

Problem Solving Quarterly

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Reporting on Innovative Approaches to Policing

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A First: The POP Awards

The Fourth Annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference had a new level of excitement *this* year due to PERF's first annual POP awards.

At a special ceremony on Nov. 4, PERF announced the establishment of the Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award—to the surprise of awards presenter Goldstein. The announcement ended a grueling two-month process for the awards committee, which had to choose two winners (individual and team) from over 60 submissions from agencies in the United States and Canada.

One awards judge, Sgt. George Meglesh of the Abington (PA) Police Department, said, "The finalists were all so creative and made such improvements in their communities.

"The officers created results above and beyond what one would expect, and, in the

process, created permanent structures so these solutions could be evaluated periodically and avert the original problems from recurring."

Los Angeles Police Officer Suzy Campbell won the problem-solving award for her creative response to vandalism, drug dealing, and gang-related activities in the Virgil/Burns area of northwest Los Angeles.

A seven-member unit from the Santa Ana (CA) Police Department won the problem-solving team award for their multi-phase project to clean up prostitution, panhandling, and drug dealing from a shopping complex.

The team members included Sgt. Dan Carr, Corporal Wallace Shearing, and Officers Charles Upton, Gary Magers, Ron Dryva, John Byron, and Frank Fajardo.

This issue of PSQ features descriptions of the award-winning efforts of these problem solvers on pages 1 and 4.

Fighting Urban Decay

By Suzy Campbell

Los Angeles, California—For the past two years, the northwest section of the Rampart Division, once relatively, crime-free, had seen dramatic increases in narcotics, robbery, and gang-related activities. Although a majority of the section remains quiet, the Virgil/Burns area, comprised of single-family residences, small businesses and multi-unit complexes, had been a source of rising crime and citizen complaints.

To document the problem, I compiled information from citizens, crime reports, and officers, and identified five primary locations for the increase in service calls: a park-

(cont. on next page)

(Campbell, cont. from p. 1)

ing lot behind a bakery, the front area of a day-care center, a seldom-used parking garage, a trash-filled abandoned house, and a popular nightclub.

All five locations were within a few blocks of one another, and were frequented by the same criminal element—gang members, drug users and sellers, transients, run-aways, and prostitutes.

I contacted the owner of the bakery parking lot and he made minor lighting improvements. The owner of the adjoining apartment building installed a ten-foot fence and hired a full-time maintenance person and manager to protect his property against people running through it. The bakery owner also moved the dumpster on his property so that it prevented juveniles from jumping the fence. Within a two-week period, calls for loitering and gang-related activities ceased.

Having worked in the area previously, I was familiar with a primary drug market. Members reported seeing him parceling out drugs to independent dealers.

After a tall from a community member located the dealer and detained him; Not only did the suspect have outstanding warrants, but the Immigration and Naturalization Service wanted him for illegally entering the United States from El Salvador three times. No narcotics were at the scene, but we later found more than 10 grams of rock cocaine in his shoes. He is now serving an 8-year federal sentence for illegal reentry.

Officers from the Rampart Station initiated a mini-task force to address drug dealing in front of the day-care center. We detained two

suspects during a transaction. I knew both suspects from prior arrests; one had recently been released from prison. Since the arrest for violating parole, both suspects have not returned to the area.

The multi-level parking garage was rarely used. Graffiti and overgrowth covered the exterior. The surrounding sidewalks and parkways had become a dumping ground for discarded, soiled furniture. An abandoned moving van alongside the garage contained soiled mattresses, clothing, and beer bottles.

I impounded the van and learned the parking building belonged to the Los Angeles Community College. I requested that the school maintenance staff clean up the property. They quickly renovated it, and, after two weeks, the garage was freshly painted and the parkways cleared. After six weeks, students began parking there again.

The abandoned house remained an eyesore and a blemish to the community, despite numerous attempts by residents and officers to secure and maintain the property. In prior months, two fires had been set there.

A local ordinance hindered the property owner from tearing down the house or selling the property. So I brought the owner together with representatives of the management company and the proposed wrecking company to find out what permits were still necessary to complete the tear-down. Since inspectors were afraid to go into the area, I accompanied several of them during their routes. Eventually the wrecking company leveled the house and the lot was put up for sale;

The Canandonga Nightclub was another major source of problems drunk driving, drug dealing, and shootings—in the area. After an ad hoc community meeting at the Rampart Station, we initiated several problem-solving efforts.

Spot checks revealed the club was in violation of its own permit—which did not allow amplified music or more alcohol sales than food sales. When I discussed the problems with the nightclub owner's attorney, he said the owner wanted to avoid trouble with this club since he had 12 others to manage.

A diligent neighbor kept a daily log of activities occurring at the nightclub and wrote letters to the police department's Police Commission permit division. Division representatives later advised the owner of these ongoing nuisances. Due to public and police pressure, the owner decided not to renew his lease and today the location remains secure and quiet.

This project successfully decreased calls for service in the area. The gang that once quartered the bakery disbanded. The majority of the transients and drug dealers no longer frequented the parking garage or abandoned house and left the area. Police have not received any complaints from the day-care center since the arrests.

Disturbances have decreased significantly since the nightclub closed. The project created a cleaner, more favorable atmosphere in the area. Even the criminal element commented on how much nicer the area looked.

Officer Suzy Campbell of the Los Angeles Police Department was the winner of the 1993 Excellence in Problem Solving Award (Individual)

Leading the Change

By Susie Mowry

Lt. Susie Mowry recently completed her fellowship as PERF's POP coordinator and returned to the Newport News (VA) Police Department to become commander of a neighborhood policing unit.

Fifteen months ago, I came to PERF with little to no idea what the rest of the law enforcement community was doing about POP. Of course I was very familiar with the POP activities the Newport News (VA) Police Department had been undertaking, but I was very ignorant about what the rest of the country was doing.

As PERF's POP coordinator, I spent about 60 percent of my time on the road training police departments of every shape and size in the nuts and bolts of problem-Oriented policing. The other 40 percent of my time was spent working on PERF research and technical assistance projects.

One of the things that shocked me almost immediately after I began delivering POP training was that no matter how large or small, police departments had the same concerns. Someone from every department would say POP or community policing (CP) was nothing but social work. Agency employees were expecting police officers not to do "real" police work. Some said community policing was nothing but "glad-handing" the public. I even heard that police administrators were only interested in getting on the good side of politicians and the public, and did not care about officers.

Most of these concerns are due to a lack of knowledge about POP. Perhaps we as police executives are negligent in familiarizing our officers about POP prior to expecting them to change their entire way of life as they know it. Maybe we need to involve our line officers in the research and development of this "new" method of policing.

During my fellowship, I often trained entire departments, including supervisory and line personnel. Many of the most negative officers, once confronted with case studies and other proof of POP/CP successes, realized that it didn't mean changing everything they believed in. As police officers, they still had to enforce the laws and perform other functions that we have led them to believe is "real" police work.

Our only expectation was that they do it by addressing community problems. POP and CP give officers the time to positively interact with People every day. POP, CP, and CP enable departments to use two crucial elements—problem solving and community engagement—involving problems that adversely affect the police and community members.

When I was in one major Northeast city, I heard a patrol officer make a comment before his chief and the entire command staff that proved to me that my efforts were more than worthwhile. The officer had been doing practice exercises during the training, working on problems specific to his assigned neighborhood. At the end of the presentation, the officer said that he had been at the department for over 10 years and often worked evenings.

(cont. on p. 6)

Submissions

The PSO editors encourage readers to send in articles on their POP efforts. When submitting descriptions, remember to consider the following questions:

What is the problem?

Who is affected by the problem, and how are they affected?

How has the department handled the problem in the past?

What information was collected about the problem?

Was there any difficulty in getting the information?

What was the goal of the problem-solving effort?

What were the results of the problem-solving effort?

How do you plan to continue the problem-solving effort?

What are the major lessons learned?

What would you recommend to other police agencies interested in addressing similar problems?

Send submissions to: Editor, Police Executive Research Forum, 1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004
(202) 637-6341
E-mail: perfor@perfor.org

Shopping Center Blues

By Bill Tegeler

Santa Ana, California As have other cities throughout the United States, Santa Ana has experienced a dramatic increase in its transient/homeless **population**. Such an influx has led to a significant increase in crimes of all types and deteriorating neighborhoods.

In the westend district of Santa Ana, the Harbor Plaza Shopping Center is a large commercial complex that houses a supermarket, two fast-food restaurants, and 30 other stores. Harbor Plaza was a major source of the area's crime.

Scanning

Members of the district's community policing team and store owners/managers of the Harbor Plaza met and identified aggressive panhandling, auto burglaries, and narcotic activity as major problems for their businesses. Officers from the POP team also analyzed the problems from reports and service rolls at the shopping center. As a result of a survey, participants identified peddling as the most frequent problem.

Officers observed extremely aggressive panhandlers who intimidated customers for money by washing car windshields and soliciting for work. Officers also learned the "window washers" were actually responsible for many of the auto burglaries. Fifteen panhandlers admitted to using their money to buy drugs.

Approximately five blocks from the Harbor Plaza, the Santa Ana Riverbed allowed many transients to create makeshift housing under its street overpasses. Members of the community policing team videotaped the living conditions along the Santa Ana Riverbed.

The video revealed the panhandlers at the Harbor Plaza were the same individuals illegally camping at the riverbed. Officers' observations and a review of the videotape showed telltale signs of drug use, prostitution, and theft of items such as golf clubs, car radios, lawn mowers, and bicycles.

Analysis

Officers identified the following groups affected by the Harbor Plaza problems: merchants, citizens, businesses in neighborhoods adjoining the riverbed, police personnel, and the city of Santa Ana because of revenue losses from the plaza's declining tax base.

In the past, the police department had responded to similar problems through enforcement, adoption of nuisance ordinances, and imposition of a park curfew. The police department also worked closely with local public and private organizations who fed and sheltered homeless people. These activities proved successful in the short term but did not resolve the long-term problems in the area.

Response

Data revealed the majority of calls and reports about the criminal activity on the riverbed and at the Harbor Plaza occurred on the swing shift. Seven members of the district's swing shift designed a multi-phase program to address

these illegal activities. The goals were to reduce crimes against people and property, reduce widespread drug sales and use in the area, and evict transients who aggressively panhandled.

The westend district commander and an Orange County Sheriff's Department commander formed a joint operation to remove people illegally camping along the riverbed. A Santa Ana councilperson, as well as a member of the Orange County Board of Supervisors, supported this effort and ensured the cooperation of other county agencies, including the local environmental management agency.

Prior to enforcement activities, flyers were handed out to the riverbed residents, as well as posted on their living quarters, to advise them of their illegal camping activities and necessary removal from the area. The residents complied and police did not make any arrests.

During the next two phases of the intervention, officers sought to remove the criminal element from the Harbor Plaza. Officers worked in plainclothes and uniforms, using footbeats, bicycles, marked and unmarked units, and a golf cart, to patrol the shopping center and contact persons engaged in criminal activity. A short talk, followed by a voluntary photo, field interview, and fingerprint, was usually sufficient to make the offenders leave the area. Over the next four weeks, officers made fewer than ten arrests, while contacting nearly 100 individuals.

During this phase of the program, officers uncovered additional criminal activity within
(cont. On next page)

(Shopping, cont. from p. 4)

the shopping center, including a telephone fraud scheme. An offender would meet a "client" at a pay phone, accept \$20, and allow this client to **make a call, usually international**, with a stolen telephone credit card. Working in conjunction with the phone company, police arrested several individuals in connection with this fraud scheme.

Approximately one dozen individuals would not voluntarily leave the shopping center area. Officers remained there, varying their method of operation and work schedules. They advised the window washers how they could get a license to conduct a legitimate business. Because of the officers' continual presence, customers at the plaza were no longer **intimidated into giving money**. As a result, the rest of the **panhandlers** left after they saw it **would no longer be profitable to work in the area**.

As one of the most critical parts of this POP effort, officers identified the underlying environmental conditions of the plaza that contributed its problems. With the cooperation of business owners and the property managers, the following enhancements prevented the criminal activity from recurring at the center.

- The lids and gates of the trash dumpsters were locked after business hours;
- Wrought-iron gates were installed in an alley to prohibit pedestrian traffic;
- Two entrances of the parking lot were chained to prohibit offenders from engaging in

prostitution and drug sales in parked cars at night;

- Store bathrooms were locked so they would be accessible to customers only;
- An outside drinking faucet was relocated so it would be accessible to customers only;
- Some of the telephones were removed and others were restricted to outgoing calls only after 10 pm;
- Brighter lights (as well as timely replacements) were provided around the plaza at night;
- Unauthorized parked cars were impounded;
- Beverage bars at the fast-food restaurants were removed or replaced to prevent transient loitering, and
- A new and more effective security company was hired for the center and police training was provided to the new security officers.

The final phase of this POP project was an educational campaign for customers at the shopping center. Officers created flyers that advised customers not to give monies to panhandlers and provided the names of legitimate organizations that help homeless people.

Assessment

Three months after the POP project, property crimes in the area had dropped, while shoplift

ing and other offender-related arrests had risen. A survey on the effects of the entire intervention revealed improvements at each Harbor Plaza business. Each noticed a dramatic decrease in homeless individuals, beggars, and disturbances in the parking lot, as well as a corresponding increase in shoppers.

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When asked about the impact of the POP program on businesses, one restaurant manager said his sales had gone up 50 percent. The supermarket's sales went up approximately \$8,000 a month and the owner decided to stay at the center. The intervention also resulted in the formation of the Harbor Plaza Business Owners' Association, which meets regularly with officers from the police department.

Factors contributing to a success of this POP project were officer training and supervision, the use of plainclothes officers and non-arrest strategies, respectful treatment of offenders, and observation of the area's environmental conditions. In addition, the officers at the westend district completed their project without one lawsuit or citizen complaint.

Det. Bill Tegeler of the Santa Ana (CA) Police Department is commander of the department's developmental policing (POP) district. A POP unit in his district won the 1993 Excellence in Problem Solving Award (Team).

Conference Adds Up to Success for Participants

"The POP conference was an excellent forum for sharing ideas."

"The initiative and imagination many of the participants displayed with their projects was exceptional,"

"It was especially satisfying at this year's conference to see so many rank and file officers presenting their thoughtful and effective responses to commonly recurring problems."

Those are only a few of the accolades received from participants at the Fourth International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference, cosponsored by PERF and the San Diego Police Department in early November:

Over 500 people attended the three-day conference, where police chiefs and officers alike learned about new, alternative approaches to

stubborn problems such as drug dealing and noise complaints in public areas. City council members and other local representatives also attended the conference, allowing police executives to share information and ideas with their government counterparts.

As in previous years, the conference focused mainly on presentations and discussions by street-level officers who are actively engaged in problem-oriented policing. The workshops covered the application of POP to community problems, the implementation and management of problem-solving efforts, and issues in problem solving. Most workshops were filled with people eager to learn more about POP.

Other workshops covered a wide array of topics, including school crime, situational crime prevention and auto theft, conflict resolution, overcoming political obstacles to POP, the development of community partnerships, use of technology to help in solving, POP supervision, and implementation of POP at all ranks in police departments.

(Mowry, cont. p. 13)

His family lived in the district and he worried about them every night at work. He had been making arrests and issuing citations nightly and thought he was doing an effective job. But after participating in POP training and seeing what other departments had done, he realized what he had been doing was like shoveling sand against the tide. He could now see that with the community's help and using problem solving, he could really solve problems." He said, "This is the only thing

that I have seen that will make a difference in the community. It's the only thing that gives my family a fighting chance."

As police executives, we have to give our officers the knowledge and skills necessary to do the job we ask of them. Maybe that means we need to have a little faith in officers and their desire to do a genuinely good job for their respective cities and towns

PERF Offers Problem-Oriented Policing Training

PERF provides POP training for command staff, mid-managers, first-line supervisors, and field officers. The training can be specially designed to meet your department's needs. The basic training program covers:

1. The evolution of problem-oriented policing

2. The problem-solving process

3. Problem-solving

4. Implementing problem solving in your department

PERF trainers use a variety of training techniques including role playing, case studies, and group problem solving. The training is designed to be interactive and practical. Participants will receive a copy of the training materials and a certificate of completion.

For more information, contact PERF at (202) 462-7000.

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PSQ Readers Reply

Question: How do you discourage peer pressure against officers who participate in problem-solving activities?

Answer: In August 1993, the Garden Grove Police Department implemented community policing-Garden Grove style. Acceptance of our effort to establish a **police-community partnership** was based **upon nine** months of discussion **and** planning by staff representing all ranks within the organization.

Negative peer pressure was not an issue, primarily because the people who carry out the majority of the **policing tasks** had direct input into the development of our **newly-adopted** service delivery methods.

In addition, all staff are involved in community policing; problem solving is not practiced by an elite or specialized unit. Each patrol officer is assigned to a beat area. We have discovered that beat "ownership" has become a strong, positive form of peer pressure to use innovative methods to identify and resolve problems.

Patrol officers are our primary problem solvers, supported by specialized street units and civilian community service officers. Every effort has been made to give officers the necessary free patrol time to meet with residents and business owners, and develop the city and community resources essential to a successful partnership.

-Chief Stanley Knee, Garden Grove (CA) Police Department

Answer: I think training is very important. When we began our change to community policing, all of our police officers, and a few city employees from other departments, received POP training from PERF. The feedback from patrol officers was very positive. Most saw that it made good sense to be more than just incident-driven. They saw that problem solving not **only** could **make them** more effective, but also make their jobs a little easier. So problem solving is more likely to be perceived as something other than just "trying to look good."

It is also important to make everyone on the department aware of your successful POP projects. You're less likely to discourage someone from doing problem solving when he or she made the job a little easier for everybody.

-Lt. Nick Weiss, Joliet (IL) Police Department -

Answer: The first step to minimize negative peer pressure and establish problem-solving as a department-wide responsibility is to incorporate it as part of the employee evaluation process.

Each officer then is required to buy into the expanded role, and identify problems of consequence within his or her area of concern. The rating supervisors are then obligated to assist the officers in identifying the problems, resources, and strategies necessary to resolve 'the Problems.

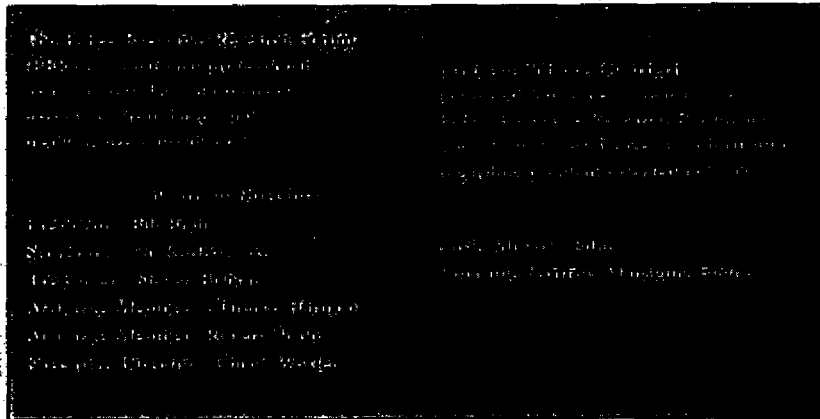
The supervisors become the focal point of the success of problem solving. By working with their subordinates individually; they are able to coach and direct their personnel and they get recognition for their good work.

-Sgt. Rick Abney, Santa Barbara (CA) Police Department

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