

May 30, 2006

Rob Guerette  
Herman Goldstein Award Coordinator

SUBJECT: Plano Police Department  
POP Initiative: Reclaiming Fridays at Haggard Park

Dear Committee:

Please accept this document as a nomination for the Problem Oriented Policing Project initiated by the Plano Police Department's Neighborhood Police Officer Unit. Officers from this Unit started working on this project due to increased complaints of disruptive youth congregating in Haggard Park on Friday nights being disruptive and making other citizens fearful of using the park. Officers thoroughly investigated the underlying causes that contributed to the complaints and discovered there was a group of teens who frequented a local skate park who had decided they would make Haggard Park their meeting and socializing place. Citizen complaints as well as complaints of damage to park property, from the City of Plano Parks and Recreation department, helped forge an alliance between the parks and recreation department and the police department. Officers tried many different solutions before the problem stopped.

They utilized the SARA Problem Solving Model during this process and have made significant progress in reducing each of these issues. The officers devised a coordinated plan, which involved police officers and parks and recreation employees. Through their combined efforts conditions at Haggard Park have improved greatly. Citizens now feel safe to use Haggard Park at any time and enforcement efforts have been minimized.

During this initiative, the public's safety as well as their support of the Plano Police Department has increased. The methods used by these officers proved that officers could make a positive difference when working with the community.

Sincerely,

Gregory W. Rushin  
Chief of Police

# Plano Police Department's Submission for the Herman Goldstein Problem Oriented Policing Award

## Reclaiming Fridays at Haggard Park

### 1. SUMMARY-

- a. Over the past 6 years officers of the NPO unit have been tasked with dealing with an issue at Haggard Park on Friday Nights. During the week, Haggard Park is a quiet suburban park that caters to city employees and the downtown Plano Community. At night the park was usually quiet and rarely used. As Plano grew, light rail came in, along with new apartments and a skate park across the street from Haggard Park. Eventually the teens from the skate park claimed Haggard Park on Friday nights and made the park unusable by residents wanting to spend time in the park with their families. Officer Milton and later Officer Bowie were assigned the task to reclaim the park on Friday nights. Standard enforcement was not effective, so the SARA model was implemented and a solution was reached by changing mindsets at City Hall, CPTED, and diligence on behalf of Officer Bowie and the Neighborhood Police Officer Unit. Currently the park is free for families to play and picnic on Friday nights once again.

### 2. SCANNING-

- a. The Neighborhood Police Officer Unit became aware of the problems at Haggard Park due to calls for service complaints from residents from around the downtown area. Initial complaints were that teens dressed in gothic attire were overrunning the park on Friday nights. Preliminary stats showed that calls for service on Friday nights were much higher and the frequency of calls were higher. Complaints from residents indicated that they were afraid to go to the park on Friday nights due to the unruliness of the teens in the park.

### 3. ANALYSIS

- a. An analysis of the problem in Haggard Park revealed that the influx of the Gothic crowd into the Park resulted from the newly installed light rail system, the garage band night at the skate park across the street, and the environmental design that allowed the teens to hide in the dark corners of the park. Officers discovered that the park was no longer able to be used as it was intended on Friday nights due to the illegal activity at the park.

### 4. RESPONSE

- a. During the response stage, Officer Bowie tried several attempts to solve the problem through enhanced enforcement. After traditional law enforcement techniques did not solve the problem, she took several steps to make the park an undesirable place for the teens to hang out. After bringing in a church organization, closing the park for six months, changing the lighting in the park, and gaining authority to issue criminal trespass in the park the group of teens held a vote and decided to change the location of their Friday night meetings.

### 5. ASSESSMENT

- a. After Officer Bowie succeeded in making the park undesirable to the teens, she witnesses their vote to leave the park. The very next week, the problem that had been present for four years was gone. Officers of the NPO Unit still monitor the park every Friday night, but the problem remains solved.

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Plano is very proud of its parks facilities. Haggard Park has been a quiet park in the system. It is special because it serves as the park for the historic downtown area of Plano. Haggard Park has served its purpose well for the past 20 years. Over the past few years, Haggard Park has transformed from being a small community park to being a neighborhood park for a new transportation village that was erected when the Dallas Area Rapid Transit light rail system came to Plano. The light rail station was wedged between downtown Plano and the Haggard Park.

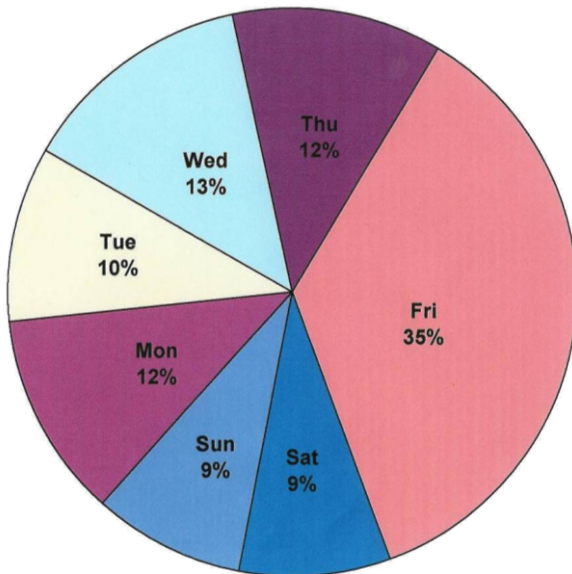


Unfortunately unruly teens discovered Haggard Park about the same time that the light rail came to Plano. The semi-organized group of teens made a conscious decision to take over Haggard Park on Friday Nights. As the City of Plano's only park officer, Jay Milton took on the task of dealing with the teens and attempting to reclaim Haggard Park on Friday nights. Tragically Officer Milton fell ill with cancer and passed away in the summer of 2002. With the City still suffering budget cuts from the terror attacks in 2001, the position of park officer was not filled after Officer Milton died. While the complaints continued, the NPO unit simply did not have the resources to devote to the problem. In 2003 the complaints once again made it to the Mayor's office and the police department was instructed to work on the project again. At that point, Officer Bowie who is a Business District Officer in Downtown Plano was assigned to find a solution to the problem. Officer Bowie, with the assistance of the Neighborhood Police Officer Unit, applied the SARA model of problem solving and eventually convinced the now well organized group to find another place to have their gatherings on Friday nights. The park can now be used as it was intended.

## SCANNING

When the Parks and Recreation Department called the police department for assistance with the Friday night “Goth” problem at Haggard Park, as with most departments, patrol was sent out to investigate. A typical Patrol response included employing “special watches” and a reactive-style approach. This however was ineffective since much of the reported problems were occurring during the evening hours when discretionary Patrol time was limited due to a higher call volume. This style approach did not provide a desired long-term resolution, but merely addressed the problems as they occurred. The decision was subsequently made to

initiate a problem-solving approach to the Haggard Park problems by assigning Neighborhood Police Officer Jay Milton. His assignment utilized him mostly on day shift and on the weekends, so he was not aware of the problem on Friday nights. Officer Milton learned that City Hall had instituted an effort in 2001 to revitalize the downtown Plano area to coincide with the quickly approaching light rail system that would eventually connect downtown Plano with the rest of the City of Dallas and the surrounding areas. This

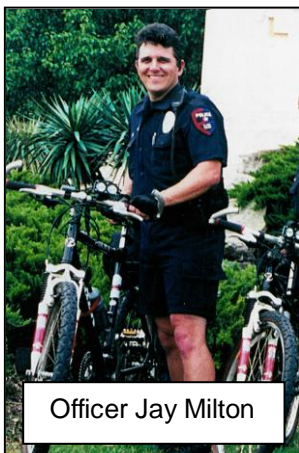


This chart clearly shows that from 2001 to 2005 a vast majority of calls for service were on Fridays.

revitalization included the addition of a 500-unit apartment complex, which was built adjacent to Haggard Park. The complex was designed to serve the downtown areas, as well as residents commuting on the light rail train to Dallas. City Hall saw this development as an

opportunity to revive the downtown area, which had been slowly floundering over the years. City Hall intended Haggard Park to be the centerpiece of this new development.

Officer Milton modified his work schedule to provide additional coverage during the Friday night hours to personally address suspected problems. He also conducted bike and foot



Officer Jay Milton

patrols throughout Haggard Park. Officer Milton quickly discovered that soon after sunset, many of the suspected teenagers dressed in gothic attire converged on the park. These patrols provided valuable information as he witnessed underage drinking, disorderly conduct behavior, underage smoking, narcotics use, and sexual displays in the park. He also found that his presence alone had very little effect on the teens. Officer Milton also reported back that

the teens congregating at the park were mostly Gothic teens. Officer Milton met with other residents who were walking around the park rather than through the park. He found that people who had been using the park daily for years, were now afraid and intimidated to visit the park on Friday nights. Other park patrons complained to City Hall of concerns about not being able to use the park on Friday nights.

## ANALYSIS

Officer Milton initially sought out to determine what identified Haggard Park as an attractive and desirable location for the unwanted teens during the Friday nights. Thus he discovered that the teens had learned about Haggard Park while patronizing a local “Skate Park” located adjacent the park. In 2001 the skate park began having “Band Night” on Friday nights. “Band Night” attracted a more diverse crowd than had previously attended the establishment. Many of the bands that played were small local teen bands. This contributed to unwanted loitering within the park as many of the teens attending



“Band Night” were now frequenting Haggard Park during the 30-minute break periods between band sets. “Band Night” increased in popularity among many Dallas and Plano area teens, which was easily accessible using the conveniently-located railway. By mid-2001, Officer Milton noticed a trend among the visiting teens that were now merely coming to the skate park, then immediately



Imagine 200 of these invading your local park every Friday Night.

congregating in Haggard Park. Many of the teens were witnessed being dropped off at the skate park by a parent, then the child would then walk to Haggard Park and stay until park closing hours. This suggested to Officer Milton that Haggard Park was now being viewed among the teens as more desirable social “hangout” over the skate park.

Officer Milton also noted factors that contributed to the park’s desirability included that the park was not well lit and there were many small “hiding places” where teens could congregate and conceal themselves from the view of passing police officers. Officer Milton spoke with several teens over time and noticed that many were well versed on the current ordinances governing curfew hours, which allowed the park to remain open until 11:00 p.m. The teens were quick to talk about their civil rights and tell the police officers that they did not have the authorization to simply remove them from the park. Officer Milton first developed a plan to enact a zero-tolerance policy on Friday night and vigorously enforce all city ordinance issues in the park. Sadly Officer Milton was diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer in late 2001 and passed away in the summer of 2002. Officer Milton’s death again left Haggard Park without a working plan to resolve the problem. Even though Milton was gone, the complaints still rolled in. Beginning in 2003, Neighborhood Police Officer Camille Bowie was assigned the project. Officer Bowie’s current assignment was to patrol the neighboring downtown business district. She reviewed Officer Milton’s notes and came to the same conclusion Officer Milton previously had with regards to how to approach problems surrounding Haggard Park.

## RESPONSE

In her response, Officer Bowie considered a wide range of plans ranging from issuing criminal trespass notices, to simply providing her presence within Haggard Park to deter undesirable subjects from entering into the park. Officer Bowie took her knowledge of the CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) philosophy to develop a request for changes in the design and lighting of the park itself. In the analysis phase of the project, it was determined that the problem was isolated to Friday nights from sunset to midnight. The small timeframe of the problem allowed for a more specific attack, but left Bowie worried that support for expensive changes to the park were not justified.

Officer Bowie's resources included personnel assigned to NPO Unit. The first action in the response state was to have the ten officers assigned to the NPO Unit adopt a "zero tolerance" attitude by aggressively enforcing all city ordinances and state law violations observed in the park. Officer Bowie also discovered that the City of Plano was planning a major renovation for the park



in 2004. Arrangements were made for the officers of the NPO Unit to have input on how the park would be renovated. Officer Bowie suggested that the dark areas in the back of the park be lit up and that benches and tables be separated further apart to deter the groups from

gathering. A suggestion was also made to completely close and fence the park during the period of reconstruction at the park. Officer Bowie also planned on obtaining authorization for members of the NPO unit to issue criminal trespass warnings to people at the park.

It was decided that strict enforcement would maintain a presence during the entire process. Officers of the NPO Unit would rotate working assignments in the park. Some NPOs were on foot, while others were on bikes and in patrol cars. Multiple documented violations

occurred during this period including Minor in Possession of Alcohol, Minor in Possession of Tobacco, Littering, curfew violations, disorderly conduct, and possession of drug paraphernalia. Among the custodial arrests made were for narcotics possession, child pornography, unlawfully carrying a weapon, possession of an explosive device, arson, and aggravated assault. While the numbers stacked up, it became obvious that enforcement alone was not going to resolve the problem. At the suggestion of one of the NPOs, a local citizen group referred to as the “God Squad” responded to the park on Friday nights. The “God Squad” arrived en masse and engaged in some spirited debates with some of the more Satanic Goth teens that were in the park. The “God Squad” proved to be entertaining, but was ineffective. After a few months, they grew tired of the scene and quit coming out. It seemed as the only viable solution would be issuing the problem teens criminal trespass notices. The problem was the only people authorized to give criminal trespass notices were high ranking Parks and Recreation Department officials. All of them worked normal hours and were unavailable Friday nights. Officer Bowie asked for authorization for her and/or the NPO



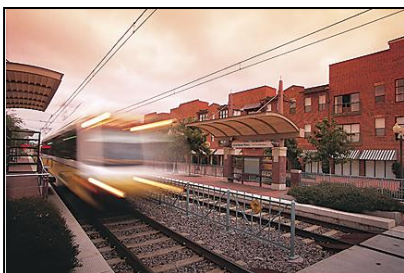
unit to issue criminal trespass warnings. The Parks and Recreation Department would not do that, but they did arrange for a senior Parks Department official to ride out with one of the NPO’s each Friday Night for a limited time. Mr. Jess Davis did come out and he issued several criminal trespass notices. Although somewhat effective, that was never intended as a long-term solution.

In 2003, the big break occurred which everyone involved was certain would solve the problem. The Parks and Recreation Department announced that Haggard Park would close for almost six months for renovation. The new design included smaller gathering areas, and much more lighting, making it more difficult to conceal criminal activity. Obviously the crowd needed to



find somewhere else to hang out for six months to a year. It appeared that most of the group actually started going to the skate park and staying inside. When the park re-opened in late 2003 the group slowly started migrated back over to the park. Now the light rail had arrived and Bowie noticed that many of the teens showing up were riding the train up from Dallas and other places in the Metroplex. She also noticed that this group was much more organized and found that they had put Haggard Park on Goth web sites as a place to meet on Friday nights. Although the teens returned, it was much easier for the officers to keep an eye on them and monitor illegal activity. Still complaints came in from residents of the downtown village and the downtown business. Several restaurants had gone in downtown hoping to capitalize on the light rail business. They reported that potential patrons were scared to get off the train at the Downtown/Haggard Park stop, due to the large group of Goth teens congregating around the park and the train station.

Although criminal activity was some what down, potential visitors still perceived Haggard Park as an undesirable location due to the teens seen loitering in the park. Officer Bowie, through a series of meetings, was able to get the director of the Parks and Recreation Department to issue a letter authorizing all members of the NPO unit and Sergeants to issue Criminal Trespass Warnings at Haggard Park. Armed with this new authority, officer began targeting suspected



leaders within the group of teens. The new design of the park, especially the new lighting, made it easier for officers to locate subjects participating in illegal and unwanted activity within the park. Within the first few months of 2006, all of the major problem

subjects had received criminal trespass warnings from Haggard Park. It became obvious how organized this group was when the leaders were not allowed to come to the park and many of the followers stopped coming as well. In March of 2006, Officer Bowie witnessed the group call a “special meeting” at the pavilion of the Park. As a group, they voted and decided that they wanted to switch their Friday night hang-out spot. The very next week the difference was dramatic. Only

the uninformed subjects for the group showed up in the next few weeks. Officer Bowie was happy to inform the remaining subjects of the group's decision.

## **ASSESSMENT**

By May of 2006, families were seen returning to Haggard Park. Right up until the time of this writing, Haggard Park is finally being used as it was intended on Friday nights. Subsequent calls for service have dropped dramatically to almost zero. Every once in a while individuals, or couples from the skate park will walk across the street, but they do not gather and do not commit criminal offenses.

A check of the report management system shows that calls for service Friday nights at Haggard Park have equaled out with the rest of the week. Neighboring downtown business owners also indicate an improved perception of Haggard Park. City Hall has quit receiving complaints about the park, so they are happy as well.

There was a slight issue with displacement. The group from Haggard Park started congregating at the Collin Creek Mall about a mile away. Officer Bowie responded to that



location and assisted the Mall Security in identifying and issuing criminal trespass warnings to subjects who were causing problems there. Within only a few weeks the group relocated again, this time outside the City of Plano. The NPO unit still monitors

Haggard Park for violations on Friday Night and will spot check the park to make sure that the problem does not re-surface. For now, Officer Bowie is able to resume her day shift activities downtown.

## **CLOSING**

The members of the Neighborhood Police Officer Unit mainly Officer Bowie tried many options to resolve this issue. While many of the tactics tried assisted in solving the problem, the big break was when the Parks and Recreation Department changed its policy and allowed officers of the unit to issue criminal trespass warnings. This is when the teens in the park realized that the police department finally had the ability to make the park an undesirable place to hangout. Once the key players were removed, followers had no reason to come back. The part that the officers liked the most was that they problem people actually had an organized meeting and voted to leave the park. The Residents of the apartments and the downtown visitors can now stroll through the park on Friday evenings. Visitors to the park, now see a person walking their dogs, parents pushing their teens on swings and couples taking stroll by the pond, rather than 300 Goth teens drinking, smoking, and offending everyone who visits the park. Problem Solved.

## **Agency and Officer Information:**

Plano Police Department  
909 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Plano, TX 75074  
(972) 424-5678

This project was primarily handled by members of the Neighborhood Police Officer Unit. The unit consists of four divisions

- Neighborhood Officers (7 Officers)
- Problem Oriented Policing Officers (2 Officers)
- Business District Officers (2 Officers)
- Park Patrol Officers (2 Un-filled positions)

Officer Bowie was primary on this project. Her assignment as one of the Downtown Business District Officers made her to obvious choice to work on this project. The NPO Unit works together on many projects and all 11 officers were happy to help with any project that one officer is working on.

While all members of the department receive training in problem solving, members of the NPO unit practice the problem solving philosophy daily. Members of the NPO unit teach Community Policing and Problem Oriented Policing to all recruit classes and some in-service classes for experienced officers. The Plano Police Department rewards officers for Problem Oriented Policing through a quarterly and yearly award for projects worked.

Members of the NPO unit have been Goldstein Finalists in 2003 and 2004 for the Underage Drinking Project and the Barron Elementary School Project. Through attending the POP Conference officers discovered [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org). NPO officers regularly use this site for training new officers and for obtaining reference material on new projects.

This particular project was a good example to the fact that the SARA model is not a linier model. Many of the first attempts at solving the problem never got past the response state. Officers were aware of the fact that they could easily go back to the assessment stage and work on a new response.

The City of Plano Parks and Recreation Department should be credited with listening to the needs of the NPO unit. The Parks and Recreation Department also was willing to spend the money needed to make Haggard Park unappealing to the criminal element. They should also be credited with turning over some authority to the NPO unit to issue criminal trespass warnings to the problem element, which turned out to be the final tool that the NPO unit needed to solve this problem.

<b>Plano Police Department Contact Information</b>	
<p><b><u>Sergeant Frank McElligott</u></b>            909 14<sup>th</sup> Street            Plano, TX 75074            (972) 941-2527 Office            (972) 816-8330 Cell  <a href="mailto:frankm@plano.gov">frankm@plano.gov</a></p>	<p>Sergeant McElligott is the Sergeant over the NPO Unit and supervised Officer Bowie the other officers of the unit during this project.</p>
<p><b><u>Officer Camille Bowie</u></b>            909 14<sup>th</sup> Street            Plano, TX 75074            (972) 941-2544 Office            (972) 816-8247 Cell  <a href="mailto:camilleb@plano.gov">camilleb@plano.gov</a></p>	<p>Officer Bowie assumed the primary officer during most of this project. She received help from other officers in some of the areas, but she was instrumental in getting the Parks and Recreation Department and the Police Department to work together.</p>
<p><b><u>Officer Richard Glenn</u></b>            909 14<sup>th</sup> Street            Plano, TX 75074            (972) 941-2544 Office            (972) 816-8249 Cell  <a href="mailto:Richardg@plano.gov">Richardg@plano.gov</a></p>	<p>Officer Glenn was a POP officer during this project and assisted Officer Bowie on a regular basis. Since he has participated in the Goldstein Submission Process in the past, he assumed primary duties in the writing of this submission.</p>