

ST. PETERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT**PROTECT "RESPECT"****A. SCANNING**

Since the mid-1980's, the city of St. Petersburg has had to contend with the crack cocaine epidemic. According to community surveys administered by the Police Department to citizens citywide in both 1991 and 1994, the problem of greatest concern to residents in several areas of the city was the level of illegal drug activity they felt was occurring on their streets and within houses in their particular neighborhoods. Open air drug dealing in particular was compromising residents' quality of life, their perception of personal safety and the safety of their children. Many citizens reported feeling like prisoners within their homes, especially after dark. Not only did the drug dealing activity itself create these perceptions, the activity brought with it a host of other criminal and nuisance problems, such as robbery, burglary, prostitution, noise and speeding traffic. Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data reported by the Police Department to both the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the FBI also showed an increasing number of narcotics drug law violations. The drug problem was being consistently reported by citizens, police officers and their supervisors, and undercover police personnel. City Council members were getting strong messages from their constituents to address the drug problem in the city. Additionally, a local group of religious leaders formed a group known as "Congregations United for Community Action" that petitioned police managers with a list of drug "hotspots" that they had identified throughout the community. Clearly, there was a need to address the drug problem, particularly street-level narcotics transactions, and devote police resources exclusively to this problem. This is a difficult challenge these days in light of the scarcity of public resources. Since 1990, the strength of the St. Petersburg Police Department had remained constant,

even in the face of rising demands for police service and the Department's citywide implementation of its community policing model.

In FY1995, the St. Petersburg Police Department was awarded a federal hiring supplement grant from the newly created Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) at the U. S. Justice Department. This allowed the Department to employ and train eighteen new police officers then transfer three sergeants and eighteen veteran officers to a new unit called Project RESPECT (Responses Effecting Solutions to Problems and Enhancing Community Trust). The unit is comprised of three problem solving teams, each assigned to one of the city's three police districts. The primary mission of the Project RESPECT teams is to disrupt, reduce, eliminate or displace illegal drug activity at the street level by working in partnership with the community and other police units.

The team assigned to Patrol District III became operational in the middle of October of 1995. In November, the team began its first Problem Oriented Policing (POP) project. First, officers had to identify, or scan, the neighborhood with the most drug related calls for service. Officers reviewed the data furnished by the Communications Center Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. It obtained statistics supplied to the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) by the Police Department. It conducted research in the Crime Analysis Unit, utilizing information from Field Interrogation reports, call for service data and UCR data monitored by the Unit, as well as the Unit's mapping software. The team held informal meetings with District III community police officers and Vice and Narcotics detectives for their input. Finally, officers attended Neighborhood Association and Crime Watch meetings to solicit input from neighborhood residents.

Project RESPECT officers formally surveyed other District III patrol and community policing officers and narcotics detectives. Of those who responded, drugs were the most significant problem in the Childs Park neighborhood. Next, officers went out into the field and surveyed residents. Those who participated said that drug dealing was their number one problem. They also told officers that most of the drugs were being sold along 16th Avenue South and 17th Avenue South, from 34th Street South to 37th Street South, information that was later confirmed by surveillance.

The team was able to pinpoint the location of its POP project to an area in the Childs Park neighborhood, bounded by 15th Avenue South to 18th Avenue South and from 34th Street South to 37th Street South within the city.

B. ANALYSIS

The 1990 Census for St. Petersburg provided the Project RESPECT team with information concerning the demographic profile of the Childs Park area. It indicated that this area contained 107 single family dwelling units. Almost 40% of these units were rentals with an average rent of \$225 per month. The mean value of each house was \$32,000, well below the city's average housing value of \$63,000. There were 326 residents living in the area. Fully 84% were African-American. Juveniles (persons under age 18) made up 40% of the neighborhood's population. The median household income was \$16,800, again, well below the city's median household income figure of nearly \$24,000.

Statistical research showed that from September of 1994 to September of 1995, there were 109 narcotic drug law violation calls for service in the Childs Park area. According to UCR data, most

drug arrests were for possession of cocaine, followed by possession of marijuana. An offender profile was developed based on the UCR data. African-American males were the individuals most frequently arrested for drug related offenses.

The team conducted a surveillance of the area at different times during the day and night. Officers noted that this neighborhood was adjacent to main thoroughfares and very accessible by vehicular traffic. The peak time for the illegal drug activity was from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. Most of the drug deals occurred at three locations. Typically, a drug buyer would drive a vehicle into one of these locations, stop and remain in the vehicle. The buyer would wait for the drug dealer to walk up to the vehicle then make the transaction. The buyer would drive away after the deal was complete. The deal would last for approximately one minute.

Additionally, there were many vacant homes and an abnormal amount of trash and debris in the roadway, on the sidewalks, and scattered across the yards of the vacant properties. The street lighting was extremely poor. One could clearly distinguish the "ground zero" area.

C. RESPONSES

The Project RESPECT team formulated its responses. Officers' primary mode of transportation was to be motorcycles. Officers would also conduct covert surveillance. Another tactic would be to initiate a community mobilization effort in partnership with the police. Officers had had success with just such a tactic in another neighborhood. This tactic was the "Wrice Process". It empowers residents to take back their neighborhoods from drug dealers in partnership with the police through

anti-drug marches. A clean up would improve the appearance of the neighborhood. The street lighting needed to be upgraded. Vehicular traffic could be controlled through application of a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) technique - the use of barricades. In order to implement these responses, the team needed the support and assistance of the residents, the Mayor's Neighborhood Partnership Team, and other sections within the Police Department.

The Project RESPECT team reviewed the four aspects of the SARA Crime Triangle. The three points of the triangle represented the Victims or "Sitting Ducks", the Locations or "Dens of Iniquity", and the Offenders or "Ravenous Wolves". The interior of the triangle represented the "Guardians", those persons and/or resources available to bring to bear in resolving the problem.

The Victims included those individuals who were affected by the drug dealing in some adverse way. They were the law abiding residents of the neighborhood. Other citizens in the city were victims because their tax dollars were being expended on an disproportional amount of police service to the Childs Park area. The police were also victims because they had to respond to excessive amount of calls there.

The next point of the triangle was the Locations. The team identified the specific areas of the illegal drug transactions. One approach would be to clean up these areas. Another would be to improve the street lighting. Finally, officers could control traffic by using CPTED barricades.

The Offenders would feel the main thrust of officers' efforts. This group not only included the parties

to the drug deal but those who reaped any benefits from the illegal gains. Officers chose to target the drug dealers first. If they were gone, the problem could end. Then, if necessary, the team could turn its attention to other Offenders.

The Guardians included the residents of the Childs Park neighborhood because they would have to help in resolving the problem by participating in activities such as the "Wrice Process". Other residents of the city could be Guardians because they could assist by taking part in the same activities. The city's Neighborhood Partnership Team would be instrumental in addressing the problem too. Its members could coordinate an array of city services to improve street lighting, provide sanitation services, and assist with the implementation of CPTED barricades. Finally, the police would be an important component. Police services would include routine patrol, community policing, vice and narcotics activities, and the efforts of Project RESPECT.

Initially, Project RESPECT officers began with high visibility patrol on its motorcycles. Officers made traffic stops, wrote citations, and conducted field interviews. Arrests were made for various criminal offenses including drug law violations. The officers' high visibility in the neighborhood disrupted and reduced drug sales. As officers became more familiar with the law abiding property owners, they sought their cooperation with trespass warnings. The owner would complete a form indicating a willingness to prosecute individuals who trespassed on their property. The owner would post "No Trespassing" signs in compliance with the Florida State Statutes. This technique really assisted officers in working the "ground zero" areas because it limited where the drug dealers could ply their trade.

The team then organized a "Wrice Process" march. The first march took place on November 24, 1995. The Police Department's AmeriCorps*VTSTA volunteers distributed flyers about the march in the neighborhood. At the initial neighborhood march, a total of thirty citizens joined with the police and other city service providers, along with the mayor, to take back the neighborhood. The drug dealers did not appreciate the march because it stopped their business for the time marchers were there. Neighborhood meetings and anti-drug marches have occurred on a weekly basis since November of 1995. A strong core group of 30-40 marchers participate in each week's activities. Additional residents often join in when they see the group coming down their block. Many others, often elderly residents who can't walk for the two to three hours that each march typically lasts, support the effort by turning on their porch lights as the marchers pass by, singing their chants.

On December 6, 1995, Sergeant Tom Carey (the District III Project RESPECT team supervisor), Susan Ajoc, a city Neighborhood Partnership coordinator, and Joseph Arenas, who is a member of the city's Energy and Technology Department, went to the Childs Park area and inspected the street lighting. Mr. Arenas said that he would ensure that the wattage of the street lights would be upgraded and that some new light poles would be installed.

On December 15, 1995, Sergeant Carey, Mr. Arenas, and Sheri Weaver, a Community Appearance Representative from the city's Sanitation Department, went to the targeted area and made a list of trees which needed to be trimmed to help improve the street lighting.

On December 16, 1995, a clean-up was conducted in the neighborhood. Project RESPECT, the

"Wrice Process" marchers, city officials, members of neighborhood associations, inmates from a nearby work release center, and the neighborhood residents participated. Supplies and dumpsters were provided by the city's Sanitation Department coordinated through Ms. Ajoc. Many local food establishments such as Atwater's Cafeteria, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Checkers, Church's Chicken, McDonalds, and Leverocks donated food for everyone. The event was covered by a local news station, Channel 28. It truly was a community effort.

One notable "Wrice Process" march was held on December 22, 1995. It was cold, with temps dipping into the 40s (this is serious "cold" for south Florida), and it was raining. The march lasted for two hours. This march sent a message to everyone, including the drug dealers, that the team was serious and, regardless of the weather, wanted the drug dealers out of this neighborhood.

Since the first of the year, officers noticed that the drug dealing has decreased. The improved appearance of the neighborhood has been maintained. It seems that the residents were taking more pride in where they lived.

Another response was now implemented, the CPTED barricades. On January 23, 1996, two sets of concrete barricades were placed on the streets of this neighborhood to redirect vehicular traffic and to discourage drug buyers from driving through the area. They are moved around every week. They have been very effective.

The Project RESPECT team in District III has devoted most of its time to this neighborhood. Patrol

officers, community police officers, vice and narcotics detectives, other city departments, the "Wrice Process" marchers, and the law abiding residents have contributed to the disruption and reduction of the illegal drug activity. The problem has not ended yet. On March 13, 1996, an individual was arrested for possessing twenty-five pieces of crack cocaine at 3427-17th Avenue South.

On April 3, 1996, another response was implemented. The police department parked a Mobile Community Resource Center vehicle, staffed by one police officer, at 3427-17th Avenue South. This idea was brought back to our city by three of our police officers who had visited the Austin TX Police Department last summer to observe the use of that Department's highly successful Mobile Community Policing Center. Currently, we are using the city's Mobile Command Center, a vehicle shared by the Police and Fire Departments in the event of a major disaster or civil disturbance, as our Mobile Community Resource Center. We have received a grant award from the Edward Byrne Block Grant Program for FY1997 to fund the purchase of a custom-designed Mobile Resource Center for our Department. An array of city services are currently being offered to the residents from the vehicle that is now in use. It has been a big help in our efforts to mobilize areas residents and get them actively involved in working with us to address street-level and open air drug dealing in their neighborhood, to enhance their personal safety and learn about other city and social service resources available to help them improve their quality of life.

D. EVALUATION

Not only did officers want to measure what impact they had had on narcotic drug law violations but also what impact they had had on other calls for service. Other calls for service that were examined

included warrant arrests, assaults, batteries, burglaries, disturbance calls, prostitution, robberies, shots heard, thefts, and weapons complaints. Officers compared November of 1994 through February of 1995 to November of 1995 through February of 1996.

There were 41 narcotic drug law violation calls for service from November of 1994 through February of 1995. From November of 1995 to February of 1996, this figure dropped 34% to 27. Warrant arrest calls dropped from 7 to 5. Assaults increased from 3 to 5. Batteries increased from 7 to 11. Burglaries dropped from 9 to 2. Disturbance calls increased from 21 to 39. The team felt that this increase was the result of residents believing that the police were really there to help them and that by calling the police, they were helping to turn around their neighborhood. There was no prostitution activity at all. Robberies went down to zero from 2. Shots heard remained unchanged at 7 calls during each time period. Reports of suspicious activity increased from 2 to 9. Again, the team felt that this increase could be explained by residents' increased willingness to report activity to police. Thefts increased from 7 to 13. Weapons complaints remained unchanged at one for each time period. In total, there were 13 more calls for service in Childs Park since the Project RESPECT team began its POP project. Officers attributed this increase to the amount of attention being devoted to this neighborhood and with the investigations that were initiated.

The team is encouraged by the statistics, especially with the reduction of drug law violations. In May of 1996, the POP project had been ongoing for six months. At that time, officers conducted another neighborhood survey to ascertain the resident's perceptions of its drug-fighting efforts. The team is currently assessing the results of this survey. Preliminary findings indicate that an overwhelming

majority of residents are supportive of the team's response strategies and feel these responses are having a positive impact upon the level of illicit narcotics activity in their neighborhood. The number of visible drug transactions are perceived to be decreasing by survey respondents, who, now report feeling safer in their neighborhoods.

After seven months of working on its POP project, the Project RESPECT team believes that its positive results can be maintained over time. Because of the successes achieved in the Childs Park neighborhood, two additional Wrice Process march groups have been formed and now march weekly in two other drug-infested neighborhoods in the city.

All of the tactics implemented can be used by other communities, especially the "Wrice Process". For St. Petersburg, officers' expectations of the partnership efforts have been exceeded. Marchers have received the support of the Mayor and City Council, who often marchers themselves! The creator of the "Wrice Process", Dr. Herman Wrice, has selected St. Petersburg to be a model for other communities throughout the nation. This is being accomplished through the "Wrice Process Distance Learning Project". Dr. Wrice was able to train people across the United States via satellite from the public broadcasting studios of WEDU in Tampa as the result of a federal grant. The training was coordinated by the Florida National Guard, the St. Petersburg Junior College, the City of St. Petersburg, and the St. Petersburg Police Department.

E. PHILOSOPHY AND ORGANIZATION

The Project RESPECT POP project was initiated at the level of sergeant and officer within the

Uniform Service Bureau, of one three Bureaus within the St. Petersburg Police Department. The sergeants and officers who form the Project RESPECT squads were empowered by their Patrol District majors by their being "unplugged" from a primary mission of 911 call response to go out into their assigned geographic areas of responsibility, scan and analyze high priority problems and locations, and then develop responses to be implemented by the team to resolve those high priority problems. The RESPECT sergeants report directly to their District majors, who in turn report to the Assistant Chief of the Uniform Services Bureau.

Every St. Petersburg Police Department employee, sworn and civilian, has received training in both the community policing philosophy and the SARA model of problem solving. Community policing training is taught by certified police instructors from within the Department. The initial SARA problem solving training was provided by Ms. Rana Sampson, formerly of Community Policing Associates. Community policing officers and Project RESPECT squad sergeants and officers received additional, in-depth blocks of training on problem solving techniques.

There are no additional incentives given to those officers who initiate and implement successful POP projects. Problem solving is the primary responsibility of the Department's non-call driven officers. The Department is currently working on developing a special Problem Solving Award, which will be presented quarterly to that officer or supervisor who has completed a particularly outstanding POP project.

Police officers have a problem solving manual to use as a source of reference to guide them through

the problem solving process. The manual is provided during the initial problem solving training. Additionally, the Police Department conducts monthly POP meetings. On different weeks of the month, each of the three Patrol Districts prepare and present one POP project for each of their three sectors. The projects are presented to the chief of police and his staff. The meetings have been very productive and include brainstorming sessions with the chief, staff members, appropriate sworn personnel from other operational and investigative units, and civilian support personnel from units such as Crime Analysis and Communications. Input from other meeting participants is very helpful to officers in either developing response strategies or assessing the impact of previously implemented responses to similar problems. The Police Department also publishes a quarterly Community Problem Solving Newsletter that is distributed to all police personnel. Each issue highlights at least two successful POP projects.

The primary barriers to successful problem solving are budgetary. Response strategies could easily consume additional resources, in terms of materials or staff hours, were those resources available to officers to use. However, the city of St. Petersburg, as all other municipalities across the country, faces severe resource constraints. Officers must work smarter with limited available resources. The keys to overcoming resource constraints are teamwork, using all available internal resources to their maximum effect, and partnership, working together with residents to identify problems that are of greatest concern to any given neighborhood, and then finding ways in which residents can work with police to address and resolve problems. The success of the Wrice Process anti-drug marchers in SL Petersburg represents a fine example of a successful community/police partnership.

The use of technology is also a plus. Officers use laptop computers in the field and have access to an automated Police Information system within the police station. Computer technology helps officers work smarter and faster. Support units within the Department also use technology to make the most of limited human resources - Crime Analysis is linked to county and state criminal databases and also uses MapInfo, a geo-based mapping tool; the Records Section now has an automated video booking system, which is linked to county records, to pull up, via computer terminals, digitized photos and fingerprint records.

The St. Petersburg Police Department continues to expand both its commitment to Department-wide and city-wide problem solving initiatives and its applications of computer technology. The efforts of the Project RESPECT teams must be recognized as moving the Department forward in its pursuit of outstanding problem solving. The RESPECT officers, and their sergeants, have maximized the use of internal teamwork and partnerships with the community to achieve problem solving successes. Project RESPECT'S success in addressing the street-level drug problem is evidenced by the high level of citizen participation in the Wrice Process anti-drug marching groups; the team's creative use of innovative responses, such as the application of CPTED techniques, and the deployment of the Mobile Community Resource Center vehicle; their ability to bring a variety of resources to bear on the problem; the level of cooperation occurring between various units within the Police Department, both uniform and undercover, and the involvement of other city departments in addressing the problem; their commitment to teaching others about what is working; and their willingness to gather data and assess the impacts of their efforts. Addressing the problem of street-level drug sales is a high priority area in every jurisdiction throughout the country. The officers and sergeants assigned to

Project RESPECT, and their citizen partners, have made an outstanding effort to better understand the nature of the drug activity in their target area, develop and implement innovative responses and demonstrate the impact that they are having in reducing and resolving this problem.