

Problem Solving Quarterly

A NEWSLETTER OF THE POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM
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Problem Solving in Practice #1

No Longer in Business

By Joseph Perez

Tampa, FL—In 1988, police repeatedly responded to calls for service at the Lallouva Vita Grocery in north Tampa. Area residents complained of flagrant *drug* dealing and large crowds of **young** males with "boom boxes" who gathered in front of the store. Music from the stereos could be heard several blocks from the store. Residents complained that the drug dealers used the freezer positioned in front of the store to hide their drugs when they spotted the police.

Officer Julie Prouty and other officers made numerous drug arrests in front of the store. Officers found drugs and drug paraphernalia behind the seven-foot freezer. Some drugs were also found inside the

grocery store on the floor and on the grocery shelves. When the officers left the area, another crowd immediately regrouped and the drug dealing resumed.

During surveillance, Officer Prouty observed known drug dealers loitering in front of the store. When the police approached the area, the drug dealers moved along or entered the store. When the officer talked with some of the residents in the immediate area, she learned that most of the residents feared walking in the area around the store because of the violence and drug dealing common to the area.

Officer Seeks Cooperation

After reviewing police records, **Prouty** discovered that police had responded to numerous disturbance calls and made several narcotic arrests in front of the grocery store during a one year period. When the officer described the problem to the manager of the store, the manager was unwilling to cooperate with the police. The officer described how the

freezer was being used to hide drugs, but the manager would not consent to having the freezer removed. Officer Prouty then took advantage of another option. She issued the manager a misdemeanor citation for allowing his freezer to block the sidewalk in front of the store.

"Most of the residents feared walking in the area around the store because of the violence and drug dealing common to the area."

While Officer Prouty was at the store, she took several photographs documenting the filthy conditions inside and around the exterior of the store. Few fresh grocery items were found on the store shelves. Most goods were covered with dust. The main item sold at the store appeared

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to be beer which was consumed on the premises by the drug dealers.

Owner Unaware of Situation

The occupational license, identifying the owner, was posted on the store wall. When the officer inquired about the owner, the manager indicated that he did not know how to contact the owner. Officer Prouty later used the city's cross-reference directory to find the owner's telephone number and address. When the officer went to talk with the owner, she discovered that the owner had died four months earlier. The owner's widow, an 80 year old, frail elderly woman, indicated that she was not aware of any of the problems at the grocery store. When questioned further, the widow indicated that she had never been to the store and didn't even know where the store was located.

Continuing with her investigation, Officer Prouty contacted the fire marshal's office and requested an inspection of the grocery store. Several citations for violations of the city's fire codes and regulations were issued to the store manager.

During the two days, the officers observed only one legitimate purchase of goods from the store.

The officer proceeded to contact the standards and code enforcement, the health department, and the licensing division for the city. Inspections by each of the agencies also resulted in numerous violations. The inspectors cited the accumulated trash, including the used syringes, on the property grounds and the out-dated food items and the bugs that lined the food shelves.

Officer Prouty and other officers kept the property under surveillance for two days. During that time, officers made three arrests--including the arrest of the store manager who had sold drugs to a confidential informant. Officers also observed only one legitimate purchase of goods from the store. Known drug dealers were seen entering the store and leaving with potato chips and beer without paying for the items. When Officer Prouty later questioned the manager about the "freebies," the manager told her that some individuals had established credit lines.

The grocery store's licence to operate was revoked. City Licensing refused to renew the license because of all the illegal activity brought to their attention by the police. The store is now closed and the manager has been found guilty of all criminal and code violations.

For more information contact **Officer Julie Prouty**, Tampa Police Department, at (S13) 227-7037.

Problem Solving in Practice #2

Gypsies Outfoxed in Baltimore County

By Captain Richard D. Engel

Baltimore, Co., MD—For several years, residents of Catonsville Manor, a community of mostly middle class, retired elderly citizens were the victims of numerous deception and con games. During the spring of 1988, residents from eight homes in that community lost a total of more than \$30,000 in cash and

property to roving gypsies who preyed on the vulnerable residents.

Corporal Craig Herwig was assigned to Catonsville Manor to work on the problem. He collected general information on crimes of deception. He found out that the types of scams varied widely. In some cases, suspects offered to make home repairs or to resurface driveways at lower costs than usual. However, suspects made the repairs using substandard materials such as kerosene and motor oil.

The gypsies would sometimes require cash deposits from the unsuspecting residents to buy additional materials to complete the work. However, once the suspects left to buy the materials, they never returned to complete the work.

On some occasions, the con artists tricked residents into allowing them to enter the homes. Needing to use

the phone or asking for something to drink were two tactics often used to gain access to the homes. Once inside, the con artists scoped the premises for valuables. When left alone for the slightest amount of time, the con artists took any valuables or cash found.

Corporal Herwig also discovered that most of the crimes in Catonsville Manor were committed by females who feigned some kind of distress such as illness or poverty.

Educating The Public

The corporal, with the cooperation of his supervisors, developed several strategies to inform the community about the problem. A flyer was designed that described different types of con games and listed the names of police to contact to report problems. Officers from **each** of the

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patrols then delivered the flyers to more than 500 homes in Catonsville Manor. The officers also offered to conduct security surveys of each of the residences visited.

Police then solicited the support of local media. During one news program, officers were shown talking to citizens of the area about fraud and con games. Local newspapers published articles related to the topic and a local radio show hosted a program about con games. Lieutenant Brian Uppercue and Corporal Herwig were the guest speakers for the radio show.

**" Since July 1989,
there has not been
one deception crime
in the target area."**

Police also conducted several educational seminars for citizens of the area. The seminars provided basic crime prevention education. Directed patrol and surveillance tactics were also used to apprehend suspects.

Program Highly Successful

Since July 1989, there has not been one deception crime in the target area. However, police did arrest two individuals who attempted to defraud a resident in a neighboring community. The resident, suspicious when two men in a pick-up truck tried to get her to accept a driveway-coating job, called the police. The complainant said that she recalled the warnings in the newspapers and on television.

Corporal Herwig plans to work with other police precincts to inform officers and the community about deception crimes.

For additional information, contact **Corporal Craig Herwig**, Baltimore County Police Department at (301) 887-2214.

PERF Studies Police Decision- making Process

A new PERF project, funded by the National Institute of Justice, will document the process decision making in police agencies by reviewing key decisions in three police agencies.

By focusing on three specific incidents, PERF will capture the elements of police decision making, by carefully reconstructing events, reviewing time constraints and assessing varied points of view. Political constraints and financial considerations will also be reviewed and incorporated into a case study narrative.

**There is a need to
document exactly
how police
decisions are made.**

Each case study will review how police agencies handled either a particular crisis, an unexpected opportunity, or an organizational change. The case studies will not be judgmental but will inform readers about the process and environment in which police decisions are made.

The case studies are to be prepared by police practitioners to ensure their utility for other police agencies. PERF is currently seeking practitioners at the mid-level rank to participate in this effort. This participation will require about a time commitment of some 30 days to

be donated by the practitioner's department to the project.

PERF is currently considering events and decisions for the study. The incidents selected for study will not be major, life-threatening events, but should lend themselves to an analytical review of the decision-making process.

If you have comments or suggestions regarding this project, or wish to nominate a practitioner as a case writer, please contact **Deborah Weisel** at PERF, 2300 M Street, NW, Suite 910, Washington, DC, 20037 or call (202) 466-7820.

Tribute: A Day on the Beat with America's Finest

"Tribute is a remarkable achievement: It took me back to my days walking the beat. Tribute should be placed in a time capsule so tomorrow can see the finest law enforcement has to offer today."

Dewey Stokes
President

Fraternal Order of
Police

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Mack Vines
Chief of Police
Dallas Police
Department and
President, PERF

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San Diego Newspaper Advocates Problem-Oriented Policing

[Reprinted with permission of *The San Diego Union*, August 27, 1989]

Mayor O'Connor's appeal to President Bush for additional federal aid in San Diego's battle against illicit narcotics is a polite reminder to Washington that this western front is one of the hottest spots in the nationwide drug war.

The mayors' letter to Mr. Bush focuses attention on San Diego's proximity to the border and the prevalence of methamphetamine laboratories here. A copy of the letter, sent to drug czar William Bennett, ought to enhance San Diego's chances of being designated a "high-intensity" area. This would result in more federal agents being assigned here to fight traffickers and the lethal violence they spawn.

Problem-Oriented Policing 'Should be Applied Widely'

More state and federal aid is needed to win the regional battle centered in San Diego. But stronger local efforts are also essential. An effective plan should include:

- **Expanding the Problem Oriented Policing (POP)** program developed over the last few months by the **San Diego Police Department**. The key to this program is that specially trained officers listen to citizens in problem neighborhoods. The POP

program should be applied widely, not just in hard core areas.

- Promoting the grass roots counterpart of POP, as typified by the decade-old, church sponsored San Diego Organizing Project (SDOP). This program has achieved dramatic success by simply asking neighbors what their problems are and enlisting their support in turning in drug dealers; informing police about their activities and bringing pressure to bear on politicians and bureaucrats for more government help. Mayor O'Connor, whose earlier interest in SDOP program seems to have waned, should revive her backing for this innovative project.
- Strengthening statewide education programs and devoting more resources to analyzing the drug problem, with an eye toward pinpointing areas of the state that need the most help. Despite the enormous scope of San Diego's drug problem, this city gets less than its fair share of anti-drug funds.

"The drug war is being lost today because it has no political constituency."

The drug war is being lost today partly because it has no political constituency. Politicians tend to focus their attention on influential entities that are not among the victims of inner city crime. Citizens can educate the politicians only by a sustained expression of their outrage and insistence that the rising threat of drug abuse be attacked more aggressively by government at all levels.

Have You Gotten Your Message On METAPOL?

METAPOL, a telecommunication network, provides a forum for exchange of information about police issues. Using a personal computer, a telephone modem, and a toll free number, police officials can log on and participate in a variety of discussion areas, called conferences.

These conferences are divided among different audiences and topic areas, such as Community Policing, Chiefs, and Drugs. The Community policing conference, for example, provides an excellent opportunity for police officials to share and discuss problem solving efforts in their respective departments.

METAPOL's annual maintenance fee is \$600. If your department is interested in becoming a Metapol participant, please contact **Darrel Stephens** at PERF, 2300 M Street, N.W., Suite 910, Washington, DC 20037; (202) 466-7820.

PERFAX

PERF has acquired a FAX machine. Please feel free to submit articles and suggestions regarding Problem Solving Quarterly by this means. Our number is: (202) 466-7826.

PERF Offers Problem-Oriented Policing Training

Since May, PERF has conducted several on-site training programs on the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing. Most programs have been conducted in two and one half days to allow time for the training staff to meet with the department's chief or sheriff to explain the curriculum. The training staff also attempts to get a sense for the direction the chief executive is taking the agency.

Copies of **Problem Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in New-Port News** and other training materials are sent to the participants several weeks before the training program. This allows participants an opportunity to gain some familiarity with the terms and concepts of problem-oriented policing.

Typically, the training staff includes a PERF staff trainer and a police official who has had experience with implementing the problem-oriented approach. First, the trainers cover some of the basic research and history of the police profession to lay the groundwork for teaching the new approach. Then trainers use a combination of lectures, videotapes, and open discussions to teach the basic principles of problem-oriented policing. Specific examples of how the approach has been applied to police work elsewhere are described. Working in small groups, the participants are then given an opportunity to apply this analytical method to specific problems in their cities.

After each program, participants are asked to complete a short train-

ing evaluation form. These have been extremely helpful to the trainers in their effort to continually improve the structure of the programs and their own individual performances. All of the programs conducted to date have received favorable reviews. They have been most highly rated for their success in giving participants a solid understanding of the problem-oriented approach. Participants have indicated that they feel the approach will be valuable to their everyday police work.

"Participants are then given an opportunity to apply this analytical method to specific problems in their cities."

During the past six months, PERF has conducted problem-oriented policing training for the following police agencies:

- Milwaukee, Wisconsin Police, Department
- Reno, Nevada, Police Department
- Lakewood, Colorado, Police Department
- Alexandria, Virginia, Police Department
- Boca Raton, Florida, Police Department
- Hillsborough County, Florida, Sheriff's Office
- New York City Transit Police Department
- Suffolk County, New York, Police Department

PERF is also negotiating with several other police agencies on the details of training programs for their personnel.

For more information, contact **Mike Scott** at (202) 466-7820.

For Your Reading Pleasure

- **Rating Your Police Chief** by Jerald Vaughn
- **Police and Drug Control: A Home Field Advantage** by John Eck
- **Tribute: A Day on the Beat with America's Finest**

To order, call PERF at (202) 466-7820.

Who's Who?

Problem-Oriented Approach to Drug Enforcement

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Problem Solving in
Practice #3

Asset Seizure and Forfeiture: Another Tool

By Lt. Mike Hasson

Philadelphia—For five years, a family-run drug ring operated a thriving drug business less than two blocks from the 17th Police District in Philadelphia. At 1242 South 20th Street, the headquarters of the family ring, an estimated 400 to 500 customers bought codeine and valium, cocaine, and marijuana daily. Police estimated that annual profits from the drug sales netted more than \$1.3 million.

Residents in the area constantly complained of the flagrant drug dealing at the 20th Street address. They sent letters to the police commissioner describing how they were forced inside their homes after dark because of the violence in the neighborhood. Street fights and shootings were common to the area.

"No More Drugs!"

In 1988, police made fifteen drug arrests at the infamous rowhouse. In December of that same year, district officers served search warrants at the 20th Street location. Cash totaling \$70,000, drugs worth \$500,000, six guns, a computer and one automobile were seized. But, within only hours after the police left, the rowhouse resumed business as usual. The drug arrests had very little effect on the illegal drug operation.

Residents, angered by the drug dealing and increasing violence, organized the Philadelphia Direct Truth Anti-Drug Coalition. Coal-



Movers carry furniture from 1242 South 20th Street as police inventory property and workers seal the building's windows. (photo: John Costello, Philadelphia Inquirer)

tion members marched on the problem location twelve times, chanting "No More Drugs."

Frustrated with the lack of police and community control of the problem location, I contacted the Philadelphia District Attorney's office to seek help. I described the drug problem at 1242 20th Street. To address the problem, I challenged the district attorney to test the state's year-old drug forfeiture law. The law, which had not yet been used in Philadelphia, allows the assets of drug organizations to be seized on the spot—without a formal court hearing. All that is needed is a judge's order based on the evidence presented by the district attorney.

Police Involve District Attorney

The attorney agreed to take the case. A four-month investigation by the District Attorney's office established that the property and other

assets of the family were being used for an illegal drug operation. In June of 1989, the police raided the home again. Soon, two moving vans arrived, and workers began emptying the house of all its furnishings. Utility company employees came to shut off the gas, electricity, and water. Then, a crew from the city's department of licenses and inspections arrived to seal the doors and windows with sheetrock, stucco, and two-by-fours.

While the property at 1242 South 20th Street was being boarded up, members of the anti-drug coalition, Direct Truth, along with other neighborhood residents, began to pick up trash and sweep the pavement and street surrounding the property.

This effort was a three-fold commitment among police, the district attorney and the community.

For more information, contact Lt. Mike Hasson, Philadelphia Police Department at (215) 686-3015.

Submissions

When submitting descriptions of problem-solving efforts for the newsletter, remember to consider the following questions:

- What is the problem?
- For whom is it a problem and how are they harmed? How did the problem come to your attention?
- How has the department handled the problem in the past?
- What information did you collect about the problem?
- Where did you get the information?
- Did you have any difficulties in getting the information?
- Once you were clear about what the problem was, what was your goal?
- What strategies did you develop to reach your goal?
- What agencies assisted the police department in achieving the desired goal?
- Did you accomplish your goal? How do you know that your goal was accomplished?
- What would you recommend to other police agencies interested in implementing similar strategies to address similar problems?
- Did you have fun? (okay, you don't have to answer this one. I wouldn't want anyone to know that you actually had fun at work!!!)

Problem Solving in Practice #4

Crime: No Vacancy

By Sgt. Dave Petko

Santa Ana, CA—The Goldenwest Motel is located on a main arterial street in the northeast area of Santa Ana. During the spring and summer of 1988, the motel had deteriorated into a haven for drug dealers and users, prostitutes, and parolees. Tenants of the motel were harassed, threatened, and intimidated by the criminal elements who seemed to run the motel. In June 1988, the Santa Ana police responded to 48 calls for service at the motel. During that one month, officers spent more than 26 patrol hours handling the calls.

Citizens in the adjoining residential neighborhood were victims of several burglaries and assaults. Foot patrol officers received letters complaining of the problems from crime victims and a concerned property management company in the neighborhood. The patrol watch commander also disseminated a memorandum detailing a series of cat burglaries that had occurred in the area of the motel.

The Goldenwest Motel had caused sporadic problems for the police in the past. Poor management practices, a disinterested off-site owner, unkempt and poorly maintained property, and inexpensive room rates, \$8-\$12 per night, seemed to contribute to an already bad situation.

Heavy Enforcement And High Visibility

Initially, officers attacked the problems with traditional heavy enforcement and high visibility techniques. The problems subsided for a

period of time, but resurfaced after heavy patrol and high visibility decreased.

Officers then tried another strategy. Foot patrol officers contacted the citizens who had complained about the motel. The officers discussed possible solutions, and enlisted the support and assistance of citizen groups in the area.

Officers then ordered a computer print-out of burglaries in the area to review information about the suspects. During routine patrol, officers concentrated their efforts on identifying burglary suspects. A foot patrol officer was also assigned to re-search the ownership and licensing requirements at the motel.

Tenants of the motel were harassed, threatened, and intimidated by the criminal elements who seemed to run the motel.

The primary goal of the Santa Ana police was to eliminate the burglary problem in the neighborhoods surrounding the motel. To achieve this goal, a number of objectives were identified:

- Enlist patrol support for the operation.
- Inform the neighborhood of plans, solutions and progress of the operation.
- Improve management practices at the business, and
- Bring the building up to all code requirements.

To make the community aware of the police department's efforts, a meeting was scheduled with police, residents, and representatives from numerous city agencies. More than 200 citizens attended the meeting.

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(Crime cont. from p. 7)

Officers described their plans to address the problems. The police strongly urged the support of the residents and agency representatives.

After the meeting, the police contacted the city attorney's office to begin abatement proceedings. Other city agencies, such as code enforcement, the health department, the fire department and the planning commission, worked with the police.

The suspect identification efforts soon paid off. A suspect, who confessed to twelve of the outstanding burglary cases, was arrested. The burglar later helped officers recover a majority of the property. The suspect, who was on parole, was im-

mediately returned to state prison to serve the remaining seven years of his sentence plus sentencing for the burglary charges. During the intensified patrol efforts, twenty-five other arrests for penal, health, and safety code violations were made in and around the area of the motel.

Twenty-two pages of code violations were cited.

In August 1988, an inspection was conducted at the motel premises by the participating city agencies. Twenty-two pages of code violations were cited. Some of the violations required immediate repair. The owner

of the property was served a copy of all of the alleged violations with the dates for compliance identified for each violation. In April 1989, the motel owner filed a petition requesting permission to demolish the building. The owner indicated that the cost to make the necessary repairs exceeded the value of the land. The decision to approve the owner's request is pending.

Between August and January, there were only three calls for service at the Goldenwest Motel. The total patrol time spent in handling the calls was reduced to 54 minutes.

For further information, contact Lt. **Dan McCoy** or Sgt. **Dave Petko**, Santa Ana Police Department at (714) 647-5366.

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