

Problem Solving Quarterly

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Police, Parents Team Up To Teach Traffic Safety

By Kenneth Bond and Scott Rastin

The Hamilton Wentworth (Ontario) Regional Police Service's 750 sworn officers serve a population of about 500,000 citizens. The police service also has 500 non-sworn employees.

In 1991, the Hamilton Wentworth Regional Police Community Service Traffic Safety Branch became concerned about traffic accidents involving school children, and decided to evaluate traffic safety programs for school children. "Elmer's Safety Rules" was a program being delivered to children in first grade. This 30-year-old program had an elephant mascot and consisted of seven rules for children to follow around traffic.

Scanning

Police first analyzed records of traffic collisions in 1990, focusing on children under the age of 16 who were pedestrians or cy-

clists. In 1990, there were 252 collisions involving the target group. Eighty percent of collisions involving children aged 6 to 8 were "dart-out" collisions, resulting from children darting into traffic from between parked cars. The result was surprising because one of Elmer's rules was not to play between parked cars.

To determine whether these results were an aberration or the norm, officers conducted further study. Records from 1985 to 1989 were evaluated, with similar results. In fact, the number of collisions involving the target group averaged 250 annually over the five years studied. Again, almost 80 percent of accidents involving 6- to 8-year-olds were dart-out collisions.

These data confirmed the need for a new traffic safety program, and officers began working on this task.

Analysis

After several days' work, the officers involved realized that presenting Elmer's rules to first-grade children did not make them traffic safety experts. In retro-

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Neighborhood Is Finally Free of Gang-Related Problems

by Dave Bernardy

Friendship Lane is a one-square-block area in the Northeast section of Reno, Nev. Ninety-five percent of the residents are non-English-speaking Hispanics. Most residents work at low-income jobs, and some have extended families living in two-bedroom duplexes. Local gangs found a criminal haven in this area by intimidating the residents.

Due to numerous calls for service based on gang-related incidents, including drive-by shootings, loud parties, drinking in public, and drugs, the Reno Police Department began a problem-oriented policing project called the Friendship Lane Pilot Project.

Scanning

Officers gathered information from a number of sources for the

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(Traffic, cont. from p. 1)

spect, this realization was perhaps the most important step in the project. It meant that the officers had to look outside the police department for help.

The officers **began** by calling people in related **organizations**, such as city traffic, public health, early education, and parents' groups. **When advised** of the **problem**, these organizations were surprised that the police were calling them for help. They thought the police were the experts! After many calls and referrals, in July 1991 the officers invited people from a number of disciplines to take part in an **advisory** committee on traffic safety for children.

The **committee discovered** that **various groups, including public health nurses, teachers and the police, were teaching traffic safety. However, everyone was teaching a different program. This led to a scattered and inconsistent approach.**

Based on their combined experiences and professional knowledge, members of the committee identified parents as the best teachers, because they had the most access to their children and were often willing to spend the time required for children to learn traffic safety. However, while parents may be willing to teach their children traffic safety, they often lack the proper information or knowledge to do so. The committee also recognized that in some family settings, due to economics, education and other factors, traffic safety would not be taught, no matter what information was provided.

These conclusions helped the committee to formulate two clear **goals. First, parents and caregivers must take an active role in provid-**

ing traffic safety **training** to their children. Second, a network of community organizations should assist parents, teaching the same message **and** reaching children whose parents might fail to educate them.

A study of traffic safety research confirmed the committees' conclusions: community agencies must work together to address traffic safety issues, police officers are not the best safety educators, dart-out collisions are a major cause for concern, parents often fail to become **involved** in **teaching** traffic safety, and parents are an important part of any safety program. The committee, not wanting to "reinvent the wheel," studied existing programs that incorporated these goals.

The advisory group concluded that an effective traffic safety program must involve parents.

The research unearthed a German program and book titled *Traffic Training: Parents Practice with Their Children* (English translation). The program included **exercises that taught safe crossing at mid-block and between parked cars, thus addressing the dart-out problem.** The committee obtained a **copy of the program book and permission to use the material in developing a similar program.**

Response

Two volunteer authors from the committee worked with two police officers to develop the **Canadian** version of this book—the KIDestrian book **and** education program.

The KIDestrian program consists of a series of simple, fun

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exercises **that parents** or other caregivers teach their children. To address the committee's second goal, **the book** is also designed to assist community organizations in **teaching** traffic safety.

Parents can start using the exercises as soon as their **children begin walking and playing outside. Important in the first exercises is the idea of stopping at the curb or, in the book's terminology, developing "Kid Brakes." This skill, once learned and made instinctive, becomes an important base from which to build further traffic safety skills.**

To accommodate children as they mature and become more independent, the exercises can be adapted to each new stage. As children are allowed to venture out on their own, they tend to take shortcuts and forget safety rules. Rules such as always crossing at corners or never crossing between parked cars are forgotten when a friend is calling from across the street. The fact that

(cont. on p. 4)

Building High-Performance POP Teams Through Training

By Dominic Licavoli

Now that POP is a popular strategy for police departments, POP training is becoming an equally hot topic. Many administrators are looking for a perfect training program that will quickly have all of their employees involved in successful problem solving.

What Training Can and Can't Do

G. Douglas Mayo wrote that "the term 'training' emphasizes (1) the development of a skill, and (2) learning for a definite purpose, characteristically associated with the goals of an organization." To implement a POP approach, police departments must modify their training to coincide with new organizational goals. Good training provides employees with the skills that they need and helps them to put theory into practice.

Many departments use an eight-hour POP training course, though they may extend it for as long as five days. Course content typically includes the history of policing, the SARA model (scanning, analysis, response, assessment), a case study review, and some group problem solving. Unfortunately, in many cases this training becomes the "cure-all" for POP implementation. If 100 percent involvement in POP doesn't happen, order more SARA training.

More SARA training may not be the remedy for insufficient in-

volvement. There may be a performance problem that is not linked to training. POP supervisors need to recognize the difference between a training problem and a performance problem.

Training addresses skill deficiencies. Mager and Pipe describe a skill deficiency as "they couldn't do it if their lives depended on it." Do your department's officers fit this description when you look at their POP skills? Then they need more training.

Performance problems, on the other hand, stem from other factors, such as incentives favoring the traditional approach, competing activities or conditions officers perceive as inequitable. More training, no matter how good, will not solve these problems.

Squad Training

If training is what officers need, what constitutes effective training? For POP to work, all employees must be skilled problem solvers, motivators and team builders, in addition to having many other skills. Effective training involves both officers and their first-line supervisors. Squad training not only fosters POP skills, but also fosters team building, a necessary component of POP.

A carefully designed training program allows all team members to participate, and minimizes the perception of other groups as opposing forces. Training of this sort must be ongoing and thorough to continually reinforce team building.

Phase Training

In the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), we are experimenting with a phase training model. Phase training covers a

five-month period, and first-line supervisors must attend training with their squad. The training follows this structure:

Phase 1—The commanding officer meets with first- and second-line supervisors to set goals.

Phase 2—Squads receive training in team building, communication skills and goal setting. At the end of the day, trainers ask the squads to identify five problems in their assigned areas. Those problems will be used for the next training session.

Phase 3—This phase, which occurs one month after Phase 2, consists of an eight-hour POP course that includes the history of policing, the SARA model, a case-study review, and some group problem solving skills. Students identify resources, both internal and external, for problem solving. Of the five problems they were asked to identify, they choose one for their initial team problem-solving effort.

Phase 4—Occurring one month after Phase 3, this phase allows students to practice their problem-solving skills. They are coached through the SARA steps for their chosen problem. Trainers teach them how to maximize resources and manage their problem-solving projects.

Phase training gives students time to experiment with POP. They receive coaching and support for their first attempt, so that they will not be discouraged by their first failure. The LAPD is also designing follow-up training to further develop POP skills. We are measuring the training program's effectiveness by conducting surveys before train-

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Many **departments** use an eight-hour POP training course, **though** they may extend it for as long as five days. Course content typically includes the history of policing, the SARA model (**scanning, analysis, response, assessment**), a case study review, **and** some group problem solving. **Unfortunately**, in many cases this training becomes the "cure-all" for POP implementation. If 100 percent involvement in POP doesn't **happen**, order more SARA training.

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(cont. on p. 4)

Submissions

PERF invites submissions of articles **describing** successful **problem-solving** projects. **When submitting** descriptions, discuss the four phases of your effort—**scanning, analysis, response, and assessment**. It may help to **answer the following questions**:

- **What was the problem?**
- **Who was affected by the problem, and how?**
- **How has the department handled the problem in the past?**
- **What information was collected about the problem, and from what sources?**
- **What was the goal of the problem-solving effort?**
- **What strategies were developed to reach that goal?**
- **Was the goal accomplished?**
- **What agencies assisted the police department in achieving the goal?**
- **What would you recommend to other agencies interested in addressing similar problems?**

Send submissions to
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(Training, cont. from p. 3)

ing and at intervals after training has been completed.

Initial observations of phase training indicate that it is successful. Teams appear to be working together, gathering data and effectively discussing their chosen problem.

Thus far, phase training seems to be a promising way to help officers and first-line supervisors gain a working knowledge of POP, including the team-building and communication skills that are necessary for any successful POP project.

Sources for this article included the following:

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Couper, David C., and Sabine H. Lobitz, Quality Policing: The Madison Experience. Washington, D. C.: PERF. 1991.

Hersey, Paul, and Kenneth Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources (Fifth Edition). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall. 1988.

Mager, Robert F., and Peter Pipe, Analyzing Performance Problems or You Really Oughta Wanna. Belmont, Calif.: Lake Publishing Company. 1984.

Mayo, Douglas, and Phillip H. DuBois, The Complete Book of Training: Theory, Principles and Techniques. San Diego: University Associates Inc. 1987.

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(Traffic, cont. from p. 2)

children will often take the easiest route to get across the road explains, in part, the high number of dart-out injuries. To address this problem, the book includes exercises that teach crossing safely at mid-block and between parked cars.

The team of authors revised the book several times. After each revision, the book was either field tested or examined by safety experts. Therefore, the book incorporates not only the results of the committee's research, but also advice from traffic engineers, health department officials and educators. The field test included giving the books to parents at two local schools and asking for feedback. The results indicated that over 90 percent of parents and caregivers thought the book was outstanding. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated in each revision.

Public health nurses conducted field tests to determine the effectiveness of the program in communities where English is a second language. Older students took responsibility for explaining the program to parents and younger students. Once again, the study results were extremely positive.

Upon completion of field testing and revisions, the authors produced a very rough prototype of the book and solicited corporations for sponsorship. Corporate sponsorship would mean that the book could be provided free of charge. The committee thought this was important to get parents and others involved.

Canadian Tire, an automotive, sporting goods and hardware retailer with stores throughout

(cont. on p. 5)

(Traffic, cont. from p. 4)

Canada, is a leader in children's safety through its Child Protection Foundation. The foundation offered \$19,000 to produce a quality prototype of the book. The prototype would be used to attract additional sponsors.

Canadian Tire made the book available in both English and French. The only thing missing was the money required for printing. It would cost approximately \$25,000 to print 20,000 copies to initially reach community groups and parents and caregivers with children aged 2 to 9.

Fundraising was not the problem the committee expected it to be. Once organizations learned about the program, they became more than willing to assist, and ended up donating more than the required \$25,000. Community members also expressed interest in helping to get the program running. This led to the development of the KIDestrian Team to incorporate **community input in making administrative decisions relating to the program. The team included police and community members.**

The **national postal company, Canada Post**, offered to **package and distribute the materials at no cost. In addition to this support, Canada Post also mailed out a fundraising request, provided a cash donation, purchased sidewalk chalk to accompany the books, and put KIDestrian advertising posters on all postal trucks.**

Staff from a national publication called *Today's Parent* offered to print the books at a reduced cost, allowing the team to print 25,000 books instead of the original goal of 20,000. In addition to this support, they used their marketing expertise to enhance the

book's layout, making it easier to read and more visually appealing.

As the books were fairly expensive, the team did not want to send them home with children and simply hope that they were used. They chose instead to target particular groups of people connected to children. Members of each group would know the best way to promote and distribute the book to others in their interest group. The team sent letters and order forms to school principals, recreation centers and **neighborhood** associations, day care centers and home care providers, home school organizations, **parent associations**, public health nurses, police officers, and city traffic officials. In addition, the police video training branch produced a promotional video.

The team launched the KIDestrian program through a media event on April 13, 1994. Within two weeks, the 25,000 books were distributed, with demand exceeding expectations.

Assessment

Parents eagerly requested the books, as did community organizations. In addition to the groups listed above, the books were purchased and used by senior centers (for **training grandchildren**), scouting and guide groups, school boards (for **incorporating the program into gym classes**), **babysitter instruction trainers, pediatric physicians, and the Canadian Red Cross Society.**

Evaluation was an important part of the KIDestrian program from the beginning. The team has not yet been able to measure the program's effect on reducing child traffic injuries. Given the number of variables involved in such accidents, it is **hard to make a**

correlation between a safety program and the number of accidents. The team also recognized that it would be very difficult to have an appropriate control group. So the evaluations focused on whether the KIDestrian program reached its intended audiences and whether those audiences found it useful.

The evaluations gathered information from parents, day care workers and teachers who used the program; other community groups; and the **Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.** The evaluations revealed that the KIDestrian program was reaching its **intended audiences and that people found it useful.** Evaluators pointed out problems with the program, such as the need for a section on rural traffic safety and the fact that some sections were hard to follow.

As a result of the evaluations, the books have been redesigned, with new sections on rural and railroad-crossing safety. A KIDestrian community manual has also been developed, which helps community members publicize and disseminate the program through press releases and special events.

In March 1995, the **Canadian Tire Child Protection Foundation launched the KIDestrian program nationally. Over 1 million books, in both English and French, have been circulated throughout Canada.**

For those of you wondering about Elmer the safety elephant, he's still alive and well, but now he has help teaching traffic safety.

Kenneth Bond and Scott Rastin are police officers with the Hamilton Wentworth Regional Police.

(*Neighborhood, from p. 1*)

scanning and analysis phases of the project, **including** citizen meetings, calls for service, field interviews with **gang** members, and officer observations.

A review of the calls for service in the area revealed that the department had received 255 calls from January to June 1994. Of these 255 calls, 11 percent were gang-related, as described by the complainant. Eleven percent of the total calls **required** a return visit by the officer; 9 percent of the calls involved crimes such as burglary, property destruction, auto theft, and **larceny**; and 5 percent of the calls **pertained** to **suspicious** people and vehicles in the area.

The Reno Police Department has a Community Action Team (CAT) that works with local **gangs**. The CAT **had conducted** several field interviews with **gang** members in the **Friendship** Lane area. That information was reviewed for times, **dates** and circumstances of activity. Several officers on **various** shifts also drove **through** the **area** and made independent **observations**.

The **gang that had "adopted"** the area was a large Hispanic group called the Montellos (after a local street). According to the CAT's field interviews, **none** of the gang members lived in the area. The residents were easy prey for this **gang**, who threatened them if they called the police. Because of cultural **and language** barriers between residents and police, many incidents went unreported, **and** residents dis-trusted the police. The **gang** felt free to conduct all types of activities in the area, including stripping stolen vehicles, **drinking** in public, **and using abandoned apartments to take drugs and store weapons**

presumably the weapons that they used in drive-by shootings.

Analysis

To understand the root causes of the problem and come up with a response, officers used the above-mentioned information gathered from the CAT, crime data and officer observations, along with a series of community meetings that confirmed **and** added to this information. These meetings resulted from the residents' growing concern about safety **and** the increase in drive-by shootings that threatened the safety of children and the whole **neighborhood**.

Residents failed to report some incidents because of language differences and gang intimidation. Drive-by shootings finally prompted residents to meet with police.

Police officers asked residents **what they thought the problems were and what they wanted the police department** to do about them. The residents listed several problems, but the number-one problem was the **gang that had taken over their neighborhood**. The gang's graffiti was ruining the appearance of the area, and residents were tired of the neighborhood's reputation as a gang-infested area. They also voiced serious concerns about the safety of their children. Because the streets were very dark due to lack of lighting, the gang members would drive their "low-rider" vehicles through the streets at high speeds and would not see the children playing.

Most **gang** activity took place **between dusk and early morning**. Inadequate street lighting meant that much of the activity went unnoticed.

Taken together, information from residents, police and the field interviews revealed two main factors that gave the gang opportunity to act in this neighborhood: 1) poor communication between residents and police, due to language and cultural barriers and intimidation of residents by **gang** members; and 2) environmental factors, such as poor lighting and streets well-suited for fast driving. It became **apparent** that the most effective and long-lasting solution would address these factors, thus eliminating the **opportunity** for criminal behavior.

Response

In the past, the department **had** responded with a high level of visibility **and** enforcement. However, when the police had to direct their attention to other areas of the city, the problem would resurface in the **Friendship** Lane area. Officers decided that it would be more effective to build working relationships with community residents to gain their trust **and support**. They decided on several clean-up efforts, with the dual purpose of promoting better police-community relations and improving the **area's physical appearance**.

The police contacted the media at the beginning of the response phase. The officers did a walk-through of the **neighborhood** with the media, **explaining** their approaches to **eliminating** the **gang** problem. The public awareness and support received from the media stimulated businesses to assist in the project with donations.

(*cont. on p. 7*)

(*Neighborhood*, from p. 6)

The first step on the agenda was a community clean-up day. The local disposal service donated three large dumpsters. Rakes, shovels and brooms were also donated, and a local tow company loaned the community one of its trucks at no charge. The abandoned cars were towed from the area, the dumpsters were filled and removed, **and** the area was swept from one end to the other. These clean-up efforts were expanded with the **painting** over of all the graffiti on the **buildings**, in order to bolster the **neighborhood's** image. Through positive publicity, businesses **donated enough paint and equipment for all the duplexes in the neighborhood** to be painted.

The next phase of the project was lighting improvement. The local power company, with the city's cooperation, erected four large street lights in the darkest areas of the community. A local hardware store donated 30 motion-detector lights, **enough** for each of the duplexes. In **addition**, the **streets were repaved and speed bumps** added to thwart speeding vehicles, thereby **reducing** the likelihood of drive-by **shootings and** danger to residents, especially children. A local construction company was contacted **and** agreed to complete the work at no **charge**.

As a final step to long-term cooperation **and** public safety, police helped residents start a **neighborhood watch group and plan regular** monthly meetings to discuss crime issues. Police also **developed** a community advisory **group that** provided information on government services for residents.

This response phase was targeted to be completed in six

months. During that time, the officers and community volunteers cleaned up the neighborhood, removed the graffiti, installed security lights, paved the street, and established community awareness among the residents.

Increased community trust in the police, combined with environmental changes, eliminated the opportunity for gang activity.

Assessment

The residents were empowered to handle many of the problems themselves. They **had** gained trust in the police **department**.

The calls for service were compared between the first six months of the year **and** the second six months, which was the project period. Although calls for service increased **during the** project period, this may likely be **attributed** to the residents' increased trust in the police **department**. Calls **regarding gang** activity, however, decreased by 100 percent, while calls **regarding** unwanted people in the area decreased by 50 percent. Additionally, family disturbance calls decreased 50 percent, which **may have** been an

unexpected benefit of the community cohesion the project created.

The officers also completed a resident survey to assess the project's impact. They went with translators to every house in the community and questioned at least one member of each household. The survey comprised 10 questions in both English and Spanish. Because the residents' number-one concern had been the **gang** problem, officers asked which of the activities completed seemed most successful at reducing the gang problem. Ninety percent said that the improved lighting made the most difference, while others listed the neighborhood watch **and** the clean-up projects as having the greatest effect. In addition, officers asked residents to rate the department's performance in the neighborhood; all survey respondents gave the department the highest possible score. All the residents surveyed said they felt safer after the project.

These are the initial results of the project. The department is completing a second six-month evaluation to see if the project continues to have positive effects.

Dave Bernardy is a sergeant with the Reno Police Department.

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