The Roanoke Chapman Avenue Project

by Sergeant James Fazio
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Roanoke, Virginia is a city with a population of approximately 99,000 and a police force of 248 sworn officers at full staffing. In 1991, the Roanoke Police Department began its community policing effort with a small specialized unit, COPE (Community Oriented Policing Effort). This program began with eight officers and one sergeant and was partially funded by the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The program accomplished many objectives with the efforts of these officers who networked with the community and local government agencies but, as with many other community policing programs of that time, had not evolved beyond its original focus.

In 1998, the newly hired Police Chief, A.L. Gaskins, made clear his goal of institutionalizing community policing throughout the department with a focus on problem solving and community involvement. In July 1999, Officer Jay Michael of the COPE Unit began focusing on an area in the Southwest section of Roanoke City. Officer Michael noticed a drastic increase in the number of violent offenses in the Chapman Avenue area and expressed his desire to be the lead officer on a SARA Project there. The Chapman Avenue area is one consisting of both single-family as well as multi-family homes and is located in the Southwest section of the city, 12 blocks from the downtown area and the main police facility. This area was once Roanoke and home to railroad engineers and executives during the 1930s and 1940s. A decline started to slowly take hold in the 1950s, and by the 1990s the once affluent neighborhood was ridden with crimes ranging from drinking in public to drug dealing and murder.

The fact that there were still many single-family dwellings in the area was important because they created a much stronger "stakeholder" foundation to help us combat the crime in the neighborhood. One factor that we had working against us was that the majority of the rental properties were owned by nonresidents of Roanoke, which made it more difficult to correspond with them and slowed the process. Some nonresident landlords also had an "apathetic" attitude because they do not reside in these areas and care only for the rent the unit may generate.

Scanning

The scanning process, which began July 1, 1999, consisted of identifying crime and disorder problems in the targeted area—the 1300-1600 blocks of Chapman Avenue SW. Officers working this project obtained crime analysis data for the prior 12 months on the number of calls and types of crimes occurring. Officers also spoke with the area patrol officers to get their perspectives on the neighborhood problems. Finally, the officers conducted door-to-door surveys in the community to understand residents' perceptions about their quality of life and to identify problems. The surveys also helped the officers break the ice with residents who were not accustomed to the police speaking with them one on one. The problems that were noted as a result of scanning ranged from building code violations, zoning issues, urban environmental conditions and criminal activity. The area was overcome by litter, houses in need of repair, prostitution and open-air drug dealing.

Analysis

The analysis phase, which uncovered the underlying conditions that caused the problem(s), began on August 1, 1999 with officers compiling information gained from surveys, calls for service reports and complaints phoned in from citizens identifying specific problems within the targeted area. Officers found that drugs were rampant in the area and with the assistance of a few core residents identified certain "crack" houses. Officers also found that the quality of life for the area was at an extreme low with dilapidated houses on every block and trash thrown along the streets. Poor lighting was allowing the drug dealers to conduct business virtually undetected. Neighborhood residents were scared to call the police for fear of retaliation and without a Neighborhood Watch in effect, there was virtually no hope for cooperation from them to assist in cleaning up the area. The calls for service in the targeted area revealed 375 dispatched responses from July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999. Of those 375 dispatched calls, 116 were found to be actual offenses requiring police intervention. Officers obtained an
aerial map of the targeted area and used it to identify and mark houses that were abandoned or condemned, and which were owner occupied or rental properties. We found that there were 64 dwelling/business properties in the targeted area. Forty-five percent of the inhabited properties in the area were rentals. Of those, 65 percent were owned by landlords not residing in the City of Roanoke. The research also determined that 67 percent of the condemned houses were owned by people not living in the city. With the majority of the owners in the targeted area living outside of Roanoke, they were not able to properly monitor their properties, and in some cases did not care about the property condition, creating the major disrepair issues.

Response

The response phase of the Chapman Avenue SW area project began September 1, 1999. Officers from the COPE Unit wanted to establish a presence in the neighborhood and build a rapport with the residents. This was accomplished by conducting high visibility operations on foot, mountain bike and vehicle patrol. Officers also conducted a lighting survey for the area that resulted in replacing inoperable lights and the addition of four new streetlights. Pre-project photos were taken documenting the large amounts of trash in the streets and Vice Detectives took video of suspected drug locations and dealers. Officers met with various city agencies and conducted a walk-through assessment with each agency making note of problem areas that needed to be addressed by their department.

The Roanoke Times (a local newspaper) was contacted about publicizing the SARA project as a means to address the Chapman Avenue SW area project. The resulting publicity was a huge asset to the response phase. At first, we were hesitant to include the media in our operations, but the reporter, Kim O’Brien proved us wrong. She remained within the parameters that we set for her at the outset by not releasing anything on the story until we gave her the “green light.” We did not want to give up any information until our operation was in full swing, thus maximizing the full range of city resources dedicated to the problem. This media attention forced accountability by all.

In September, officers contacted the Roanoke City Sheriff’s Office and coordinated weekly cleanups with the inmate work crew. The city street sweeper was also scheduled to clean the streets every two weeks in the area. Officers arranged for numerous code violations to be addressed and for abandoned vehicle removals from the area. Our initial objective was to improve the “looks” of the area and show some immediate results. By doing so, the citizens who lived in the area saw that the police department was serious about conducting business there. This is an easy task to accomplish with very little effort if you have the assistance of the city’s public works, the inmate work crews, code enforcement personnel and the health department.

Crime prevention officers assisted the area residents in developing a neighborhood watch to create a partnership between the community and the police department. We trained this newly formed neighborhood watch and empowered them with new information on how to obtain city services and how to report illegal activity. This group was most important in sustaining the positive changes to come. The neighborhood watch later evolved into patrols and, due to media coverage, received donations from other city residents to “fight the good fight.” And fight they did: One issue raised by the neighborhood watch was the volume of traffic on Chapman Avenue SW and the speed of these vehicles. Officers worked with Traffic Engineering to have a stop sign placed on Chapman Avenue SW to slow the traffic down in the area.

In January 2000, officers from the COPE Unit began using the Commonwealth’s Common Nuisance Laws. The laws allowed officers to charge a tenant with maintaining a common nuisance if they use, sell or manufacture any illegal narcotics in their apartment. The law also states that the landlord is responsible for “abating” the nuisance. This meant that the landlords had to either evict the tenant or face charges for allowing him or her to stay. If the landlord allowed the tenant to remain, and the tenant was charged again with a narcotics violation, the landlord could then be charged with maintaining a common nuisance. The first offense under this code section is a Class One Misdemeanor. Any subsequent offense (not conviction) is a Class Six Felony, punishable by up to 5 years in the penitentiary. Landlord accountability skyrocketed to the point that when we served the landlords with a letter advising them of drug activity on their property, they did not hesitate to evict that tenant. To date, we have not had to charge a landlord under this section, having achieved 100 percent compliance.

The remaining major problem in the area was a convenience store on which we were receiving numerous complaints of narcotics and alcohol violations. After surveilling the store for several months, our Vice Unit was able to charge the manager with distributing marijuana. Patrol officers were also able to charge him with selling to intoxicated persons on two occasions, which resulted in their alcohol license being revoked. The hearing officer revoked their license for several months, but it is currently under appeal.

Assessment

When officers first went into the Chapman Avenue area, they were faced with individuals who were reluctant to speak with them for fear of retaliation from the neighborhood criminals. After establishing a strong neighborhood watch program and interacting with the residents in the community, officers were able to gain their trust and create a bond between the community and the police department. As a result of this neighborhood partnership, dispatched calls for police service increased by 35 percent for the year July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000, demonstrating a willingness of citizens to come forward. While calls for service were up, we determined that actual offenses decreased by 5 percent from the previous year. The increase in the number of calls is directly related to the bond that the officers working that area created with the community. Residents in that area became more involved in what was occurring in their community and were not going to tol-
The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) is soliciting entries for the 9th Annual Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing and presentations for the 12th Annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in Roanoke, VA.

**Conclusion**

As a proponent of community policing, it was exhilarating to demonstrate to the few naysayers that this style of policing works. There are a number of officers across the country who stigmatize community policing as “soft policing,” “wave and grin squads,” etc. It is an enjoyable experience to be able to put these principles to work and prove these types wrong. In order for community policing to work, you need to get a "buy in" from all of the players in the game. Command staff, the officers involved, the outside agencies and the citizens must be accountable for their roles. We are very fortunate to have an upper command staff that is very supportive of our community policing efforts. With command staff and empowered citizens behind the proactive policing philosophy it will produce results. Since initiating this project, several similar projects are underway changing how we do business. Our motto in COPE is simple, "not all change is an improvement, but all improvements are the result of change."
* Rana Sampson, Community Policing Associates (San Diego, CA)
* Greg Saville, Center for Advanced Public Safety Research, University of New Haven (West Haven, CT)
* Mike Scott, Police Management Consultant (Savannah, GA)

Eligibility for Panel Presentation

Members of the law enforcement community, criminal justice professionals, academics and others involved in problem-solving efforts are eligible to present at the 2001 conference. All submissions for the Herman Goldstein award are also considered for panel presentations. Please note that presenters are responsible for conference fees and travel expenses.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS For Panel Presentation at 2001 POP Conference

Only submit for panel presentation if you have not submitted for the Herman Goldstein Award. Herman Goldstein Award Submissions are considered for panel presentation.

1. Submit three copies of the completed application package (Each copy to include summary and description, and any supporting documents).
4. Direct any inquiries to POP Conference Coordinator at perf@policeforum.org or by telephone at (202) 466-7820.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD AND/OR PRESENTATIONS

1. Summary: To be considered, each entry must begin with a summary of your project. The summary should be between 300 and 400 words. Begin with the project title, and then using the four-stage SARA model, explain the nature of the problem addressed, give a brief account of the measures taken, and show results using the most important measures of success. You may use headings and bulleted points.
2. Description: In no more than 4,000 words (approximately 15 pages double-spaced), not including charts, tables and graphs, provide a detailed description of the project using the four-step SARA problem-solving model outline, and very briefly answer the questions under agency and officer information. A complete list of questions that should be answered in your description is available on PERF’s web site at www.PoliceForum.org. Although you should cover as many of the constituent questions as are applicable, they are intended to guide you, not to serve as a blueprint for your project description. In any case, tell the story of your POP project. Be aware that the committee is particularly interested in well-presented data, especially at the analysis and assessment stage.

You may include up to 10 pages of supporting documents, such as newspaper clippings or magazine articles, in addition to the text, charts, tables and graphs. While judges can not consider videotapes as a component of the award submissions, we encourage their use in later conference presentations. For a list of questions to answer in your application, visit the Conferences section of the PERF web site at www.PoliceForum.org. To view prior winning projects and formats, see examples of problem-solving projects on POPNet at www.policeforum.org, or contact NCJRS for a copy of the 1999 and 2000 Goldstein winners at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/nijll. 82731.pdf and http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffilesllnij/185279.pdf, respectively.
Original Legislation/Appropriations Language. The legislation creating the program, as well as the appropriations language that followed it two years later, placed serious restrictions on the program's ability to function effectively. For example,

- Administrative costs for the 'lead agency', responsible for administering each state's program, were not provided, reducing the attractiveness of the program.

- The appropriations language included no specific staff allocation for the Police Corps at the national level. All staffing for the program had to come out of the limited complement of personnel assigned to the COPS Office, who periodically also had non-Police Corps obligations. A recent report by the General Accounting Office (GAO) found this staffing "insufficient."

- Because the language appropriating funds for the Police Corps referred only to funding for "education, training, and service," it was determined by legal counsel that the program could not pay for the costs of recruiting or selecting Police Corps recruits. As a result, these expenses had to be borne by local authorities.

- Although the originator of the program firmly believed and expected that the program required that Police Corps training be provided in a residential setting, the legal counsel of the Department of Justice concluded that the law did not so require. This issue led to continuing controversy and confusion.

- Although the originator of the Police Corps expected that the program's recruits would be trained by themselves, in units large enough to create group cohesion, the legislation did not stipulate this requirement. As a result, in some cases Police Corps trainees received the bulk of their training with other recruits, diminishing the possibility of creating the desired group cohesion.

The original requirement that Police Corps training consist of "two 8-week training sessions" posed two logistical problems for law enforcement agencies and trainers. First, the total of 16 weeks of training was seldom congruent with local requirements. For some agencies, this training was more than required for non-Police Corps recruits, causing a disparity. For others, the Police Corps training was shorter than that normally provided, requiring the local agency/academy to provide additional training to meet local and state standards. Second, to divide the training into two segments, separated by a year interval, deviated dramatically from accepted practice, and was opposed by several training officials.

- The legislation required that Police Corps participants be placed on "community and preventive patrol" during their required four years of police service. The definition of this term was left undefined, leading to confusion in many of the pilot states.

Administration. Several difficulties in program administration were encountered:

- Between fiscal year 1996 and fiscal year 1998, the Police Corps received $60 million in appropriations, authorizing 1,007 participant positions. As of September 30, 1999, according to the GAO, only 430 of those positions (43 percent) had been filled. According to the Police Corps's most recent annual report, 231 of those participants were actually serving in police agencies at the end of 1999, with 450 estimated to do so by the end of 2000. The GAO report attributes this "slower than expected" start to the lack of national program staff and the failure of the program to pay states' costs for administration or recruitment and selection of program participants. It is worth noting that the majority of the program participants indicated to evaluators that they would have become police officers even if the Police Corps did not exist.

- The program was created as a "reimbursable agreement," a procedure unfamiliar to the pilot states, and one, according to the GAO, that made determining program status difficult, because it slowed the rate at which funds were obligated.

- Although the originator of the program expected that a "model curriculum" would be developed for the Police Corps, such a model was never created. This left the pilot programs in an ambiguous state concerning the acceptability of their training and the eligibility of the costs incurred in carrying it out.

Summary. As noted above, this evaluation focused only on the first three years of Police Corps program operations. During that time, the national and local officials dedicated to implementing the program experienced many difficulties and obstacles. These challenges limited the capacity of the Police Corps to achieve its lofty goal. Many of these difficulties have now been addressed. Only now can the true potential of the Police Corps be measured.

Tony Pate is a senior researcher at the Cosmos Corporation and was the project director of the process evaluation of the Police Corps program. Pate will present a more thorough description of the evaluation at the upcoming PERF annual meeting in early April. The research described in this article was funded by grant #97-IJ-CX-0057 from the National Institute of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or members of the Police Executive Research Forum.

PERF welcomes additional views on Police Corps for future newsletter placement.
On January 23, around 10:00 A.M., that van was located parked behind a restaurant. The discovery of the van brought the media, most of who were already close by because they were covering the Woodland Park arrests. There were approximately 100 media representatives covering the recovery of the van.

Later that evening, the two remaining fugitives were located at a hotel approximately a block from where the van was found. Negotiations were established with the fugitives and a long night began. Approximately 225 media representatives from all around the country converged on the hotel and settled in until the conclusion.

Approximately one year ago, I attended a conference put on by the Emergency Services Public Information Officers of Colorado (ESPIOC) and the subject was "Communicating in a Crisis-After Columbine." This conference provided me with some very useful tips that I used in working with the media in a mass setting such as this. We are still developing some other ideas from that conference.

One such idea, which I now see as a crucial piece for any public safety agency, is developing and implementing a crisis communication plan. This plan identifies tasks that will arise during any major media event, whether it involves police or fire departments. Then when the plan needs to be implemented, tasks can be assigned to on-scene personnel in a command post.

When a major incident such as this arises, one person, regardless of the number of agencies involved, should be designated as the primary person to address the media in regularly scheduled briefings for the duration of the event. That person will most likely be limited to just being able to give the briefings and individual interviews. Other tasks need to be assigned to other support personnel.

In our case, we did our briefings hourly and then set aside 30-40 minutes after each briefing for individual media interviews. I found it extremely beneficial to have an assistant whose responsibility was to coordinate those individual interviews for me. During this entire incident, I conducted approximately 180 interviews. The feedback from the media was that they were very grateful for the accessibility.

Other tasks to be considered are to have people assigned to handle the pager and/or cell phone for the PIO during the incident. It is also helpful to have someone act as a liaison between the PIO and the Incident Commander for getting updated information to the PIO for each briefing. There needs to be a balance between obtaining new information for the media and not compromising the investigation or operation. The PIO is often caught in the middle because Incident Commanders are typically concerned about safety and the successful conclusion of the mission first and foremost, and usually don't care to divulge too much information. The media on the other hand, want as much information as they can get as quickly as they can get it.

When the PIO responds to a major event such as this, someone needs to be assigned to handle the incoming media calls that will still come into the office. This line may be forwarded to a command post but you have to recognize that even though a large number of media will likely be on scene, even a larger number will continue to call into your department and they must be served as well. We did assign someone to handle the PIO Office telephone during the day when the van was found, however, we did not accomplish that throughout the evening during ongoing negotiations with the fugitives. As a result, our department was inundated with media calls with no place to refer them. Our command post established at the hotel did not have adequate telephone lines to which the media calls could be forwarded.

We were also not able to generate and transmit press releases from the scene. That would have been very helpful both to the on-scene media and those covering from their stations. We are in the process of developing the capability of transmit-
ting press releases via email from a laptop computer to address this issue.

In closing, this experience was very intense and at the same time very educational. As a result, we are now in the process of developing our crisis communication plan based on the lessons learned here. As with any other type of operation, pre-planning will facilitate smooth media operations and convey an image of police professionalism.

Lt. Skip Arms is a Public Information Officer in the Colorado Springs Police Department. He can be reached by e-mail at ARMSarc@colospns.co.us.

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**Chief of Police, Grand Junction, Colorado**-Grand Junction function, situated in scenic Colorado midway between Denver (250 miles east) and Salt Lake City (270 miles northwest) along Interstate 70, enjoys a strong economic base as the retail, trade, medical, and transportation center for Western Colorado and Eastern Utah. The city's population is nearly 50,000, and combined with local surrounding communities is about 120,000.

Major airlines provide frequent nonstop service to Denver, Salt Lake City and Phoenix. Recreational activities abound, with snow skiing only 40 minutes away, and the majestic Rocky Mountains close by. The climate is temperate with nearly 300 days of sunshine each year.

With a Council-Manager form of government, the city enjoys a stable administration. The police chief is appointed by and reports to the city manager. With approximately 80 officers and 60 civilians, and a budget of $12.2 million, the police department is a full service law enforcement agency. The chief also administers a regional police and fire communications center.

A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and seven years of increasingly responsible law enforcement experience including three years of management and command-level responsibility are required. A Master's degree and advanced police management and leadership training is preferred. The successful candidate will demonstrate a solid record of building community partnerships and improving organizations, and show past performance as an active, collaborative member of a municipal management team.

The salary range is in the $80s, depending on qualifications. A competitive benefits package and relocation assistance is included. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) (www.policeforum.org), is assisting the City with the selection process. You will find additional information at www.gjchamber.org, www.grand-junction.net and www.grand-junction.net/city/.

To apply, send a resume, a list of five professional references and a one-page letter addressed to PERF summarizing your qualifications by April 13, 2001 to:


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