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Patrick J. Carroll
Commissioner

City of New Rochelle
New York

95-54

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Police Executive Research Forum
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Project

Detective Jeffrey Wilson has been recognized by the New Rochelle Community for his innovative approach to the problems of his beat area. His multifaceted problem-solving techniques, combined education, enforcement and community support to reduce the variety of problems identified along the "bar strip" of New Rochelle.

His project is submitted for your review and consideration.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Carroll
Police Commissioner

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City of New Rochelle New York

The City of New Rochelle has had a reputation of underage patrons frequenting the area known as "The Strip" to socialize and obtain alcohol. There were seven bars and four delis that catered to the college and high school aged youths. The North Avenue bar strip is a three block area where in excess of a thousand patrons would visit on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. The bars would have loud, disorderly lines of young adults waiting entry into these establishments- Many of them became highly intoxicated and numerous physical confrontations would occur. The disorderly conduct would effect the surrounding residential communities. The youths would be observed cursing, urinating and fighting on the streets. The noise from their cars and motorcycles would be alarming. Also, vehicles were being damaged and property destroyed. The area consists of college houses that continually sponsored Fraternity and Sorority parties.

The Police Department would assign personnel and resources to patrol this area, but due to the frequency of the problems, the officers would handle a problem (assault) and subsequent arrest. This would consume patrol time and personnel. Therefore, further activity would continue and the police response would be to that incident. The Officers were compiling arrests of serious assaults, disorderly conduct, and mischievous behavior, but the problem was not resolved.

On June 21, 1994, there was a fatal auto accident on North Avenue. The vehicle was occupied by six, out of town, teenagers ranging in age from 17-19 years old. Two occupants of the vehicle were ejected and killed. The accident was determined to be speed and alcohol related. The operator was an 18 year old male who had a blood alcohol level of .18%. The legal drinking age in New York State is 21 years of age. An investigation was conducted by the New Rochelle Police Department into the location where these teenagers had been drinking. The local bars, located on North Avenue, were summonsed for serving alcohol to these minors. The problem of underage drinking not only effected our community, but extended to the communities of Northern Westchester and Putnam Counties, where the six teenagers lived.

In May of 1994, Police Commissioner Patrick J. Carroll introduced a new form of policing to our community. This new philosophy was entitled, PACT. Police And Community Together. The newly formed Unit consisted of a Lieutenant, three Sergeants, four Detectives (Youth Officers), twenty-four Police Officers and a civilian Social Worker. This volunteer unit was trained in problem-solving. The officers were assigned to foot patrol and bicycle patrols throughout the community to identify and attempt to solve the problem of their beat. The residents were to be involved and interact with their beat officers. A portion of the personnel resources were to be used as a mobile Conditions Team to assist the beat officers when needed.

Detective Jeffrey Wilson volunteered to be a member of the PACT Unit and was assigned to the North Avenue Bar Strip, Beat 10. Detective Wilson was familiar with his beat's problems and further identified other problems. He immediately met with neighborhood associations to fully understand their concerns and then met with college officials. Most of the complaints were a result of the bars and consisted of quality of life issues. The Officer met with the Tavern Association to introduce himself to the owners and address the problems. He educated them and advised them of his intent of strict enforcement. He also visited the delis that were serving beer to minors and made sure that they fully understood the laws. He advised both types of business establishments that he would be making routine inspections of the businesses in reference to under age drinking and occupancy. The Fire Department was supportive and cooperative. He adjusted his work schedule to coincide with the nightly problems and activity.

Detective Wilson coordinated his efforts with the Police Department's Special Investigation Unit to obtain purchases of alcohol through and underage agent. Subsequently, numerous arrests were made. The Officer would then return to the establishment (days later) and recommend further suggestions to the owners. He continued occupancy inspections, underage drinking arrests, and other code violations.

Detective Wilson would continue to be a visible obstacle to both young adults attempting to patronize the businesses and to the taverns. He would monitor a deli and observe a young person (under 21 years) enter and purchase a beer. As the person departed, he would identify them and conduct his investigation. If the identification was "fake", he would arrest the individual. If they did not have identification, they were brought to the establishment and were asked to identify the employee that serviced them, The clerk would be arrested and taken to headquarters. The business was interrupted and inconvenienced. The young adults parents were notified.

Detective Wilson's proactive approach transformed a heavily populated bar area into a relatively quieter community, with a greatly reduced bar population. But, Detective Wilson realized that strict enforcement would only be short termed. He believed that educating the youth to the dangers of underage drinking and driving would have a greater effect.

The Officer drafted a letter to all incoming freshman of the local colleges explaining the PACT philosophy and his position. He educated them as to the State Laws and the City's Codes. He advised them of the strict enforcement policy and the support of the college toward disciplinary procedures. He followed this orientation with a letter to all high school principals, and college presidents of the area explaining the PACT philosophy. His letter received positive feedback. The Officer was

requested by numerous schools and associations to explain how they could assist in combating this problem. Next, Detective Wilson conducted a poster contest to combat drunk driving. The participants were fifth grade students in the community. This was consistent with the education of the DARE Program. The winning poster was enlarged and placed on a billboard in the North Avenue bar area. Numerous merchants donated prizes and the Westchester County Chapter of Mother's Against Drunk Driving assisted. This contest was conducted in October of 1994, which the City of New Rochelle had declared Alcohol Awareness Month.

The final part of this education process was to work with the students of the local colleges. He planned several events to coincide with the NCAA Alcohol Awareness Week. The first event was a charity basketball game between members of the PACT Unit and one of the college fraternities. This was an important program because it established a strong rapport with the college students. The next event was to organize a simulated DWI accident involving college students. Detective Wilson coordinated this program with the assistance of the college, fire department, ambulance service, medical helicopter, and our Department. The program was taped and aired on the local cable network. Education handouts were distributed to the students and demonstrations were conducted with the breathalyzer and intoxilyzer machines. The students' response was very positive. The demonstration

was quite realistic and most students related that they felt the program impacted the observers.

The initiatives of Detective Wilson has greatly impacted this community. He continues to work on the problems and is considered a "friend" to the area, He truly made a major accomplishment to the problem that existed for quite a while and one that needed attention. His ingenuity, dedication and conscientious efforts were recognized by this department - Jeff was promoted to the rank of Detective in March of 1995.

Currently, along the lines of students education. Detective Wilson coordinated programs dealing with the issue of drinking and driving. The programs are directed to high school students and dealt with the safety of "prom night." On May 8th, The Chrysler Corporation had their "simulator car" in Yonkers, NY. The program sponsored by Mother's Against Drunk Driving, allows a student to drive an obstacle course with traffic devices around the course. Thereafter, the Chrysler representative program's the vehicle's computer to simulate a drunk driver. The operator's physical stature and the number of drinks will be calculated and the operator will then attempt to operate the vehicle under these conditions. The New Rochelle Police Department and the New Rochelle Youth Bureau co-sponsored the event for the four New Rochelle High Schools. Each school had thirty participants (seniors) and were transported to the location site. The

response was very positive and enlightening. The students felt that the experience was rewarding and a worthwhile opportunity. Also, the timing was excellent due to prom season, warm weather and summer. A follow-up assembly was then held at each school and the students addressed their peers about their experience. The object of the assembly was to encourage the students not to drink and drive through interaction of both the New Rochelle Police and the students peers.

Subsequently, Detective Wilson has been able to address the issue of drinking with businesses, colleges and high schools; all within one school year. This accomplishment has been receptive in the- community and will be reproduced with a new group of students in September.

In conjunction with the work accomplished by Detective Wilson, he successfully completed a New York State certification to become a DARE Instructor. This confirms his commitment to drug education and working with our young adults. I believe that Detective Wilson's project is unique, extensive and can be cycled every year. Jeff's success was partially due to support by educator's, community representatives and businesses. They were fully cooperative and assisted his efforts.