citizens and agencies from all levels becoming actively involved in working toward the health and safety of youth and the stability of families in partnership with the city's police agency. This program will be extended to other high schools and feeder schools in the Jefferson County system.

10. WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO OTHER POLICE AGENCIES INTEREST IN ADDRESSING SIMILAR PROBLEMS?

We would recommend other police agencies evaluate this program as a proactive and positive way to prevent negative behaviors of youth and to support schools and families.

Enclosed is a copy of the film clips made by the local press concerning this project.

Lakewood students nailed in drug bust hear straight talk

By Romel Hernandez

Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

Last month's dramatic drug bust at Lakewood High School, which led to the arrests of 20 students, was a start.

The real work began Wednesday night, when the youths and their parents met with Lakewood police and anti-drug officials, to discuss where to go from here.

"As painful as this is for you to sit here, tonight could be the best thing that ever happened for you," Lakewood Police Chief

Charles Johnston said. He told parents that he, too, had a son who was involved with drugs.

"The first thing that crosses your mind is 'What do I do now?'" Johnston said. "But let me tell you, the best thing that ever happened to my son was that he got caught."

The children sat uncomfortably between their parents, squirming as they were presented with talks and videos about prison life and the dangers of drug use.

They were shown the police videotape that featured them outside their school,

smoking and selling pot — actions that led to their arrests Nov. 20.

The youths have been offered numerous diversion programs — such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education counseling or "straight talk"-type tours of prisons — as possible plea bargains in their cases.

Officials believe such programs will have a lasting impact on the students.

"Some students made bad decisions," said Lakewood principal Marcia Goldi. "We want to help students make good decisions in the future."

33 Lakewood High students charged in pot sting

By Madonna Kukay
Denver Post Staff Writer

Police have charged 33 students from Lakewood High School with drug and weapons possession stemming from a Nov. 20 sting in which youngsters were videotaped smoking marijuana and loitering in a lot near the school.

About 18 students were arrested by police, who leaped out of a rented truck parked in the vacant lot near the school that afternoon. An additional 15 were arrested the following week.

Lakewood Police Chief Charlie Johnston said charges filed against those arrested included: 21 for drug possession (marijuana), two for carrying concealed weapons, five traffic violations, seven for selling stolen cigarettes, two for trespassing, one for reckless driving, one for littering and one for using false license plates.

Police met with the parents of the arrested students last night to explain a diversion program available to any youngster who pleads

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guilty to the charges.

The diversion program includes counseling for the students and their parents. The youngsters also would be required to travel to the state prison to attend a "Shape Up" program designed to steer them away from drug use and criminal behavior.

Those who don't plead guilty face probation and a maximum of \$999 in fines, Johnston said.

The arrests initially triggered some criticism from students and parents who questioned police handling of the operation. Several students said they were inappropriately frisked and then released by police that day. Other students, however, applauded the sting operation.

Johnston yesterday said police had enough probable cause based on the videotape to make the arrests. Because the tape was not enough proof that a crime had been committed, however, police

extracted confessions from the students who were hauled into city hall and shown the video.

"We showed the tapes to the kids and said, 'Were you smoking pot?'"

If they said yes, then we charged them," Johnston said. In one case, however, no charges were filed because police could not extract a confession from the student.