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**NO MINATION FOR T
HERMAN GOLDSTEIN
EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM
SOLVING AWARD**



**KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**P.O. JOHN BRYANT
P.O. ROBERT BENNETT
P.O. JENIFER DEGEN**

Over the past several years, the Creston Apartments located at 906 E. 30th Street, Kansas City, Missouri has experienced a dramatic increase in violent crime.

During this time there have been numerous complaints and calls for service from residents and neighbors who live in the area. The calls range from parties selling narcotics, homicides, assaults, robberies, prostitution, and stealings. In addition to these calls, the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department has also received verbal and written requests from city, state, and federal officials to address the growing problem of violence at the Creston.

These calls and requests have generated many calls for service for district officers who patrol the area. It has also made it necessary for district officers, street narcotics officers, and the Tactical Response Unit to spend numerous hours every day monitoring the location in an attempt to combat the increase in crime at this location. As of 07-01-93, the Creston Apartments was the #1 location, within our division, for calls for police service, averaging 55 calls per month. Police officers spent hundreds of man-hours answering these calls every month. The calls not only caused problems for the officers handling the problems, they also deprived citizens in other parts of the city routine police patrol.

As time passed the problems continued to grow with offenders of the law becoming more bold and violent, putting officers who responded to the area in greater danger each time they went to the location. As the number of

violent acts and assaults on police officers grew, it became necessary to send four police officers on calls, two officers would remain outside insuring the safety of the police vehicles, while two officers would respond inside to handle the call. This act continued to compound the problem of addressing one location too much of the time and letting other areas of the city deteriorate.

The Police Department and the residents of the surrounding community were both affected by the problems at the Creston. The geographic area that surrounds the Creston Apartments is know as the Longfellow Community. It predominately consists of three story Victorian Style homes with occupants in the medium income bracket, many of which have children. The violent acts, gunfire, and drug activity, originating from the Creston would often take place right in front of their homes. This illegal activity, along with an increase in residential burglaries, drove real estate values down, and homeowner's insurance up. The residents began to feel as if they were prisoners in their own homes, building privacy fences totally encircling their property. Some residents even bought watch dogs to help protect their families and property. These residents became so concerned about the activities at the Creston they refused to allow their children to play outside without their supervision, depriving these children of a normal, happy childhood.

As would be expected, these residents have made numerous pleas to the Police Department to stop the violence and crime, as well as to make the neighborhood safe to live in again.

Often, it was the innocent residents of the Creston Apartments, who were trying to raise children in this environment, who were the victims. These occupants having to tolerate an environment unfit for human occupancy. This environment consisted of a building infested with mice, rats, and roaches. They also had to co-exist with drug dealers making transactions in the hallways 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This forced the residents and their children to reside in a building where unfit living conditions, drugs, violence, and immoral activity were part of daily life.

With these problems in mind, P.O. Robert Bennett, P.O. John Bryant, and P.O. Jenifer Oegen, decided to start a Problem Oriented Policing Project at 906 E. 30th Street. The objective of this project was to stop narcotic sales and use, and end the era of violent crime in the area created by the presence of the narcotic activity. The officers felt that if they could stop these acts, the calls for service to the location would drop dramatically. With these goals accomplished, the Creston Apartments would again be a livable environment for the residents.

The officers that worked on the problems at the Creston decided that the standard way of handling 'a call, "respond to the call, handle the problem at hand, and clear for service," was not working. The officers handled the specific problems of the call, but the underlying problems of the building and neighborhood continued on. The officers decided to use a different approach to the overall problem.

The first step taken in addressing the problems at the Creston was to collect reports taken by officers at the location in the previous six months and to obtain a computer printout detailing the nature of the calls to the address during that period. These actions were to identify the most frequent type of calls to the location and identify those involved. Through these actions, we determined that the majority of calls for police service at 906 E. 30th Street had ties to parties selling narcotics in and around the building. It was apparent that the flow of illegal drugs had to stop before the problems at the Creston would end.

In an attempt to address the narcotics problem, the officers involved in the project contacted the occupants of 906 E. 30' Street, as well as the residents of the surrounding community. The officers requested their assistance in identifying the subjects selling narcotics. The officers gave all residents of the community and the occupants of the Creston business cards with- pager numbers. This allowed the residents of the building and the community twenty-four hour a day access. This unusual candor on the part of the officers, built confidence in the residents to provide information about the problem. As people began to call with information the officers were able to identify subjects involved and the times of heaviest activity at the location.

Over a period of several weeks, the officers collected and forwarded this information to the Street Narcotics Unit to assist them in making undercover narcotic buys. The officers further assisted the Street Narcotics Unit in

providing faces to go with the names of subjects selling narcotics at the Creston.

The officers contacted numerous agencies and individuals to help with the problems that were plaguing the community. They located the owner of an abandoned apartment building that sat directly across the street from the Creston. The owner was more than willing to help with the problem. The owner provided keys to the officers and told them they could use the building for surveillance, however, the only way in was the front door. This posed a new problem, because even the most naive drug dealer would notice uniformed police officers entering an abandoned building carrying video equipment. We solved this problem with the cooperation of the Kansas City Missouri Fire Department. On 12-22-93, KCMO Fire Department pumpers and ladder trucks arrived with full emergency equipment, to what appeared to be another of numerous emergency calls to the abandoned building. The gathered crowd of drug dealers and prostitutes never noticed P.Q. Bennett and P.O. Degen enter the building with video equipment. Of course the boots, helmets, and turnout coats were helpful in this deception. The fire fighters fanned out over the entire building, as if checking for smoke and fire, while the officers set up the video equipment. When the officers were ready, the fire fighters returned to the fire trucks leaving the two officers inside. Over the next several hours, the officers video taped numerous narcotics transactions, while the drug dealers were totally unaware that the police were just 75 feet away, watching and taping

their every move. After a transaction, P.O. Bryant, along with several other officers in the area conducted pedestrian checks or car checks on the parties involved.

The video not only allowed for the identification of the dealers, but was also used quite successfully to spread the news of the problem to other agencies. In addition, local television stations broadcast portions of this tape as part of their coverage of the problems at the Creston Apartments.

Numerous attempts to get the owners of the Creston to step forward and take responsibility for the property met with little success. The owners continually avoided contact with the Police Department. The owners were uncooperative and unwilling to work with police on the problem.

Without the assistance of the owners, the officers needed to take a more aggressive stance. The officers provided the Jackson County Drug Abatement Response Team (DART), the Fire Marshal, and the Health Inspector copies of reports from the Creston, and a copy of the video tape for review. After they had inspected the building they served the owners of., the Creston with numerous fire code and living condition violations. These violations gave them the authority to close the building without needed improvements.

During the investigation, tax records revealed that the Creston Apartments was a 100% HUD subsidized facility. A HUD lien on the building made them just as responsible as the owners.

The officers contacted James McCarthy, Regional Director for HUD, and

advised him of the situation. After viewing the surveillance video and taking a tour of the Creston, with police escorts, Mr. McCarthy could not believe that human beings were living in these conditions. He wasted no time in getting things going on his end. Officers scheduled a meeting with HUD, DART, and the Longfellow Community Association, including the residents of the Creston. This was the first of several meetings that Mr. McCarthy attended to assist in fighting the problem at the Creston Apartments. Mr. McCarthy was in constant contact with Washington D.C., expressing his concerns about the deplorable living conditions at the Creston. An inspection of the building by HUD officials soon followed. After the inspection, engineers determined that the building had deteriorated to a point beyond repair. They based this conclusion on the lack of any area where children could play, the overall condition of the building, and the lack of parking for the residents. Officials forwarded these findings to Washington D.C. for final evaluation.

As this took place, the officers contacted House Representative Alan Wheat and U.S. Senator Christopher Bond and solicited their support to resolve the problems at the Creston. Senator Bond responded to the call for help, and attended a meeting with the Longfellow Community Association, the police officers, HUD, and members of the DART Team. Senator Bond received a tour of the Creston and promised to cut through the red tape as soon as he got back to Washington D.C. It appeared the problems that had plagued the Longfellow Community for years would soon end.

After these events, Mr. McCarthy contacted the officers involved in the project and advised them that HUD had allocated funds to improve living conditions at the Creston. He further requested that the officers assist him in devising a plan of action to resolve the problems and make the building a safer place to live.

It was the initial goal of this project to restore the Creston Apartments to a cost efficient, safe living environment for low income families, but engineers determined that repairs to make the building structurally sound would be too extensive. Basic improvements would be made to make the building safe to live in until the relocation of the occupants was completed and the building destroyed.

HUD officials then fired the current managers of the Creston and replaced them with a management group willing to cooperate with the police. They then corrected all fire code violations, fumigated for insects and rodents, and made cosmetic repairs to make the building temporarily inhabitable. The HUD Officials also provided funding for 24 hour security at the location. This consists of two off-duty police officers and four armed security guards patrolling the interior and exterior of the building. Security of the building itself was increased with the installation of a metal detector in the main entrance and the reinforcement of all other entrances. People entering the building must pass through the metal detector and display picture identification prior to visiting residents. The residents themselves must display picture

identification provided to them by the apartment management.

In the months following the implementation of this plan, the initial goals created by the officers have reached fruition. The known drug dealers are either in jail facing narcotics charges or are moving from the apartments after receiving eviction notices. Calls for police service have dropped over 60%. There are no longer narcotics being sold and violent crime in the surrounding community is nearly non-existent. The residents of the building and neighborhood are finally able to live without fear of violence and drugs, and are happily adjusting to their new found way of life.

Presently, only 50 of the 72 units at the Creston remain occupied, with HUD officials slowly relocating the residents to alternative living quarters and refusing to accept new occupants. The destruction of the building will commence at the completion of this process.

A location that was once a constant problem to the Police Department, and a disgrace to the community, the residents, and Kansas City, is now becoming just a distant memory. The officers that once spent hundreds of hours answering calls at the Creston, are now able to devote their time to other problem areas of the city, and rarely, if ever, face the need to respond to the Creston Apartments.

It is at this time, after many months of hard work, that we close the book on the POP Project at the Creston Apartments, having accomplished our objectives of lowering calls for service, halting narcotics activity, and improving

the quality of life in the neighborhood.

This project could not have been accomplished without the cooperation of many people who devoted their time and effort to assist us in meeting our goals. We would like to thank them for their assistance in resolving a long overlooked problem in our city.

We would also like to thank the other officers , P.O. Greg Volker, P.O. Matthew Grant, and P.O. Ross Davis, who took the time between calls to assist us in attacking the problems. We must especially include our supervisor, Sgt. Jesse Holt, who took the time to share his knowledge and assist us in implementing several different plans that resulted in the completion of our project. Without the support and cooperation of these individuals, our goals would not have been attained.