

1. Summary

Renaming Terror Avenue

Scanning: For more than three decades, the Terrace Avenue and Bedell Street neighborhood of Hempstead, New York has hosted a large open-air drug market that is plagued by violent crime causing community fear.

Analysis: The Village of Hempstead, located in Nassau County, New York is only four percent of Nassau County's total population, yet accounts for more than 15 percent of the County's violent crime. Hempstead has the largest number of probationers and parolees and some of the highest Uniform Crime Report numbers, community complaints, unemployment and school dropouts in Nassau County. In 2007, 44 percent of narcotics and 10 percent of violent crime in Hempstead took place in Terrace-Bedell. In 2005, there were 169 major crimes in this six-block area. The open-air drug market was so profitable that it outlived all previous law enforcement interventions and provided illegal employment for families, and sometimes, for generations within the same family.

Response: In 2007, District Attorney (DA) Kathleen Rice in partnership with Hempstead Police Chief Joe Wing and community leaders jointly designed and implemented a strategy to eliminate the drug market and related violence. The DA and police gathered enough evidence to arrest the 50+ principal drug dealers driving the open-air market. 18 dealers, with no violent criminal history, were not arrested, but instead invited to attend a community intervention meeting called The Gathering. At The Gathering the men and woman were surrounded by relatives, community members and law enforcement and told to stop dealing drugs or they would be arrested. Following the meeting, community-based service providers met with each dealer and assessed their social, educational, substance abuse/mental health and employment needs. Simultaneous to implementing The Gathering, the Hempstead Police also launched significant enforcement activities.

Assessment: This partnership resulted in eliminating the drug market, an 87 percent reduction in narcotics activity, a 10 percent reduction in Part One crime and a 74 percent reduction in overall crime in one year. From January to June 2009, there have been no drug arrests. The initiative resulted in building trust between the community and law enforcement allowing the DA to redefine her role to include meaningful prevention efforts that serve the community at-large, even residents that have never had contact with the criminal justice system. Today in Terrace-Bedell, children play outside, families take walks, businesses are starting to return and law enforcement is welcomed and recognized for their new prevention role.

2. Description

Renaming Terror Avenue

Introduction: “Renaming Terror Avenue,” describes the successful outcome of the law enforcement-community partnership that eliminated a three-decade old open-air drug market in the Terrace-Bedell neighborhood of Hempstead, New York. Today, Terrace Avenue is no longer nicknamed Terror Avenue, but is a street where families sit and visit, developers look for new business opportunities and a select group of diverted drug dealers are becoming productive community members. There are other successful Drug Market Intervention programs in the country, but what makes Terrace-Bedell different is the strength and level of community trust that law enforcement has achieved, allowing them to redefine their role in the community.

The most significant accomplishment of the Terrace-Bedell initiative was achieving the level of community trust that the law enforcement partners began to gain by initiating a dialogue. Both law enforcement and the community had to reinvent their own and understand each other’s role in the community differently. This ultimately allowed the District Attorney (DA) to focus on crime prevention, not just crime fighting. The Community had to become and be seen as an important and ongoing source of valid information and ideas that informed how law enforcement either prevented or reacted to crime. Just achieving this level of trust, which remains an ongoing process, made all the other goals and objectives of this project possible. Without this trust, the drug market might have disappeared for only a month, as with previous law enforcement operations. Without this trust, the community would not have worked so hard to support and to eventually take over this successful initiative that continues today and provides needed

community-based services to successfully diverted drug dealers and to those in need in the whole Hempstead community. But with this trust, anything was and is possible in Terrace-Bedell, including working as equal partners with law enforcement to lower overall crime by 74 percent, encouraging businesses to return, walking free of fear down the block with your children and reversing the negative stigma of living in Terrace-Bedell.

A. Scanning: The Village of Hempstead, located in Nassau County, New York, east of New York City, has a population of approximately 70,000 people. Nassau County's total population is 1.3 million people. While Hempstead is only four percent of Nassau County's population, in 2007, it accounted for more than 15 percent of the County's violent crime. Hempstead has also become home to the largest number of returning probationers and parolees anywhere in the County. For more than 30 years, one six-block area in Hempstead, where Terrace Avenue and Bedell Street cross, has been one of the County's most entrenched crime hot spots and host to a large open-air drug market. Crime and disorder were so prevalent in Terrace-Bedell that the community nicknamed it and soon even the police started calling it 'Terror Avenue.' For years, Terrace-Bedell has accounted for over half of all Hempstead's murders. In 2007, 44 percent of the narcotics and 10 percent of the violent crime in Hempstead occurred in Terrace-Bedell, which also experienced some of the highest Uniform Crime Report numbers, community complaints, unemployment and school dropouts in Nassau County.

Terrace-Bedell has over 6,000 residents and is characterized by dense apartment buildings totaling over 800 units, with half in one large apartment building. In 2001, there were six

homicides on the same small street corner where Terrace Avenue and Bedell Street cross. One mother's description summed it up: "Drug dealers used to stand and shoot their guns up and down the street." In 2005, there were 169 major crimes in this six-block area where homicide, gun assaults, robberies, sexual assaults, prostitution, and drive-through drug buyers causing community quality of life concerns proliferated. Most crime was fueled by the drug market that was so profitable it outlived all previous law enforcement interventions and provided illegal employment for families, and sometimes for generations within the same family. However, to truly understand the effect that the open-air drug market had on the community, other non-quantitative indicators of neighborhood trauma were examined.

There was a negative stigma associated with Terrace-Bedell residents which affected how residents lived, where they worked, and their self-image. Community members reported being passed over for jobs or being denied store credit after disclosing their address. Not surprisingly, this led to a negative mindset that included low self-esteem, paranoia, racial tensions and mistrust of authority. When the DA's Office first met with community leaders about the proposed project, understandably there was a significant amount of distrust based on misunderstandings about how and why the community and law enforcement viewed the problems of Terrace-Bedell so differently. Simply stated, the community believed law enforcement only wanted to "lock people up" and law enforcement believed that the community's inaction in dealing with neighborhood crime problems was due to apathy rather than the internal conflict of sending another person to jail and breaking up a family regardless of the dysfunction in that family.

B. Analysis: Immediately upon entering office in January 2006, newly elected District Attorney (DA) Kathleen Rice started Operation Family Affair, a drug investigation initiated with a street buy on Terrace Avenue that developed into a comprehensive local state and federal task force connecting drug dealing in Hempstead to Texas, Florida and Columbia, South America. Just one week after the year-long investigation was completed, a relative of the convicted drug dealer, who made the sale that started the investigation, stepped in to take-over the drug business. At the conclusion of Operation Family Affair, narcotics activity in Terrace-Bedell *increased* by 9 percent.

Similar investigations have occurred in Hempstead for decades. (See Attachment A) One large-scale civil enforcement investigation in 1996 focused solely on Terrace-Bedell and yielded 172 arrests. But within weeks, the drug market returned. As crime declined across the nation in the 1990's, Terrace-Bedell was unaffected, except that more residents had prison records. In America today, there are over two million people in prison, the majority of whom are African American. As law enforcement tried taking back Terrace-Bedell from drug dealers, they also perpetuated the historical experience of many black Americans involving mistrust and racism between law enforcement and the community.

Focusing on Terrace-Bedell

The fact that Operation Family Affair did not have a significant impact on the Terrace-Bedell drug market was the 'Tipping Point' for the DA and for Terrace-Bedell. The Tipping Point is what author Malcolm Gladwell described in his influential book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, "the moment at which momentum for change becomes unstoppable." In February 2007, the District Attorney contacted Jeremy Travis, President of John

Jay College of Criminal Justice who came to Hempstead to meet with the DA and brought along David Kennedy, a criminologist who had designed, implemented and written about a successful Drug Market Intervention in High Point, North Carolina and other jurisdictions across the nation. The 'High Point' Model focused on identifying and developing strong cases on the major drug dealers driving a drug market. Non-violent dealers were invited to a community intervention where family and community leaders voiced their intolerance for dealing drugs. Opportunities to support the offenders through community-based medical, educational/vocational and social services were provided. Simultaneously, heavy police resources shut the whole open-air drug market down.

Analyzing Crime Data

In February 2007, the DA's Office and police began analyzing five years of arrest data and citizen complaints. The data underscored the persistent and ongoing drug and related crime problem in Terrace-Bedell and verified that the drug market had led to additional crime including theft, robberies, assault, prostitution and gun crime which in turn contributed to disorder and fear. The police also determined that 50 percent of the drug buyers that came to Terrace-Bedell to purchase drugs were from outside Hempstead, and therefore additional and more creative enforcement tactics were needed. In 2007, 44 percent of the narcotics and 10 percent of the violent crime activity in Hempstead took place in Terrace-Bedell.

Identifying the Drug Dealers in Terrace Bedell

Using confidential informants, DA Investigators and the Hempstead Police collected information about and developed criminal cases against drug dealers in Terrace-Bedell. Investigators and

Assistant District Attorneys (ADAs) debriefed every person arrested for drugs within Nassau County before any plea offers were discussed in an effort to identify the major drug dealers driving the market. Through these debriefings, they also gathered additional intelligence on the magnitude and scope of the drug marketplace.

Confidential informants made drug buys, but dealers were not arrested. These drug sales were videotaped, dealers identified and each dealer's criminal record reviewed. Initially over 100 individuals from 17 to 63 years old were identified and videotaped engaging in illegal drug activity. Further investigation and analysis revealed that a smaller group of about 50 individuals, that the DA had already gathered enough evidence on to prosecute, were involved in a significant amount of the illegal drug transactions. Through further analysis of rap sheets and criminal histories, 18 people were identified who were significantly involved in the illegal drug trade, but did not have any history of violent crime.

Collecting Non-Traditional Data By Building Community Relationships

For four weeks during September 2007, the DA's Office and Police Department met with individual community stakeholders including prominent community members, advocates, faith based leaders, businesses, social service providers, schools and tenant groups to determine if they supported the strategy. As Criminologist David Kennedy put it best, "Nobody can set standards for a community from the outside."

After these initial community meetings, weekly public group meetings that grew in size from one meeting to the next, occurred from October through December 2007. By December 2007, over 90 community representatives were voluntarily attending each meeting.

According to David Kennedy, who attended the first community meeting, “everyone realized that a successful strategy had to challenge the community conviction that there was a conspiracy to put their kids in jail or prison.” The development of this partnership led to building such strong trust among all involved that the initiative’s success went well beyond eliminating the drug market.

C. Response: After all crime data and community information about Terrace-Bedell were collected and analyzed, the DA’s Office and police department identified a small group of drug dealers who were responsible for and could be directly linked to a majority of the crime and disorder. However, all previous unsuccessful interventions in Terrace and Bedell involved some version of identifying a primary group of offenders and arresting them. The key to the new successful response was that it involved more than arresting a group of selected drug dealers. The response involved the entire community as equal partners in the design, implementation, communication and eventual ongoing oversight of the strategy to eliminate the drug market.

The Gathering: During weekly meetings with the DA’s Office, police and the community during the last three months of 2007, the response was designed. The first part of the response involved explaining to the community how the selected drug dealers would become the initial focus and explaining the different components of the strategy: intervention, enforcement, and

services. By this time, the community had started to not only closely examine the role and goals of the DA and the Police Department, but they also started to examine their preconceived notions about law enforcement.

During the design phase, the community named the intervention meeting ‘The Gathering’ which was a much more positive and less clinical term than ‘Intervention.’ It also perfectly described what was about to happen. The community also decided to re-name the 18 selected drug dealers the ‘Brothers and Sisters.’ This was important because some of the 18 participants were literally and figuratively part of the community’s family. Moreover, the community hoped the Brothers and Sisters could be role models in the community for others to emulate and have a better chance to escape the cycle of crime. Area youth had limited exposure to successful role models other than the perceived successful drug dealers. Finally, by agreeing to call the drug dealers the Brothers and Sisters, the community realized very early that the DA and police were serious in their desire to have them drive the strategy as an equal partner.

Every detail of the Gathering was carefully planned with the community partners during the weekly meetings. When the public library offered to hold The Gathering, the community declined noting that the Brothers and Sisters might not feel comfortable in the library, which was literally next door to the police station. The Gathering was moved to the African American History museum, which provided a needed neutral location. It was determined that at The Gathering, the community would surround the Brothers and Sisters to make them feel that their community was supporting them. It was also agreed that the police, DA and a community member would draft and hand deliver invitation letters to each of the 18 drug offenders,

explaining the program and answering their and relatives' questions. (See Attachment B) It was important that the family of each Brother or Sister knew about The Gathering so that they could attend, support and encourage the Brother/Sister to show-up.

Only 13 of the 18 invite letters were able to be put into the hands of the dealers. Each was told they would not be arrested and/or prosecuted if they attended The Gathering and did not commit more crime --*any* crime. The Gathering took place on January 8, 2008. (See link - Attachment C)

The Gathering was a community intervention. Over 250 people attended. Every community partner participating in the initiative knew someone in their family or in the community who had been involved in criminal activity in Terrace-Bedell. Every community member had been affected by crime, collateral violence, and disorder in Terrace-Bedell. The community partners' message to the Brothers and the Sisters who had been active selling drugs in their neighborhood for too long was one of tough love: We love you, but you have to stop.

At the Gathering, the DA showed videos of each Brother and Sister selling drugs. Then law enforcement and the community partners delivered their message. The Brothers and Sisters were told about the program, which first involved addressing three priority needs: food, clothing and shelter. The Brothers and Sisters were also asked to participate in education, employment, social service and other related life skill training programs in order to begin living as productive community members. It was not mandatory for the Brothers and Sisters to participate in these services; the agreement was to attend The Gathering and not commit a single solitary offense. However, all 13 Brothers and Sisters took advantage of these services including the weekly

Council for Unity meetings. These were group sessions led by an ex-offender to help the Brothers and Sisters adjust to a lawful lifestyle while at the same time providing a new social network for those that had been displaced from their criminal social network ‘on the corner.’

While planning and implementing The Gathering, Hempstead Police launched significant enforcement activities. The Hempstead Police provided 24/7 patrol for three months through March 2008. Additionally, special enforcement strategies including vehicle check-points, and parking code and traffic enforcement, among others, were implemented in Terrace-Bedell. Since a promise had been made to the Community that the Police would address all buyers coming from outside the Village of Hempstead, the police stepped-up reverse drug and prostitution sting operations in the area. Today, an enforcement team comprised of members from the DA’s Office and Hempstead Police continues to meet monthly to address emerging crime and quality-of-life issues in Terrace-Bedell and throughout Hempstead.

D. Assessment: The open-air drug market is gone. It has not moved to another neighboring area and crime has declined steeply, by more than 74 percent in 2008. Shots-fired-related calls to the police fell by 76 percent. The success of this partnership resulted in an 87 percent reduction in narcotics activity and 10 percent reduction in Part One crime in one year. In 2007, the year prior to The Gathering, there were 124 drug arrests. By the end of 2008, one year after The Gathering, there were only 16 drug arrests in Terrace-Bedell. Between January and June 2009, there have been zero drug arrests in Terrace Bedell.

All 13 Brothers and Sisters, who personally received the invitation letters, showed up at The Gathering and signed up for services and programs. As of June 2009, 10 of the 13 Brothers and Sisters have not recidivated and nine are currently employed. Some, with the help of the DA and the Police Chief, are working for the Village of Hempstead, have joined the union and are receiving full benefits. Three Brother and Sisters did not make it because they committed non-violent misdemeanors and have been arrested and prosecuted. However, the newly developed relationship between law enforcement and community has changed the dynamics of how such prosecutions are perceived by the community. In fact, one of the arrested Brothers served his sentence and upon release he immediately rejoined the DA's Council for Unity Group. With the help of the DA and the Mayor of Hempstead, he was recently hired to work in the Village.

There was, however, an even greater achievement than eliminating the drug market. While law enforcement helped the community feel safer by ending overt drug dealing, the community helped law enforcement, particularly the DA's Office, redefine its role from only fighting crime through prosecution to preventing crime by forging strong community partnerships and together developing crime reduction and crime prevention strategies. One prevention strategy is the creation of the Hempstead Redevelopment and Redirection Center (HRRC).

The HRRC: The Nassau DA's Office created, coordinates and manages the Hempstead Redevelopment and Redirection Center (HRRC), a one-stop locally based community service center that includes government and community-based providers to assist participants with housing, food stamps, drug treatment, mental health, job training, employment, life skills, mentoring and criminal justice needs. Although the HRRC was first developed for the Brothers

and Sisters, it was later staffed, through grant funding secured by the DA's Office and in-kind services from local providers, to serve ex-offenders returning to Hempstead.

At the HRRC, the Brothers and Sisters, and now new participants, enroll in the aforementioned Council for Unity group meetings where diverted drug dealers and ex-offenders share experiences and strategies for success at weekly meetings facilitated by an ADA and an ex-offender. These meetings provide a social network and serve to empower participants to control their own destinies by problem solving and skill development while relying on the group when needed.

Also at HRRC, outreach services to facilitate family re-unification are offered. Additionally, a job training program called Project Connect helps at-risk, diverted and ex-offender enrollees find work by providing an incentive to local businesses to hire. "One more job, one less victim," is a common refrain of the DA and project partners. The HRRC clients also enroll in Youth Build, a community-based program where low-income 17-24 year olds work toward their GEDs, learn job skills and serve the community by building affordable housing, while transforming their own lives. Additionally, a mentoring program is offered through 100 Black Men of Long Island.

Recently, more vocational programs were added including a pre-apprentice program offered by the Building and Trades Union that is a career track into the construction industry. The HRRC also provides 'no-entry services' to help local at-risk Hempstead residents avoid entering the criminal justice system. The 'no-entry' goal is supplemented by a new student-run Youth Court in Hempstead High School, coordinated by the DA in partnership with Hofstra University Law

School, which helps keep at-risk youth from entering the criminal justice system. Students going through Youth Court are also assessed to determine if there are issues that can be addressed through the various services provided at the HRRC.

Today, anyone in the neighborhood can access services offered at the HRRC because as the community partners once explained to law enforcement, in order to help each Brother and Sister, they also had to help their families. Today over 215 community members from the Village of Hempstead are currently in programs at the HRRC.

Outcomes are collected and evaluated by a crime analyst from John Jay College of Criminal Justice who also attends monthly meetings with an enforcement team comprised of the DA, police and community to discuss tips, collect hot spot crime data and develop crime control strategies. There is also a community services team that meets weekly to track, discuss and provide case management services at the HRRC. This year, it is anticipated that the community's role in the project will expand so that they become the lead administrators of the ongoing initiative. Self-policing by the community members is one of the most desired outcomes of this successful problem-oriented policing strategy.

The Terrace-Bedell initiative did not just eliminate an entrenched open air drug market. It helped redefine the role of law enforcement in the community. The relationship, that started with the community taking a stern 'we do not snitch' stance, today is one where the community calls the police directly identifying and providing information about specific crimes. And the police reaction has also changed. For example, information about drug use in an apartment would have

traditionally resulted in the execution of a search warrant and the start of an eviction process against the named tenant, initiated by the DA. Because of the open dialogue among the partners, the Police may learn that the named tenant is being victimized, held hostage by a son, niece or grandson who is using their apartment for illegal drug activity. No longer under these circumstances is a search warrant automatically executed. Instead, the Hempstead Police will very loudly and conspicuously knock on the door of the apartment and tell those inside that they are aware of the drug activity and that this is a warning. The next time, a search warrant will be executed. In the instances where the police have used this strategy, they have never had to revisit an apartment.

There is still a great deal of work to do. Younger members of the Terrace-Bedell community need to see successful non-drug dealer role models. The notion that prison is just a normal part of growing up in Terrace Bedell will take time to change. Recently, when a student who was involved in the new Youth Court project was asked to describe her future, her life steps included incarceration in the same manner a young person might talk about going to college. When the interviewer told her that she didn't have to go to prison to be grown-up, she was surprised and relieved. Similarly, when a new parent recently lambasted the ADA in charge of the new Youth Court program, telling her that the only reason the Youth Court existed was so that the police could "target our kids by collecting data on them," other community members immediately stepped in and told the mom that in fact the DA's office was there to help Hempstead children and asked the mom, "Don't you know about what they did in Terrace-Bedell?"

In the summer of 2008, after the drug market was eliminated, the community held an outdoor block party and invited the police, DA's Office and other government agencies. Community members commented that one year before, they never would have predicted or dreamed that they would be able to have an outdoor block party on their street. The public officials commented that one year before they never would have predicted or dreamed they would be invited by the community to an open air block party at Terrace-Bedell. Today, the DA's office has a full-time ADA managing the HRRC and the office is working closely with other public agencies to expand upon the DA's success on Terrace Avenue, which is no longer called Terror Avenue by anyone.

3. Agency and Officer Information

Key Project Team Members:

District Attorney Kathleen Rice
Hempstead Police Chief Joe Wing
Eddison Bramble, President, 100 Black Men of Long Island
Executive Assistant District Attorney Meg Reiss
Professor David Kennedy, Director of the Center for Crime Prevention John Jay College of
Criminal Justice

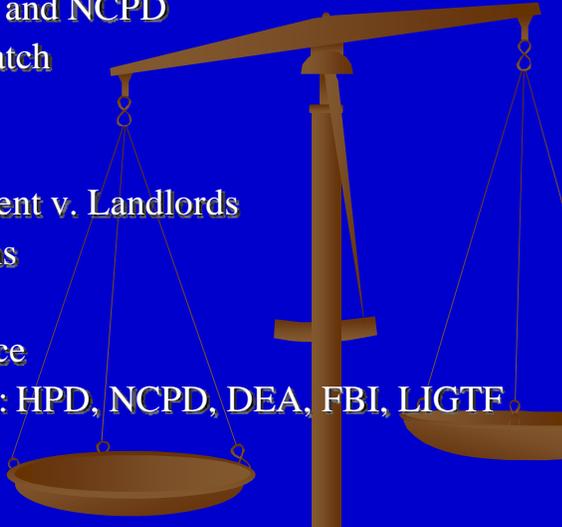
Project Contact Person:

Name: Meg Reiss
Position: Executive Assistant District Attorney
Address: Nassau County District Attorney's Office
262 Old Country Road
Mineola, NY, 11501
Phone: 516-571-3812
Fax: 516-571-2266
Email: Meg.Reiss@nassauda.org

Other Drug Crime Investigations in Hempstead, New York

Prior Law Enforcement Efforts

- Drug Sweeps: HPD and NCPD
- Operation Night Watch
- Red Zones
- DEA NET
- AG Civil Enforcement v. Landlords
- HUD UC Operations
- Intensive Patrols
- FBI Gang Task Force
- Drug Investigations: HPD, NCPD, DEA, FBI, LIGTF



ATTACHMENT B



SAMPLE INVITE LETTER TO THE GATHERING

January 2, 2008

Mr. XXXX
1234 X Avenue
Hempstead, NY 11550

Dear Mr. XXXX,

As the District Attorney of Nassau County and the Police Chief for the Village of Hempstead, we are writing to let you know that your activities have come to our attention. Specifically, after we conducted an extensive drug investigation on Terrace Avenue and Bedell Street you have been positively identified as selling drugs on the street.

Because of your activities, we invite you to a meeting on January 8, 2008 at 6:30 pm on the main floor of the African American Museum located at 110 North Franklin Street, Hempstead, NY. **Mr. XXXX you will not be arrested at this meeting.** This is not a trick. You may bring someone with you who is important to you, like a friend or relative. We want you to see some of the evidence we have of your involvement in criminal activity, and we want to give you the opportunity to stop before Hempstead Police Officers are forced to take action. Again, you will not be arrested at this meeting.

If you do not to attend this meeting, you will be arrested. Street-level drug sales and violence have to stop in the Village of Hempstead. We are giving you one chance to hear our message so that we are not forced to take action against you.

If you have any questions, please call Executive Assistant District Attorney Meg Reiss at 516.xxx.xxxx (office) or 516.xxx.xxxx (cell).

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Rice
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NASSAU COUNTY

Joseph Wing
CHIEF OF POLICE
VILLAGE OF HEMPSTEAD

ATTACHMENT C

Please click on the link below to view a video about Terrace-Bedell Initiative that includes highlights of The Gathering.

Hunting Down Drug Dealers

<http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=5620293>