

# Problem Solving Quarterly

A POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM PUBLICATION

Reporting on Innovative Approaches to Policing

Vol. 8, Nos. 314

Fall 1995

## Award Winning POP Project Reduces Crime and Disorder in Park

by Sgt. David Morgan, Officer Robert Newell and Officer Fred Pitcher II

Georgetown, Texas, is located on the state's "Main Street," Interstate Highway 35, just 20 minutes north of Austin. Blue Hole Park is in the heart of Georgetown, on a stretch of the South San Gabriel River. Limestone cliffs surround the park and it is populated with vines and live oak trees. The Imhoff Dam in Blue Hole Park runs across the river, forming a picturesque swimming hole.

Since the early decades of this century, Blue Hole Park has provided special memories to Georgetown residents, many of whom remember it as the site where they learned to swim or where they were baptized. In recent years, however, the park had become a trouble spot where alcohol-related crimes and accidents

frequently occurred. As a result, three Georgetown police officers initiated a problem-solving project to eliminate the problems there.

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**Blue Hole Park required so much police attention that the rest of the city sometimes had only one patrol officer available.**

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### Scanning

For several years, between the months of May and August, Blue Hole Park generated a large percentage of the calls for police services for Georgetown's central district. The calls included reports of drownings, disorderly conduct, fighting, public drunkenness, drug offenses, assaults, indecent exposure, sexual assaults, robbery, and a double suicide.

These calls constantly tied up officers who patrolled the area. Given the police department's small size, this at times left only one patrol officer to cover the entire city. This not only posed a safety problem for the lone offi-

(cont. on p. 4)

## Problem-Solving Effort Targets Chief Aggressor in Domestic Violence Incidents

by Sgt. Jeff Harsh

### Scanning

In November 1992, Eve Casey\* bought a house in the affluent neighborhood of St. Lucie West Heatherwood Estates in Port St. Lucie, Fla. On Nov. 17, 1992, the Port St. Lucie Police Department responded for the first time to Casey's house. The caller had reported a disturbance created by the presence of a man named Bob Green. The responding officers learned that Green was Casey's

*\*The reamer of those involved have been changed to protect their identities.*

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boyfriend. Eight days later, on Nov. 25, 1992, the police were called to the house again. They took Green into custody and admitted him to a detoxification facility.

On Dec. 12, 1992, officers again responded to the Casey house, this time because of a domestic disturbance that caused property damage. The responding officers learned that Casey's ex-husband, James Casey, had created a disturbance over her relationship with Bob Green.

During the next 22 months, the police department responded to the Casey house 54 times. Each time, the call was due to a domestic disturbance involving two or all of the above-mentioned people.

These repeated disturbances were of great concern to the police department, as each call required that at least two officers and, in most cases, a supervisor respond. Police noticed that most of the disturbances were alcohol-related. The level of violence increased, and the police reported stabbings, beatings and self-inflicted injuries. It seemed only a matter of time before an officer or one of the three people involved would be killed.

Not only was this a police problem, but it was also a problem for the neighbors. They were aware of each disturbance, and thus their quality of life was affected. The neighborhood homeowners' association initiated legal action against Casey, requesting that she leave the community.

As the evening shift supervisor for the St. Lucie West area, I realized that the routine response to the Casey house had not resolved the problem. Thus, I began to analyze the problem with the goal of finding a long-term solution.

## Analysis

I analyzed both the written reports concerning the individuals involved and the records of all dispatched calls for service to Casey's house. I developed a chart showing the service call dates, the case numbers, the incident types, the suspects, the victims, the weapons used or injuries sustained, subsequent incarcerations, and whether alcohol was a factor in the incidents.

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### Green's presence at the house and excessive alcohol use were the major causes of violent incidents.

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The analysis indicated that there were 54 total police responses to Casey's house, 25 of which resulted in written offense reports. Of those 25 cases, 96 percent were related to domestic problems. Green was the suspect in 76 percent of the cases, and alcohol was a factor in 64 percent of them. Twenty-eight percent of the incidents resulted in injuries, and Eve Casey was the complainant or victim in 64 percent of the cases. Police made 16 arrests, 15 of which were of Green. The analysis indicated that most of the problems involved Bob Green and Eva Casey, and that alcohol was a major factor in the disturbances.

I also discovered that there were no calls for police service to Casey's house from June 1992 through April 1994. Green had been in New York during that time. This indicated that Green's presence was the main cause of disturbances at Casey's house.

The solution to the problem was to prevent contact between Green and Casey and to help

Green obtain treatment for alcohol abuse. The most feasible way to accomplish this was to convince a judge that Green posed a threat to Casey and to anyone else at her house, and that he needed extensive treatment for alcohol abuse.

## Response

In October 1994, I met with the judge who presided over all of Bob Green's misdemeanor cases. The judge received a copy of my report on the problems at the Casey house. The judge agreed that the situation was bad and would only get worse if nothing were done to address it. Green was incarcerated at this time; the judge agreed to revoke his current bond and place a "no bond" order. The judge told me to meet with the assistant state's attorneys who were prosecuting the case against Green. The attorneys also reviewed my report and requested that I testify on behalf of the state.

On Nov. 21, 1994, Green appeared before the judge in county court. Green agreed to a plea and was sentenced to time served. He was also placed on probation for one year, with the stipulation that he receive treatment at an alcohol rehabilitation facility. Additionally, he was not to consume any alcoholic beverages or to visit or live in Casey's house.

On Nov. 22, 1994, Green appeared before a different judge in county court for a bond-reduction hearing. I testified at this hearing, basing my testimony on my analysis of the police reports. The judge found Green to be a danger to society and increased his bond from \$5,000 to \$100,000. Green was unable to post bond.

On Feb. 27, 1995, Green again appeared in court for sentencing. He was sentenced to time served and placed on four-and-one-

half years probation. His probation included six months of alcohol rehabilitation in a state facility and a four-and-one-half year restraining order prohibiting any contact with Eve or James Casey at the *Casey house*.

### Assessment

Since Green's release from the county jail on Feb. 27, 1995, the police department has responded to the Casey house on only one occasion. Green had called Casey, causing a disturbance between her and her current boyfriend.

The violent relationship has now been ended, and the risk of death or serious injury to any of the people involved has been greatly diminished. Police officers no longer have to respond to repeated disturbances at the house and are thus no longer subject to the risk of injury.

Green currently lives in a city about 20 miles from Port St. Lucie, and he is undergoing alcohol abuse treatment.

Jeff Harsh is a sergeant with the Port St. Lucie, Fla., Police Department.

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## 15 Officers Honored With Problem Solving Awards

As is evident in the pages of *Problem Solving Quarterly*, police officers in the United States, Canada and beyond are using innovative methods to rid neighborhoods of drugs and crime and to make crime-ridden public areas safe for residents. On Nov. 7, 1995, the Police Executive Research Forum (PEKE) recognized 15 police officers for their successful responses to crime problems by giving them the annual *Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Awards*.

The problem-solving awards, now in their third year, go to individual officers and teams of officers for their exemplary problem-oriented policing projects. PERF also recognizes other individuals and teams with honorable mentions. The winners receive their awards at the Annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference held in San Diego.

The Georgetown, Texas, team featured in the lead article of this *Problem Solving Quarterly* issue won the 1995 team award. Sgt. David Morgan and officers Robert Newell and Fred Pitcher H headed a project to address the inordinately high crime rates at a neighborhood park.

Capt. James Wood of the North Slope Borough Department of Public Safety in Barrow, Alaska, won the individual award. Wood's project to address a high rate of alcohol-related crime resulted in a ban on alcohol in Barrow and a 90 percent reduction in crime. This project was

featured in the *Winter 1995 issue of Problem Solving Quarterly*.

Individual honorable mentions went to Detective Staff Sgt. Barry Elliott of the Ontario Provincial Police for his efforts to reduce telemarketing fraud, and to U. C.D. Brown of Savannah, Ga., who implemented a plan to reduce unsafe traffic and crowd patterns in the city's River Street area, a popular *night spot*.

Officers Darren Ivey and Markus Smith of Kansas City, Mo., won a team honorable mention for working with citizens to address problems in a single city block, including a drug house, a prostitution house and a high number of property crimes (see p. 9 for a full description of this project). Officers from San Diego also won a team honorable mention for cleaning up the Otay River Valley, which had become an unsafe area inhabited mostly by transients who had an active drug trade. The San Diego team included Sgt. Jerome McManus; officers Bobby Wight, Darrell Loughrey, Bryon Barmer, Patti Clayton, and William Stutz; and Reserve Officer Steve Casey. Officer Roxana Kennedy of the nearby Chula Vista Police Department also assisted with the project.

New York City Police Commissioner and PERF President William Bratton remarked, "These award winners represent the best in policing today. The Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Awards honor just a few of the police officers who are making a real difference in their communities by utilizing innovative practices to make communities safer."

(Blue Hole Park, cont. from p. 1)

cer, but also deprived some citizens of desired police services.

During the summer, the park was used predominantly by out-of-town visitors from the Dallas, Houston and Austin metropolitan areas and from the Killeen area, including soldiers stationed at Fort Hood Army Base. Many visitors had little or no regard for the park, littering it with broken bottles, cans and trash. In addition, visitors parked their vehicles on the ecologically fragile banks, resulting in the formation of a four-foot-deep layer of silt in the water.

It is believed that the "undesirable element" was drawn to the park because it is somewhat isolated and out of public view. The park became a "party place" because visitors thought no one would enforce the law there.

In early 1995, Sgt. David Morgan, evening watch commander, identified Blue Hole Park as posing a significant public safety problem and began to gather all pertinent data. In April, Morgan, along with evening patrol officers Robert Newell and Fred Pitcher, started a problem-solving project.

The officers intended to restore Blue Hole Park to a problem-free "family" park where people could swim, fish, have quiet picnics, and enjoy the landscape in peace.

## Analysis

The team of officers met with a neighborhood group to identify park problems. They reviewed reports officers had taken over the years and assessed all collected data. They

identified the park's major problems as follows:

- Patrons under the influence of alcohol jumped and dove into the river from 30-foot cliffs, resulting in injuries and 50 percent of the county's total drownings.
- Excessive alcohol consumption contributed to crime and disorder.
- A narrow gravel road that ran parallel to the river could not accommodate park traffic.

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## The officers' comprehensive plan addressed parking, traffic flow, alcohol consumption, and dangerous behavior.

- Because there was no designated parking area, visitors often parked along the riverbanks, causing massive erosion and ecological damage.
- At peak times, as many as 200 pedestrians walked in the path of vehicular traffic.
- Emergency vehicles had trouble maneuvering through the park to respond to calls.
- The only road into the park exited into a neighborhood where many children played during the summer.
- People living in the surrounding area feared for their safety.
- Park visitors had vandalized a historical cemetery bordering the park.

- A disproportionate amount of the city's crime had occurred in the park.

The first step the officers took to address the problems was to further analyze the calls for service to identify root causes. This analysis revealed that the majority of calls were alcohol-related.

The police enacted a "zero tolerance" policy for Blue Hole Park and began to patrol the area more frequently. Officers strictly enforced all city ordinances and state laws. During the first month of this enforcement effort, police issued over 200 citations and made many arrests for violations concerning various traffic offenses, glass containers, juvenile runaways, warrants, drug possession, alcohol possession by minors, public drunkenness, and drunken driving. By analyzing the citations issued and arrests made, officers learned that over 90 percent of the offenders were from out of town.

The problem-solving team next focused on a major park attraction—the cliffs. People with coolers of beer flocked to the park on weekends to walk across the dam and climb to the top of the cliffs. They would then jump off and climb back up. The officers decided to contact whoever had control of the cliff area. The land is a 52-acre lot that lies between the North and South San Gabriel rivers. Officers had originally thought that the cliffs were part of the park and that it was okay for people to climb them. Their research, however, revealed that the federal government's Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) owned the land.

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(Blue Hole Park, corn. from p. 4)

Further investigation revealed that a Georgetown resident named Luther Laubach was leasing the land, using it for his cattle. Officers contacted Laubach, who, after learning of the project, agreed to assist by prosecuting anyone found on his property for criminal trespass. He was angered not only because people had left trash on his property, but also because they had cut his fences and left his gates open. He also did not want to be liable for the safety of people trespassing on his property. Laubach agreed to let the city post "no trespassing" signs on the cliffs, and he sent the officers a letter stating his concerns.

The officers also developed a plan for controlling vehicular traffic in and around Blue Hole Park. In other city parks, large boulders defined roadways and regulated parking. A local rock quarry, Texas Crushed Stone (TCS), provided these boulders at no cost to the city. The officers contacted TCS, who agreed to donate boulders for Blue Hole Park as well. The boulders were to be placed along the road, away from the water's edge, to prevent people from parking near the water. Thus, further ecological damage and water contamination would be prevented.

In limiting parking, the team had to consider what would happen to the overflow vehicles. They did not want people to park in the nearby neighborhood. The team recommended additional parking along Scenic Drive, the residential road at Blue Hole Park's exit. The officers also proposed adding parallel parking on Rock Street, near the park's entrance.

The officers discovered that traffic regulations posted on signs in the park were unenforceable because no city ordinances had established them. They talked to Assistant City Attorney Sheree Rabee about creating city ordinances covering the Blue Hole Park roadway. They developed several new ordinances that would establish *the* road as a public road, define each "no parking" zone in and around *the* park, establish a speed limit, and officially designate the road as one-way.

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### **The neighboring community's needs and opinions were important components in forming the problem-solving plan.**

While developing responses to the problems, the officers learned there were other issues that needed to be considered:

- The residential area surrounding Blue Hole Park consisted primarily of minorities who had historically been excluded from the decision-making for that area.
- The larger community considered the cliffs a traditional gathering place.
- Neighbors were very concerned about *the* disregard for the historical cemetery.
- The Parks and Recreation Department had obtained a grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife to build a hike-and-bike trail along

the San Gabriel River corridor that *would run* through Blue Hole Park.

- There were resource and budgetary concerns about implementing the project plan.
- Neighborhood residents did not want the park's appearance to be changed, and *they* wanted it to have the same rules as other parks (e.g., if other parks allowed alcohol, *then* Blue Hole Park should as well.)

All of these issues helped guide *the* development of problem-solving strategies.

### **Response**

The officers developed a comprehensive plan for *the* park that included the above-mentioned initiatives to control parking and keep people *off the* cliffs. *They* met with Randy Morrow, director of the Parks and Recreation Department. Morrow was very enthusiastic *about* their plan and said *it* would fit in well with the proposed hike-and-bike trail. The officers presented the plan to Police Chief Larry Hesser, who then presented the plan to the city's police division directors. Morrow attended that meeting, along with Jim Briggs, director of Community-Owned Utilities (COU), the entity responsible for street maintenance. The directors liked the plan. Briggs proposed using a pipe and cable system instead of boulders to prevent parking along the river. This was *the* only alternative suggestion for the plan.

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(Blue Hole Park, cont. from p. 5)

The officers next presented their plan to the Citizens Police Advisory Committee (CPAC) and the Parks and Recreation Department's Public Safety Committee. Both committees unanimously approved the plan. A CPAC member helped schedule a meeting with residents of the community surrounding Blue Hole Park. After the officers' presentation and a brief question-and-answer session, the residents unanimously approved the plan. They preferred boulders over pipe and cable for preventing parking.

The officers then informed the Parks and Recreation Department and COU of the community's reaction. The Parks and Recreation Department also preferred using boulders; the park would then be similar to other city parks. COU opposed using boulders primarily because of the cost and lack of manpower and equipment to move them to the park. Chief Hesser met with Briggs to identify an alternative source to move the boulders. Eventually, the JC Evans Co., a local business, agreed to move the boulders.

The officers then met with Col. Pearson of the Fort Hood Provost Marshal's Office. The officers told Pearson that Fort Hood soldiers sometimes contributed to the park's problems. Sgt. Morgan explained the plan to Pearson, informing him that the cliffs were private property and that the owner had requested that the criminal trespass statute be enforced to prohibit jumping and diving from the cliffs. Pearson agreed to relay the information to his soldiers, and the police in turn agreed to inform Pearson's

office about any violations Fort Hood soldiers committed.

Officers presented a slide program and a video of the park to the city council. The police division also presented their proposed city ordinance changes regarding parking and sign placement in the park. The council gave the division the go-ahead to implement the plan. They passed the ordinances the police and the city attorney submitted. They also reviewed the hike-and-bike trail plan to see whether the two plans conflicted in any way; they did not.

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**Undesirable and criminal behavior is now nonexistent in Blue Hole Park, and the park's clientele has shifted. from thinkers and partyers to families.**

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The plan was immediately implemented and improvements begun. Patrol Commander U. Kevin Stoffle met with TCS and obtained the boulders, which JC Evans moved and COU installed. In all, the JC Evans Co. moved and city street department personnel strategically placed approximately 260 tons of boulders. The "one-way" and "no parking" signs were installed. "No trespassing" signs were installed on the cliffs and officers began to enforce the criminal trespass statute. Community Service Restitution workers cleared brush and picked up trash in the park. Georgetown High School students made a large wooden sign for the park entrance. The sign welcomed visitors and listed sev-

eral ordinances pertaining to the park. Briggs contacted Williamson County and learned that the county owned a lot near the park's entrance. The lot was cleared and used for overflow parking. The entire Blue Hole Park project was completed before the target date of July 4, 1995.

### **Assessment**

Conditions at Blue Hole Park have improved. The traffic flow is orderly, safe and efficient during peak periods. Pedestrians can walk safely along the river's edge. Individuals under the influence of drugs or alcohol are not endangering themselves by jumping off the 30-foot cliffs. The park's clientele has shifted from drinkers and partyers to families. There has been a major reduction in the amount of trash left at the park. Undesirable and criminal behavior is now nonexistent. Calls for police service have decreased to almost zero. Though only a short time has transpired between the implementation of the plan and the writing of this article, the initial assessment indicates a bright future for the park.

Sgt. David Morgan and officers Robert Newell and Fred Pitcher II of the Georgetown, Texas, Police Department are the 1995 team winners of the Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award.

# Store No Longer a Hangout for Disorderly Teens

by Sgt. Tun Books

Late in the 1993 to 1994 school year, the St. Petersburg, Fla., Police Department addressed a serious loitering problem at a local convenience store and its adjoining lot. Large groups of teenagers from the local middle and high schools were hanging out regularly at the Circle K convenience store at 54th Avenue North and 16th Street.

## Scanning

The problem, identified by the police department, community residents and businesses, was that patrons were having difficulty driving into the parking lot due to the large and disruptive groups of teenagers. Some also felt intimidated walking through the groups to enter the store. Employees from the business complex located next to Circle K complained about students parking on their lot, leaving their customers without parking spaces. Seventy-five to 100 students would congregate in the area on school days, particularly in the afternoon.

The following problems arose:

- disorderly juveniles,
- fights,
- aggravated batteries,
- thefts, and
- graffiti.

Circle K had a history of attracting loitering teens, but the problem had intensified within the last few years. Police had addressed the problem with

traditional responses; calls to 911 had resulted in their temporarily dispersing the groups, without any long-term deterrent effects.

## Analysis

The problem was greatest between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m., although there was also a problem between 2:30 and 4:30 p.m. The before-school groups were small and the students did not stay on *the* property for very long. There was a small group of middle school students who arrived in the morning and needed encouragement to leave on time for school.

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## Officers and business owners solved the loitering problem by making Circle K less attractive to teens.

Some of the juveniles who went to Circle K in the afternoon were waiting for rides from friends or parents. Others were dropouts or gang members waiting for their friends to get out of school.

The peak activity period fell just before and during police shift changes, limiting the number of officers available to deal with the problem.

To address the problem, police officers met with business owners to come up with ways to keep the teens away from the area. The police also spoke with school administrators about options for tightening restraints on students leaving school grounds during afternoon classes.

## Response

The response was to make the area less appealing to the teens. The business owners' tolerance

for the teens' loitering, combined with the lure of Circle K's video games, encouraged juveniles to gather there.

Once the factors contributing to the problem were identified, the Circle K store's managers were eager to cooperate. They helped the police department by turning off the video games during peak hours, posting "no loitering" signs, issuing blanket trespass warnings, and keeping a book of Polaroid pictures of youths who had received trespass warnings. Businesses in the immediate area also posted "no loitering" signs, and issued blanket trespass warnings for their properties.

School resource officers further improved the situation by tightening attendance restrictions and increasing sanctions for cutting class.

## Assessment

Through aggressive and innovative enforcement, police officers and their partners in the community eliminated *the loitering* problem within two weeks. Police continue to patrol the area regularly to prevent the problem from resurfacing. Although some *of the* teens have moved to other hangouts, the number of those who congregate is significantly lower.

Both business owners and their patrons are satisfied with the changes. The parking lots are available for patrons, and the environment is safer.

Jim Books is a sergeant with the St. Petersburg, Fla., Police Department.

## PERF Releases New Publications

PERF recently released two new publications that provide valuable information for police professionals, researchers and others involved in implementing community problem-oriented policing.

*Managing Innovation in Policing: The Untapped Potential of the Middle Manager*, by PERF Associate Director William Geller and San Diego Police Department Sgt. Guy Swanger, discusses how police middle managers, when properly motivated and supported, have been and can be valuable resources for policing reform. This volume bucks the conventional wisdom—fed by management gurus—that private- and public-sector middle managers are almost inevitably obstacles to fundamental strategic innovation, including community policing. Authors Geller and Swanger cover

- middle managers' traditional and emerging roles;
- why middle managers can be expected to become willing partners in reform (included are many case studies of high-performance middle managers); and
- recommendations for how police senior leaders, mayors, city managers, and others can help position and motivate managers to voluntarily, proactively and effectively help implement community policing.

PERF has also just released *Quantifying Quality in Policing*, in conjunction with the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement

Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT). This publication is a compilation of essays that provide a comprehensive review of the potential application of total quality management (TQM) to police administration.

"Total quality management" has long been a buzz term in the private sector. In *Quantifying Quality in Policing*, edited by Larry Hoover of Sam Houston State University, police professionals and social scientists identify those *elements* of TQM that may be used to assess effectiveness in police performance. In the past, police performance has primarily been evaluated in terms of numbers, such as crime statistics and arrest rates. The authors of *Quantifying Quality in Policing*, however, suggest that other indicators such as citizen satisfaction and crime prevention, although hard to quantify, are also important in fairly assessing police services.

This volume includes essays on measuring the impacts of community policing; evaluating specific police strategies, such as tactical patrol and drug enforcement; examining alternative responses to calls for service; and more.

*Managing Innovation in Policing* (product number 803) costs \$24.95, plus shipping and handling. *Quantifying Quality in Policing* (product number 804) costs \$19.95, plus shipping and handling. Those interested in ordering should add \$5.50 shipping and handling for one book, and \$7.50 for two. For larger orders, call PERF for information. Orders must be prepaid by check, purchase order, Visa, or MasterCard. Phone: (202) 466-7820. Fax: (202) 466-7826.

## Submissions

PERF invites submissions of articles describing successful problem solving projects. *When* submitting descriptions, discuss the four phases of your effort—scanning, analysis, response, and assessment. It may help to answer the following questions:

- What was the problem?
- Who was affected by the problem, and how?
- How has the department handled the problem in the past?
- What information was collected about the problem, and from what sources?
- What was the goal of the problem-solving effort?
- What strategies were developed to reach that goal?
- Was the goal accomplished?
- What agencies assisted the police department in achieving the goal?
- What would you recommend to other agencies interested in addressing similar problems?

Send submissions to  
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# Residents' Involvement Proves Crucial for Resolving a Series of Neighborhood Problems

by Officer Darren Ivey and Officer Markus Smith

The residents of the 6100 block of Charlotte Avenue in Kansas City, Mo., had experienced minor crime problems in the past. Nothing had prepared them, however, for the criminal activity that had hit their block in the last year.

The majority of block residents own their own home, have young children and are in the medium-income bracket. The problems that arose—drug activity and other problems at one house, prostitution at another house, and increasing rates of property crime—caused property values and quality of life to decline, and homeowners' insurance to increase. Residents were constantly disturbed by loud parties, gunshots and drug dealing. The problem also affected the police department because the block generated a lot of calls for service. Each call left the department with two fewer officers to answer calls in other needy areas. Officers Darren Ivey and Markus Smith targeted *the block* for a problem-oriented policing project. Their goal was to solve the three above-mentioned problems, and they were hopeful that calls for police service would then decline. This article describes the steps they took to resolve each of the three problems.

## 6165 Charlotte Avenue: A Location

The officers first spoke with Gate Bachwartz, a block resident who, for seven years, had been trying to have the problem house at 6165 Charlotte Avenue shut down. She told the officers that a 78-year-old man owned the house. He had no family in the area and allowed teenagers to stay with him. The teenagers had loud parties that lasted far into the night. They were using and selling drugs, and on several occasions, neighbors had heard gunshots. Bachwartz also commented that the house's exterior was in poor condition. Teenagers had occasionally assaulted police officers dispatched to the house. Bachwartz had noticed a high volume of traffic at the house, which is common for drug houses, and had occasionally seen people leaving the house with large amounts of drugs.

## Officers trained neighbors to spot suspicious activity and collect vital information, such as vehicle license plate numbers.

Bachwartz also gave Ivey and Smith several years' worth of documentation on residents' requests for police assistance. The department had sent a community action officer to meet with block residents and the house's owner. The officer had mediated an agreement between residents and the owner, but this had proved to be a short-term solution; before long, the *house* was just as much of a problem as before. The city had sent a codes inspector to the house and had cited the owner for viola-

tion, but this had also had little effect.

Armed with this information, Ivey and Smith compiled all past police reports on the house and identified some of the occupants. They also met with block residents, training them on how to spot suspicious activity and what to look for. They asked residents to keep written logs about activity at the house, including license plate numbers of visitors' vehicles. The officers gave residents their pager numbers and told them to contact them at any time.

Residents responded by paging the officers and giving them important information. In addition, the officers conducted their own surveillance and obtained enough information to verify that some type of illegal activity was occurring at the house. On two occasions, Bachwartz paged the officers with information about suspicious cars. A district officer, John Wheeler, responded to the pages, stopped the suspicious cars and, on both occasions, recovered drugs and other incriminating evidence.

Ivey and Smith informed the house's owner of the problems they and residents had observed. The owner explained that, with no family in the area, he invited the teenagers to stay with him so he would have companionship. He did not believe the teenagers were involved in criminal activity. The officers also told that the owner that *the house's* interior was so run down that it was not fit for habitation.

In the weeks following that meeting, the officers stopped several teenagers leaving the house. The teenagers told the officers

(cont. on p. 10)

*(Residents, cont. from p. 9)*

that the owner had problems with his memory. He reportedly had inherited a significant amount of money and would make loans to the teenagers, later forgetting to whom he had lent *the* money.

Ivey and Smith contacted the Missouri Department of Aging about the owner's problems. A department caseworker interviewed the owner and determined that, though he did have some mental health problems, they were not severe enough for him to be declared incompetent. The officers and caseworker tried to persuade the owner to let a financial advisor control his funds, but he declined the offer. They also explained other options to the owner, such as selling the house and moving to a retirement village where he would have companions his own age. Again, he declined the offer.

During subsequent stops of teenagers leaving the house, officers recovered marijuana. The Jackson County Drug Abatement Response Team (DART) agreed to assess the situation when the officers contacted them. The officers and the DART team then met with the owner, telling him about the drugs recently recovered from teenagers leaving his house. The owner refused to believe there were any problems, thinking instead that his neighbors were conspiring to get rid of him.

The officers asked DART to post and vacate the house because of its city code violations and uninhabitable condition. The officers learned they would have to make a narcotics arrest or buy at the house before it could be closed. Attempted buys by the street narcotics unit were unsuc-

cessful. The officers again turned to *the* residents, asking them to watch the house and call in suspicious activity. One week later, Bachwartz called to report that two "skinheads" had entered the house, one carrying a large shoulder bag. While the officers were en route to the house, the two youths left in a car. Bachwartz followed them in her car until the officers located her and *the* youths. The officers arrested the two youths for possession of 5,000 hits of LSD, worth about \$50,000.

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### **After police arrested two youths for drug possession and residents filed a lawsuit against the house's owner, the owner agreed to vacate the house.**

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The house could now be vacated and posted as uninhabitable. The DART inspector cited over 30 code violations and estimated that the home needed \$35,000 worth of repairs. Residents did not want the owner to move back into the house after the repairs were completed because of his history. To keep the owner out, the residents filed a civil "nuisance" suit against him. The Missouri Young Lawyers Association agreed to take on the case pro bono, but that proved unnecessary.

The officers and residents located the owner's niece, who flew to Kansas City to invite him to move to her house in New Mexico. The officers again met with the owner and explained the lawsuit and his options. The owner agreed to sell the house.

*The* purchaser, when informed of the problems at the house, agreed to fix the house up and move in as soon as possible.

The officers and residents helped the new owner to repair the home's exterior. The new owner now lives there, and there are no problems.

### **A String of Burglaries Is Ended**

Immediately after the problem at 6165 Charlotte Ave. was resolved, Bachwartz called the officers to report three suspicious people trying to burglarize a neighbor's house. The officers responded and apprehended three armed suspects.

This incident led the officers to meet once again with residents to train them in crime prevention and home security. They also reminded residents of what kind of suspicious activity to watch for. Shortly thereafter, Bachwartz's husband, Charles, reported a suspicious man attempting to burglarize 6165 Charlotte Ave. Charles gave a good description of both the subject and his vehicle. The initial investigation proved unsuccessful. A month later, an officer stopped and identified the suspect, but released him, unaware that he was wanted for the attempted burglary on Charlotte Avenue. Ivey and Smith, coming upon the suspect's description in field interview forms, obtained a police mugshot and conducted a photo lineup for Mr. Bachwartz. He identified the suspect, who was subsequently arrested. The suspect pled guilty to burglary charges. After the two arrests and the residents' training session, property crime declined

*(cont. on p. 11)*

(Residents, cont. from p. 10)

by 60 percent in the 6100 block of Charlotte Avenue.

### **One Last Problem: A Prostitution House**

An anonymous resident informed the officers that a neighborhood prostitution house, operating as a massage parlor, was advertising in a local newspaper. The resident gave the officers a phone number, but no address. The officers scanned newspaper ads, found those listing that phone number, and called to *make an* appointment. The house was located at 6113 Charlotte Avenue.

The officers asked block residents to keep a written log of activities at the house and write *down* license plate numbers of visitors' *vehicles*. While the officers conducted their own surveillance, residents gathered the requested information. The officers thus obtained names and photographs of several prostitutes and repeat customers. The vice unit, *when* contacted by the officers, agreed to address the problem, but could not do so for another month, as they were in the middle of another investigation. The officers presented block residents with two options. They could try to shut the house down immediately, but that would leave the possibility that the prostitution would continue at another site. *Or* they could wait until the vice unit was available. The residents decided to wait; they did not want to displace the prostitution to another location.

While waiting for the vice unit, Ivey and Smith conducted additional investigations, hoping to save the vice unit time and effort. On two occasions, Smith

dressed as a city trash collector, *rode with the* regular trash crew and collected the house's trash, while Ivey videotaped the procedure. The officers gathered enough evidence to verify that the house was indeed a prostitution house.

Armed with this information, the vice unit took on the case. An undercover detective eventually arrested four suspects, all of whom pled guilty to state prostitution charges and have since moved out of the state. The house is currently vacant, but a new tenant will move in soon.

### **Cooperation between residents and officers allowed police to shut down a drug house and a prostitution house, and end a high number of burglaries.**

### **Residents Enjoy a More Peaceful Neighborhood**

After shutting down the prostitution house, Ivey and Smith ended their problem-solving project. With residents' assistance, the officers solved the problems at 6165 Charlotte Ave. and helped to get a responsible owner into the house, and they closed

down the prostitution house. By training residents, *they* also helped to decrease property crimes by 60 percent and to decrease the total number of calls for service.

Residents now feel safer and more confident about letting their children play outside. To recognize Cate Bachwartz's special contribution to the neighborhood's improvement, both the police department and the city council presented her with awards. In addition, *the* residents held a special recognition dinner for Ivey and Smith. The Charlotte Avenue project was an excellent example of how residents and police, working together, can solve crime and improve neighborhoods.

barren Ivey and Markus Smith are officers with the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department. They received a Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving honorable mention for this project.

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