Problem Solving Quarterly

Working the Nightshift

By Bob Heimberger

St. Louis, Missouri–More **than a year** ago, Ninth District Officers George Jonas and Fred Lengerer of the St. Louis Police Department became involved in problem-oriented policing **(POP).** After hearing about this new philosophy from their supervisors, the officers decided to combine their efforts and adopt their own **POP** project, although they were assigned to separate patrol vehicles.

The officers wanted to choose a project that they were familiar with and could manage during their nightshift. They were determined to try problem solving even though POP is often perceived as inappropriate for nightwatch, due to the limited opportunity for direct contact with the community.

Using information from the **department's computer crime mapping and records systems,** Jonas and Lengerer identified burglaries and repeated acts of vandalism as problems to local businesses. These incidents were occurring in the 2600-3600 blocks of Washington and Locust Streets, which is a ten-block area with 106 small businesses. Other problems included begging, public drinking and littering of beer bottles in the adjoining downtown area.

Problems in the area are compounded by the large number of transient and homeless people roaming the area. Almost every night, vagrants are found sleeping in the doorways of the local businesses. The Harbor Light and Salvation Army homeless shelters are located in the center of the target area.

From the beginning, Jonas and Lengerer realized that reaching a long-term solution to the problem would require working with the homeless people in the area, because much of the burglary and property damage was attributed to the street people who were attracted to these shelters, but did not actually use the facilities.
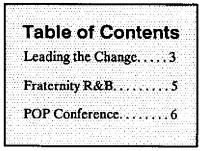
The Importance of Sharing Information

by Susie Mowry

As the new editor of **Problem-Solving Quarterly, I have** to say that I am a bit taken back by the responsibility of working on this publication. **PSQ** serves as a great vehicle to spread the word about problem solving. There are many agencies throughout the country who are participating in this type of policing and the examples available are almost endless.

PERF will continue to solicit interesting articles from every region of the country,

The officers' first step was to establish a more accurate timeframe when the crimes were occurring. **They checked** each building's security at the beginning of their shift and later at a predetermined time. They created field interview reports to identify vagrants and homeless people in the area. Select laws like begging, public drinking and littering were strictly enforced in the target area to assert some controls on the illegal behavior of offenders.

The officers wrote letters of introduction to communicate with the owners of the area's businesses, describe to them the problems they were trying to solve and ask for their cooperation. To hasten their security checks of the buildings, the officers requested that the owners place decals on all their store fronts. At a glance, the officers could then tell if a window was intact. They also asked the owners to stencil the street addresses on the rear of their buildings so they could be seen from the alley.

After analyzing the burglaries in the area, three distinct methods of entry were discovered; smashing windows, entering through the roof of second floor windows and using vehicles to crash through the overhead doors in the rear of the buildings.

Jonas and Lengerer then sent each owner the results of their security checks and advice about safety products, such as alarm systems and motion sensors, which might help safeguard businesses against these types of entry. The officers conducted a survey of the lights in the area

that revealed thirty-two burned out lamps.

Jonas and Lengerer contacted the citizen services bureau about the problem and to date the city lighting department has repaired 25 of the fixtures.

Believing an increased police presence might help reduce the number of incidents of burglary and vandalism, Jonas and Lengerer parked an extra patrol car at various locations inside the target area. They hoped to deter crime by giving the impression that the police were present.

POP is often perceived as inappropriate for nightwatch, due to the limited opportunity for direct contact with the community.

According to the officers' calculations, reported crime in the target area was reduced to about one-third of the burglary and vandalism levels prior to implementing their strategy.

To seek solutions to the problems of begging, public drinking and littering of beer bottles in the downtown area (fourth district), the officers requested a meeting with several city court judges and prosecutor Dave Miller of the City Counselor's Office.

Joined by Fourth District Officers Dan Crowe and Rock Nilhas, the group decided to use the city's alternative work release program, "Project Pride," as an option for defendants convicted of these violations.

"Project Pride" gives defendants the option to pay a $100 fine or do four hours of community service cleaning up downtown streets and alleys. The monthly cleanup, supervised by officers, tailors the punishment to fit the offense; gives the courts an appropriate, enforceable sanction; provides the community with cleaner streets; and allows defendants to do something that enhances community pride. As a result of this program, the officers noticed a positive difference in controlling the neighborhood's problems.

Working nightshift exposes officers to a different community and set of problems. Officers should not exclude themselves from doing problem solving just because of the hours they work. Nightshift officers not only need to be creative in solving problems, but also in their ways of communicating with others who work more traditional hours. It may mean communicating though the mail, as Officers Jonas and Lengerer did, or working together on a problem with officers from the dayshift and evening shift.

Whatever methods are used, it's important that nightshift officers realize that they have the same opportunity to use the problem-solving process to address their problems as other officers in their department, but they might just have to be a little more creative to do so.

Bob Heimberger is a police officer in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department **and helps to coordinate the department's POP program.**

Fraternity Rhythm & Blues

By Cynthia Avery

Ann Arbor, Michigan — **Though equipped** with stringent city ordinances and a low tolerance for noise violators, police officers in the **university** town of Ann Arbor are inundated yearly with complaints of noisy parties. Various enforcement tactics have been implemented, from warnings to citations, but each year the zeal of partying students continues to take a toll on the city's permanent residents.

The majority of noise violations originate from the University of Michigan's many fraternities, which are concentrated in the central downtown area. Activities of these groups, however innocent, send dispatchers' telephones ringing off their hooks from dusk until dawn. Every attempt is made to respond to these calls, but they are often lower priority than other, more serious calls. Subsequently, citizens feel the police are insensitive and not attentive to their needs as taxpayers when noise complaints aren't immediately solved.

The Phi Gamma fraternity typically received a range of six to twelve citations per semester. One evening Officer Cynthia Avery was dispatched to the Phi Gamma fraternity concerning a loud music complaint. She drove by the fraternity but was unable to locate the noise. Not long after her call two other units were dispatched to the fraternity on a call-back complaint. Neither unit could find the illusive noise.

Having been one of Ann Arbor's first community police officers, Avery viewed the situation as an excellent opportunity to use **POP** to try to alleviate noise emanating from fraternities, starting with Phi Gamma.

Avery contacted the complainants after obtaining their names from dispatch. The Fergusons, the fraternity's neighbors, told Avery noise that could not be heard from the road was easily discernible inside their bedroom because the L-shaped layout of the fraternity house directly faced the rear of their home.

Each year the noise generated by the zeal of partying students takes a big toll on the city's permanent residents.

After this initial meeting, Avery met twice with the Fergusons and twice with the board members of the fraternity separately. Members of the fraternity board then met with the Fergusons as a first step toward renewing neighborhood relations. Fraternity President Matt Prevest was surprised to learn that noise generated from the fraternity could be heard from within the Fergusons' home. So the fraternity prepared a detailed proposal to reduce noise and improve neighborhood relations, which was eventually adopted. Prevest made changes in the fraternity house's upcoming renovations that included building a brick wall as a sound barrier.

The neighborhood was delighted with the response of the fraternity to the noise problems. This situation has turned into a cooperative effort among the Cambridge Neighborhood Association, the Ann Arbor Police Department and the Phi Gamma Fraternity. Misperceptions that each group had had **about each other were shattered. Communication and mutual** respect between the citizens and **the students has developed,** which had not been achieved in several years.

Phi Gamma has received only one noise citation this semester. Avery and the Cambridge Neighborhood Association are encouraged by the progress Phi Gamma has made. The Ann Arbor Police Department and Phi Gamma fraternity have also formulated an agreement so the smooth relations between them can now continue even when the fraternity leadership changes.

The Phi Gamma fraternity has the potential to be a model for other fraternities on campus to solve their noise problems. If this neighborhood relations project continues to be a success, fraternities can look forward to fewer visits from the police and greater acceptance from their neighbors.

This is one of many examples that community police officers in Ann Arbor have targeted. The key to problem solving is the recognition that there is a problem and going the "extra step" to understand and solve it. Often, as illustrated, a solution can be attained, but without the initiative of the individual officer, there is no catalyst for change.

Cynthia Avery is an officer with the Ann Arbor Police Department.

Differences Between POP & COP Discussed at Conference

by Deborah Weisel

The differences between problem-oriented policing **(POP) and** community-oriented policing (COP) were the subject of a featured roundtable session held at the third national Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego in last October.

"The process of change in policing is not a simple, mechanical process," said Professor Herman Goldstein, who lead the roundtable discussion. Goldstein is professor of law at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and author of the seminal text on problem solving, **Problem-Oriented Policing.**

To the extent that COP and POP have an agreed-upon meaning, most departments are incorporating elements of each in their own plans.

"Change is complex and evolving, not neat. It is no wonder, then, that there are a dizzying array of acronyms in use to describe the numerous models of innovative change that have evolved. This is as it should be as police departments explore local needs and adapt elements from various models to serve those needs."

Most common among the identifiable models are those referred to as POP and COP. To the extent that these models have an agreed-upon meaning, most departments are incorporating elements of each in their own plans.

Goldstein characterized community policing as dominated by a commitment to supplement or replace existing strategies by placing heavy emphasis on relating to and engaging the community. Hundreds of variations now exist along a continuum distinguished by the degree of engagement—from the most superficial (e.g. police athletic leagues), to mobilizing the community, and ultimately to empowering the community in ways that also serve to empower the police to work on their behalf. He cautioned that there are numerous impostors that masquerade as community policing.

Goldstein sees POP as a more far-reaching realignment of police operations in which the initial emphasis is on examining the police task—the problems that the police are called into handle. Identified at various levels (from citywide to all the way down to the beat), the goal is then to subject these problems to detailed analysis.

This analysis is then used as the basis for developing the best response. That response—almost always multi-faceted— usually involves creative alternatives, various forms of community involvement and perhaps some traditional law enforcement.

Also at the conference session, Division Chief Ron Sloan of the Aurora (CO) Police Department, which implemented community policing more than five years ago, discussed how community policing is more conceptual and philosophical than POP. He believes that the community policing philosophy is the foundation that supports problem solving.

POP is a more far-reaching [than COP] ... [and has an] initial emphasis on examining the problems that the police are called into handle, says Dr. Herman Goldstein.

As separate approaches, Sloan believes that both COP and POP have weaknesses. For example, the COP concept is too nebulous and unfocused, and does not provide personnel with the tools for more effective policing. But POP fails to emphasize the critical community aspects of police effectiveness such as the community's role in identifying problems, the issue of distrust by citizens of police and the absence of two-way communication. Instead, POP assumes that these crucial elements will occur as officers address problems, but there is no formal framework to facilitate these aspects.

Commander Jerry Sanders of the San Diego Police Department, whose agency uses problem-solving techniques within the city's neighborhoods, concurred at the conference session that POP gives officers tools for addressing specific problems. His department has community mobilizers who maintain primary responsibility for carrying out

Leading The Change: Transition to a POP Department

By Darrel W. Stephens

In the last issue of PSQ, "Leading the Change" dealt with how to minimize the impact of the chief who leaves a department that has started problem or community-oriented policing. In this issue I want to turn my attention to the new chief who comes into a police department where the transition to community problem-oriented policing is already underway.

Although I have thought about this subject before, it has taken on much greater significance since I will be leaving PERF at the end of January 1993 to become the police chief in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The Transition Approach

What is the best way for a new chief to approach the transition in a police department where community-based POP is already established? How does the new chief integrate his or her own views into an effort that is already underway, especially if he or she has philosophical differences with the established plan?

These are among the difficult and critically important questions a new chief who identifies with and supports the philosophy must address to establish his or her own identity in the new department and community. Obviously how a new chief addresses these questions will depend on the **unique** circumstances that exist in each community. Nevertheless, there are several points that are worth considering because they can be applied universally.

First, it is critically important for the new chief to respect what has **already** taken place and recognize past **contributions.** For example, the St. Petersburg **Police Department, under** former Chief Curt Curtsinger's leadership, has made tremendous strides in the initial implementation of community policing. A new chief must carefully consider the approach to making modifications to avoid having a negative impact on the enthusiasm that has developed for the philosophy in the organization and the community.

It is critically important for a new chief to respect and recognize past contributions to a department.

As those who have worked on the implementation of community-based POP know, there is considerable risk for a chief to be among the first in a department to separate from tradition and publicly state that the police must operate in a different way. That does not *mean any* changes cannot be made—they can and should be made. But the new chief needs to make it very clear that change does not mean a rejection of what has been previously accomplished.

Second, one of the fundamental organizational values of the community-based POP is that employees at all levels must be in-

valved in bringing about whatever change is needed. And if the department has been working on POP for any length of time, there will probably be a considerable number of ideas waiting for the opportunity to be heard and implemented. A new chief needs to take advantage of these ideas–building on the positive aspects of what has already happened—while reinforcing the importance of continued change in a participatory organizational environment.

Third, the new chief can and should re-emphasize the importance that the community and other public and private agencies

have to this philosophy of policing. This is one of the most difficult aspects of the community-based POP–the challenge it poses to establish a collaborative relationship with the community, as well as relationships with local government agencies.

In both cases the police must overcome past relationships that may have been less than ideal. Other governmental agencies may also be somewhat resentful of the police getting into their territory–particularly if they feel the police have not taken their full share of the budget cuts local government has experienced in recent years. The St. Petersburg department and former Chief Curtsinger did the hard work associated with selling the concept inside and outside of the department, which has resulted in an all-around high level of enthusiasm for the philosophy that has survived, in spite of a change in chiefs.

The Challenges Ahead

A new police chief faces formidable challenges in taking over any organization. There are always conflicting expectations inside and outside the department that must be carefully balanced. However, given a choice between an organization that is steeped in old traditions, and one that has begun the hard work of redefining policing responsibilities and its relationship with the community–I would opt for the latter anytime.

Darrel Stephens is executive director of PERF and is former chief of police in Newport News, Virginia.

from both large and small departments, so that you can see what is going on with POP. In other words, I hope to make you see that it makes no sense to "re-invent the wheel." If your department is working on a problem, then most likely another agency has already worked on it, or is in the process of solving the same problem now.

Creative POP Officers Think Alike

There are numerous examples of officers in different states working on the same problems, coming up with the same responses and seeing similar results.

For instance, there was a detective in the Newport News (VA) Police Department who was assigned to the general assignment squad. Her main complaint was the amount of gasoline drive-offs that she was assigned to investigate. To her it did not make sense to spend important resources of the department, not only hers but uniform patrol as well, on incidents that usually did not result in arrest or any other police action.

The detective decided to meet with the owners of the gas stations involved and attempt to come up with an equitable solution to the problem. Her suggestion was to have the patrons pay for gas prior to pumping. Needless to say, not all of the gas station owners agreed. There was discussion back and forth, but eventually, the agreement was reached that the patrol officers would not be dispatched to gas stations to take the report. The report would be made over

the phone and the officers would be advised, over the radio, of the information about the vehicle involved in the drive-off.

Fairly simple solution to a comparatively simple problem, right? The interesting part of the story is that an officer in Clearwater, Florida, worked on the same problem, at the same time, and came up with the same solution. So did an officer in St. Louis, Missouri. It makes you wonder how many other officers did the same.

Problem Solving Across the Country

Beginning with this issue, PERF will provide a list of agencies throughout the country who participate in problem solving (page 7). If you are anticipating looking at a problem, talk to these agencies, and others. See what the rest of the country is doing about the same types of problems. Don't limit yourself to only contacting agencies of similar size; experience has shown that every agency, regardless of size, faces the same kinds of problems and quite often, reaches the same solutions.

One of the strengths of POP is the willingness of police agencies to share information about their problem-solving efforts. Take advantage of the information available and make your problem-solving efforts, and your department, stronger in the **process.**

Susie Mowry is PERF's POP trainer. She is also a lieutenant with the Newport News Police Department.

community engagement and **facilitating problem-solving efforts.**

The COP v. POP roundtable was one of five plenary sessions conducted during the conference. Each was developed to focus on specific issues related to POP that police practitioners had identified as important.

The plenary sessions were scheduled between more than 35 different small-group workshops, most of which dealt with using problem solving as a technique to **address specific community** problems, such as convenience store robberies, street prostitution, traffic problems, or street drug dealing.

Aurora (CO) Division Chief Ron Sloan believes that the community policing philosophy is the foundation which supports problem solving.

More than 450 persons attended the three-day conference and a fourth conference has been scheduled for November 3-5, 1993, also in **San** Diego.

Deborah Weisel is a senior researcher at PERIL'.

Problem-..Sotstng Quarterly is published four times a year by the PoliceEserutive Research Forum and *seeks totester sseharigte of* information regarding problem oriented policing.

Susie Mowry, Editor

Lorraine Griffin, Managing Editor

POP in Your Neighborhood

To **help facilitate communications between POP departments across** the **country, PSQ** is featuring agencies that have participated in PERF's training. Upcoming issues of the newsletter will feature agencies from other regions. The following is a partial listing of agenices that have implemented POP in the mid-west region:

Illinois

- Chicago Police Dept.
- Aurora Police Dept.
- Joliet Police Dept.
- Peoria Police Dept.

Minnesota

- St. Paul Police Dept.
- Eagan Police Dept.
- Missouri Police Dept.
- St. Louis Police Dept.
- Kansas City Police Dept.

Tennessee

- Chattanooga Housing Authority

Texas

- Hurst Police Dept.
- McAllen Police Dept.
- Friendswood Police Dept.
- Alvin Police Dept.
- Sugarland Police Dept.
- Midland Police Dept.

Wisconsin

- Appleton Police Dept.
- Eau Claire Police Dept.

Submissions

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

a What is the problem?

For whom is it a problem?

Who is affected by the problem,, and how are they affected?

How has the department handled the problem in the past?

What information was collected about the problem?

Were there any difficulties in getting the information?

What was the goal of the problem-solving effort?

What strategies were developed to reach that goal?

What agencies assisted the police department in achieving the goal?

Was the goal accomplished

What would you recommend to other police agencies interested in addressing similar problems?

Send <u>submissions</u> to:
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