

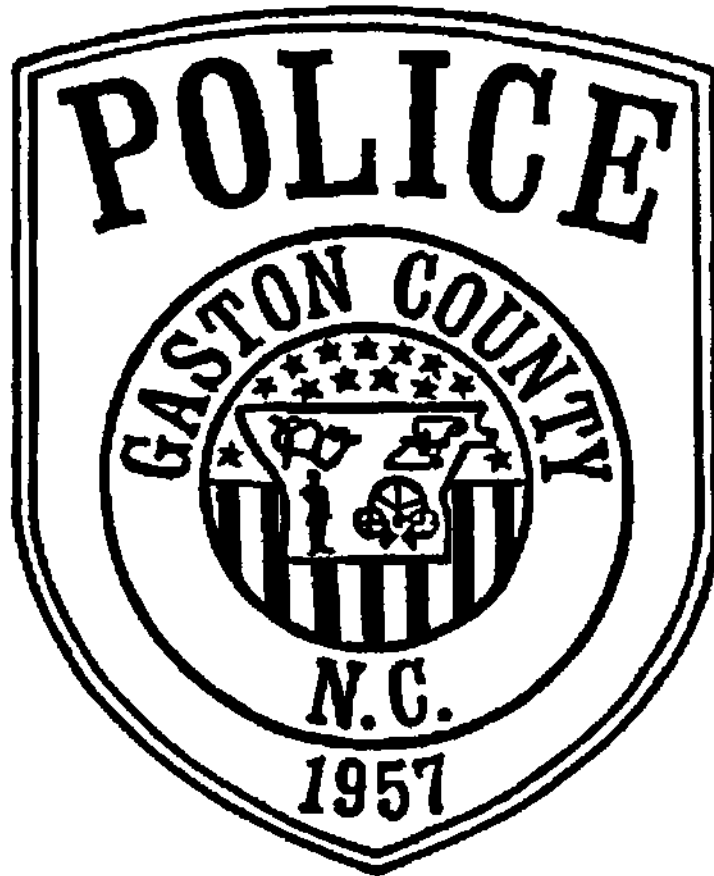
**HERMAN GOLDSTEIN EXCELLENCE IN
PROBLEM-SOLVING**

**TALMADGE McINNIS
GASTON COUNTY (NC) POLICE DEPARTMENT
HONORABLE MENTION
1993**

Police Executive Research Forum

GASTON COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

PROBLEM SOLVING FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY



CASE IN POINT: PENEGROVE MOBILE HOME PARK

**Submitted by:
Talmadge N. McInnis
July 20, 1993**

**In consideration for the Problem-Solving Award
to be presented by PERT**

**PINEGROVE MOBILE HOME PARK
A PROBLEM SOLVING EFFORT TO BETTER THE COMMUNITY**

Pinegrove Mobile Home Park (aka: Venn's) is located in the Eastern portion of Gaston County, which is in the Southern Piedmont of North Carolina. Gaston County is a medium sized county covering 356.5 square miles with a total population of 175,093 people. Gaston County encompasses fourteen separate municipalities, twelve of these having their own police departments. The unincorporated area of the county covers 292 square miles with a population of 80,012 people and is served by the Gaston County Police Department. The unincorporated area of Gaston County has no public housing but has 212 mobile home parks, most of these designated as low income housing. From these parks a significant number of calls for service to the County Police are generated.

Pinegrove Mobile Home Park's operation started in the 1970's and began with good management and decent law abiding tenants. Through the years the park grew to a total of twenty-four (24) mobile homes and one house that were all owned and rented by the property owner. The park operation was good until 1984 when the owner rented to a man who began a drug operation from a mobile home. This tenant began with small quantities of marijuana. Through the course of several years this operation grew to cocaine and prescription pain killers and also saw two of this tenant's brothers move into the park. These brothers also

sold drugs and perpetrated the drug operation. In the beginning of this illegal drug activity, the Gaston County Police Special Investigation Unit (VICE) performed the traditional police response of drug buys and arrest. This followed with traditional prison sentences for the tenants. The uniqueness of the problem though, found that when one brother was sent to prison the other brothers living at the park continued to sell the drugs, thus continuing the drug operation. When the imprisoned brother was released he returned to the park and continued the operation.

The second phase to the problem began in 1986 when the owner to the park decided that he was no longer able to handle the operation of the park so he decided to sell the mobile homes in the park and retain ownership of the property they were located on. Through the course of five years he sold ten of the mobile homes to the drug dealing brothers. Due to the owners age and health he also feared the brothers and "turned his head" to the dealings and operation of the park. This caused a serious decay in the atmosphere and condition of the park, resulting in the park earning the reputation as the "worst mobile home park" in Gaston County. The neighbors that surrounded the park began to fear their own neighborhood because of the people that were drawn to the community by the activities at the park. The police responses to the area were dramatically increased and the overflow of the drug activities and the

now present tenants caused a once quiet neighborhood to transform into a violent crime ridden area. Continually the Gaston County Police made arrests and investigated the drug sales at the park, but with the brothers in control of one fourth of the park, traditional means of law enforcement failed to eliminate the problem.

On August 20, 1991 the mobile home park was taken on as a project by the Gaston County Police Community Oriented Police Unit. The problem solving mode of S.A.R.A. was applied to the problem. The project manager was Officer T.N. McInnis.

The scanning stage was quickly addressed due to the years of known repeated calls and the reputation earned, both in the community and in the police department.

The analysis stage began with a research of calls, reports, and arrests given to the mobile home park both by Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) and by manually looking through older case files retained in the Records Section of the police department. This research found the following drug reports and arrests:

Drug cases/Case files: (1984-1991)***	44
Person charged in the Drug cases/Case files:***	55
Citations written from increased Patrol Enforcement:	70

*** Drug violations were used in the research stage due to

North Carolina Civil Nuisance law only allows drug, illegal alcohol, and prostitution violations to be used in court. Crimes of violence are not allowed in civil nuisance proceedings, thus these figures are not shown.

While the data was being compiled, the Gaston County Assistant Attorney assisted in the project, acting as a liaison with the Gaston County District Attorney and the Gaston County Board of Commissioners, to begin the process of the civil nuisance complaint against the park owner. The District Attorney decided that he did not have sufficient staff to proceed with the civil action but he agreed to allow us to find a private attorney to handle the suit for his office. The Assistant County Attorney then found a local private attorney to handle the suit. The County Attorney contacted the County Commissioners and advised them of the project and remained in contact with them due to the possible political implications.

The previous arrest and CAD information was gathered. Criminal records of the persons living in the park and persons stopped coming and going from the park were collected from the Clerk of Courts office. Utility records from Duke Power, tax records from the County Tax Collector's Office, and a complete record of ownership of the mobile homes from the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles was gathered. It was found in this step that as many as ten mobile homes had at one time been sold

to the brothers and that they had put the homes in other people's names and improperly listed them for taxes. At the time this information was finalized, only eight of the homes were able to be positively put in the brother's name or ownership shown through the research of titles.

With the data collected and the interviews of neighbors and the park owner done, the response stage began with the attorney developing the civil nuisance action. On December 18, 1991, the restraining order was signed by a Superior Court Judge. On December 20, 1991, the order was served on the park owner, his wife, and all of the tenants of the park. All records of the park were seized and assets, including two bank accounts (from separate financial institutions) and a checking account, were frozen.

On January 2, 1992, a hearing was held and the order was deemed improper and dismissed. The Judge hearing the case set another date for the nuisance hearing and restricted the owner; stating that he would be held accountable for all drug violations that occurred at the park pending the hearing.

On February 6, 1992, a pre-trial hearing was held and a settlement was reached. In the settlement the owner agreed to release the eight homes known to be the drug dealing brother's to the County Police, have all potential tenants to the park screened by the County Police giving

the police the authorization to deny any potential tenant the right to live in the park if they had any previous drug arrests, have additional lighting placed in the park, and for the owner to pay the attorney handling the suit \$1000.00 for his services.

The mobile homes awarded to the police were in such poor condition that they were given to a business that agreed to move them out for free. On February 18, 1992, the mobile homes began to be moved and on March 9, 1992, the last of the homes were moved out of the park.

The final area of the response had Officer McInnis contact the owner of the park and set up a lease and application process for the operation of the park. A lease and application was developed by the Assistant County Attorney and both became operational standards for the park. The owner also appointed a park manager to oversee the park's day to day operation.

The final stage of the project called for the assessment of the actions taken. The assessment was measured by the CAD system responses and by a neighborhood survey. The CAD response dates used were December 20, 1990, thru August 20, 1991, and December 20, 1991, thru August 20, 1992. The difference being that the earlier set of dates show the same area at the same relevant time prior to the actions taken by the police department. The latter dates show the same area after the beginning of the project.

December 20 signifies the date that the legal process began at the park and August 20 is approximately six months after the park was vacated by the drug dealers, the order was signed, and the mobile homes were removed.

The first attached graph shows the calls dispatched to the area and to the mobile home park and their relation. The analysis of the numbers shown on the graph show a 49.7% reduction in calls to the area of the park and a 83.5% reduction in calls to the mobile home park itself. The second attached graph shows the breakdown of calls dispatched directly to the mobile home park itself. The analysis to this graph shows total calls to the park were reduced 83.5%, officer originated calls reduced by 89.3%, and citizen requested calls reduced by 67.1%.

The second phase of the assessment had the police deliver surveys to all of the neighbors of the park. Each resident was provided with the survey and a self addressed stamped envelope to ensure the return of the surveys. Anonymous responses were requested. Analytical results of the survey are attached.

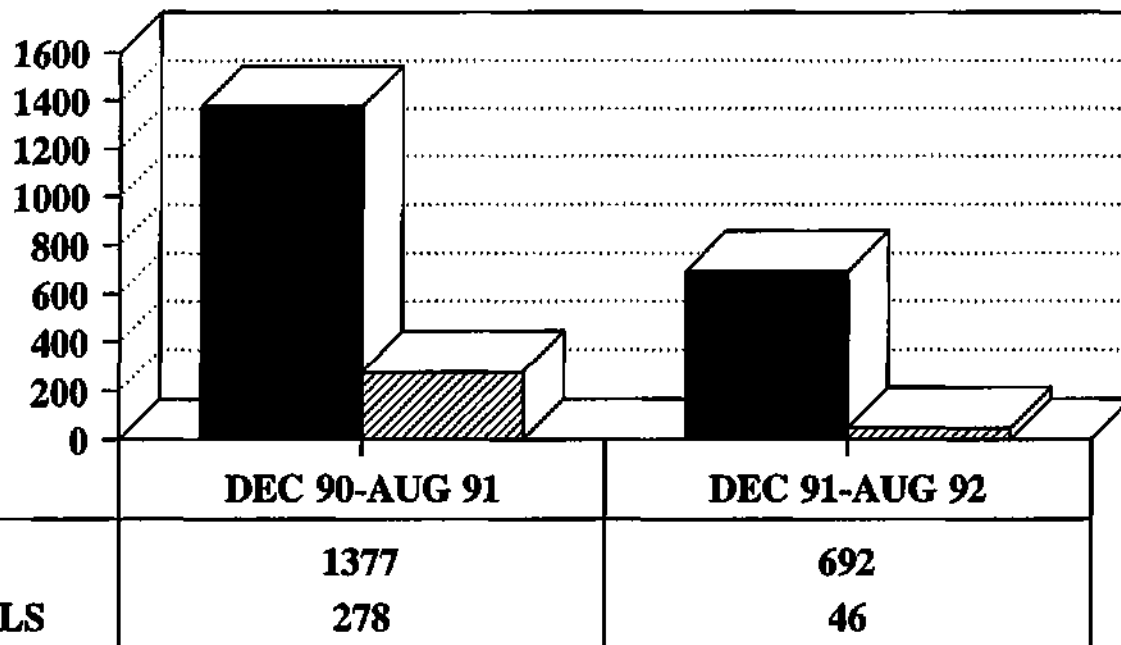
The numerical results and surveys returned show that the actions taken by the police department were and are extremely successful in the reduction of police responses and the re-building of the neighborhood's reputation. The neighbor's fears were reduced and the quality of life in the mobile home park and surrounding

neighborhoods were restored.

The uniqueness of this problem solving effort was that the police department utilized a civil proceeding to end the criminal activity. Civil court, where the burden of proof is not as great, may provide law enforcement with an often overlooked resource.

GRID # 10817 CALLS/RESPONSES

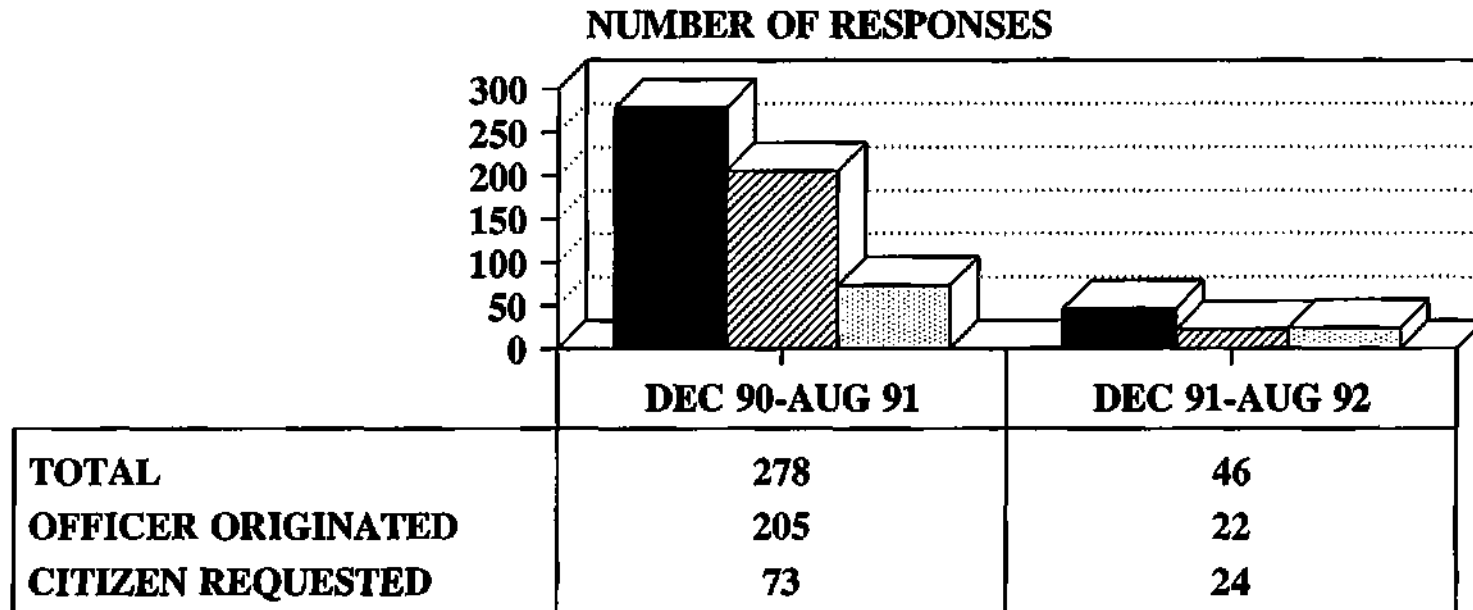
NUMBER OF RESPONSES



CAD ENTRIES FOR POLICE RESPONSES

TOTAL CALLS
 PINEGROVE CALLS

PINEGROVE MHP CALLS/RESPONSES



TYPES OF RESPONSES

- TOTAL**
- OFFICER ORIGINATED**
- CITIZEN REQUESTED**

GASTON COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
SURVEY OF SERVICES
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS RECEIVED

Sixteen (16) surveys were distributed to the neighbors that live around Pinegrove Mobile Home Park. Each neighbor was given a copy of the survey and also provided with a self addressed stamped envelope. They were asked to complete the survey and to return it anonymously. Two weeks were given for responses. Twelve (12) surveys were returned and below is the content analysis of the surveys.

Question 1 asked how long the respondent had lived in the area of the mobile home park. Each response is stated in years for the purpose of charting.

0-15 years:	4	33%
16-30 years:	3	25%
31-45 years:	2	16%
46-60 years:	2	16%
61-75 years:	1	8%

*** The average years of respondents was 29 years.

"Key words" were used in doing the content analysis of the remainder of the survey due to the fact that the questions in the survey were left open for comments. Each question analysis will have the "key words" identified to give better justification to the findings of the survey.

Question 2 asked if the respondent was aware of the drug problem at the mobile home park. "Yes" and "No" were used to analyze the responses.

Yes:	12	100%
No:	0	0%

Question 3 asked for a response in how the drug problem affected the respondent and his/her family. "Worse", "unsafe/danger", "needles", "afraid/fear", "shooting" were used to analyze the responses.

"needles"	4	33%
"afraid/fear"	4	33%
"worse"	0	0%
"unsafe/danger"	2	16%
"shooting"	1	8%

*** Three of the respondents (25%) had two of the "key words" listed in their responses.

Question 4 asked if the respondent was aware of the efforts the County Police made in dealing with the problem. "Yes" and "No" were used to analyze the responses.

Yes:	12	100%
No:	0	0%

Question 5 asked if the actions taken were successful. "Yes" or positive answers and "No" or negative answers were used to analyze the responses:

Yes/positive:	12	100%
No/negative:	0	0%

Question 6 asked how the respondent felt about his/her community since the actions were taken. "Better", "same", "worse" were used to analyze the responses.

Better:	12	100%
Same:	0	0%
Worse:	0	0%

Question 7 asked if the respondent felt his neighborhood was safer because of the actions taken. "Yes" and "No" were used to analyze the responses.

Yes	12	100%
No	0	0%

The bottom of the survey was reserved for further comments that the respondents wished to make. Of the twelve (12) respondents, eleven (11) or 92% made further

comments about the actions taken at Pinegrove Mobile Home Park. All of the eleven respondents who wrote in this area were positive in their responses.