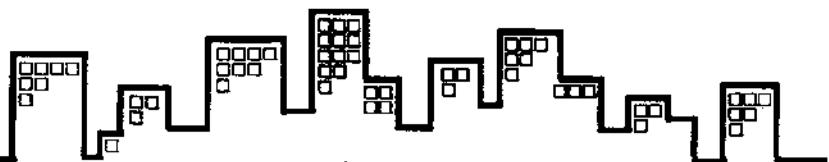


Keys to the City



Problem Solving in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department

NOVEMBER, 1993

Assaults, Robberies, Disturbances

Last year, a man began calling the COPS Coordinator's Office complaining about juveniles involved in the drug trade. He claimed to be a neighborhood watch leader, a grand juror, a confidential police informant, and a former military intelligence officer. He spoke about his efforts to rid the neighborhood of crime and gang problems.

After about a dozen such phone calls, we researched the dispatch and incident report files to learn more about these problems and this man. Between January and May of this year, the police were dispatched to **1718 South 13th** twenty-seven times. The type of calls varied from minor disturbances to more serious armed robberies and assaults.

In just three years, the man, Mr. H., was listed as the victim in seventeen separate felony crime reports, most of which were robberies, burglaries, and assaults. Mr. H. was also arrested for aggravated assault in one of the incidents. Crime summaries showed a pattern in which Mr. H. either reported unknown intruders who assaulted him in his home or unknown assailants who robbed him on the street. The reports further identified a few associates who

themselves were regular criminal suspects. Several police officers were injured in a suspicious fire at this address as well.

Almost all of the calls for police service to this address were made by Mr. H. complaining about persons not leaving his residence, stealing money from him, or hanging around in the street. Most of these calls were disposed of without a written report.

Over one-hundred staff hours were spent handling the initial criminal investigations alone. Substantial, but undocumented time was further spent handling calls and on follow-up investigations. No single patrol officer or detective, however, handled more than a couple of incidents.

We re-contacted Mr. H. by telephone and learned several things. Mr. H. displayed thought patterns that led us to suspect a mental disorder such as schizophrenia. He also said that he routinely brought other people into his home to stay.

We verified that Mr. H. was a veteran of the Korean War, where he was a naval pilot, and that he currently receives Social Security as his only source of income. On one arrest report, Mr. H. listed his sister as an emergency contact. We called her and she said her brother had behaved strangely ever since being discharged from the military. She refused to let him live

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with her because of his behavior.

We then contacted the **Veterans Administration Hospital** and a case worker agreed to contact Mr. H. After a phone conversation with Mr. H., the case worker agreed to place him in V.A. housing where his mental illness could be managed.

In the meantime, Mr. H. was referred to **Fourth District Officer Jim Rudden**, who has extensive contacts in social service and mental health agencies. Jim took Mr. H. to the St. Patrick's Center to speak with counselors. They confirmed that Mr. H. has a chronic, but treatable mental disorder.

No more than one hour was spent making phone calls to address this problem and find help for Mr. H. To date, police officers have been dispatched to Mr. H.'s new home only once in the past four months, to preserve the peace.

Disturbances, Shootings, Drug Dealing

The **4300 Block of Swan** in the **Third District's Forest Park Southeast Neighborhood**, with only twenty-seven buildings, has been the source of over 1,061 calls for police service between January 1, 1991 and September 30, 1993. The majority of these calls were for shots fired, disturbances, and assaults. There

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Assaults, from p.1

were also two homicides committed on this block during that period.

In August, 1992 a fifty-six year old woman was shot in the head and killed in front of her home in this block. This sparked the involvement of a few neighbors. One neighbor contacted ConServe Officer Carole Rulo and asked if anything could be done to make the neighborhood safer.

Carole's first thought was to schedule a neighborhood meeting to identify and address the problems on the block. But, because the fear of retaliation was so high, residents were reluctant to get involved openly. Carole was, however, able to recruit a few residents who trusted one another and were willing to meet.

This small group met secretly at first and began to identify the trouble locations and people in the area. Nine buildings on the block were targeted, including the two townhouses at 4308-4314 Swan.

Carole identified the owners and landlords of the problem properties and sent each of them a letter asking them to furnish the names and ages of their tenants along with a copy of the lease agreements. All of the owners complied.

The neighborhood group started recording the license numbers of cars seen in the area, videotaped suspicious activity in front of the target locations, and began calling the police to report suspicious behavior.

Property owners were sent a registered letter, signed by all

of the members of the group, describing their concerns. The letter detailed the number of times the police were sent to the locations and requested that the owners get involved by making their own investigations and take corrective action to alleviate the problems. Within six months, five of the owners began eviction proceedings on the problem tenants. The more serious problem properties at 4308-4314 Swan remained.

Nearly 90% of the police calls were in some way related to the two townhouses at 4308-4314 Swan. In fact, the person that was later arrested for the August homicide lived at 4308 Swan. Carole continued to send the owner of these properties, Mr. Richard Smith, letters describing the problems associated with his buildings and asked for his help. The letters and repeated phone calls were given little attention.

Because the neighborhood is in a Housing Conservation District, additional inspections and regulations are required before any property can be rented. The inspection certificate specifies the number of occupants permitted to live in each unit and is valid for one year or until the present tenants move. Also, because the townhouses at 4308-4314 Swan are rented under Section 8 of the federal housing code, a separate inspection is required by the Housing Authority.

Unfortunately, on the basis of the number of bedrooms, the apartments at 4308-4314 Swan are allowed ten residents per unit. This means that a total of forty people can live in each of

the two buildings.

The neighborhood group was unable to find any housing code violations so they turned to the Section 8 housing laws. Carole contacted the three government agencies that issue Section 8 vouchers - St. Louis Housing Authority, St. Louis County Housing Authority and the Missouri Housing Division. She discovered that Mr. Smith had contracted with the St. Louis City Housing Authority to rent the above properties under Section 8 rules.

Carole contacted a representative from this agency and explained the problems associated with this address. The housing agency was sympathetic, but no housing laws were violated and they were unable to help.

On August 14, 1993 the second homicide occurred in front of 4310 Swan. The victim lived at 4310 Swan and was suspected of dealing narcotics from his residence. That night, fearing that the gunmen would return, all of the residents in the two townhouses at 4308-4314 moved out.

Carole quickly notified the St. Louis Housing Authority and advised them of the incident. Because the tenants moved out on their own, the contract between the Housing Authority and Mr. Smith was canceled.

Without any tenants in his buildings, Mr. Smith was now willing to work with the neighborhood group. Carole arranged a meeting between community members and Mr. Smith. After hearing the concerns of the neighborhood, Mr. Smith agreed to fence his yard, making it more inconvenient for the drug dealers

and safer for the neighborhood kids. He also closed off the second floor porches to his buildings because neighbors complained that they were used as lookout posts to spot approaching police officers.

Upon Carole's suggestion, Mr. Smith also agreed to hire a management company to oversee his property. He and all the other rental property owners in the block agreed to add a "drug-free" addendum to their leases and to list all lawful residents on the lease. Additionally, they agreed to adopt a screening process for new tenants that will include checking for prospective tenants' past evictions or pending civil litigation through the public access computer in the Civil Courts Building. Mr. Smith has even agreed to beautify the vacant lot next to his property, hoping it will be used as a playground for neighborhood kids.

Now that the property owners are working with the community and the targeted tenants have been evicted, calls for service have been reduced drastically in the area.

False 911 Calls, Missing Persons, Assaults

On the basis of complaints from other **Fourth District** officers, **Officer Jim Rudden** began exploring a range of problems at the **Hogan Street Youth Center**. This detention facility houses approximately thirty-five juvenile offenders.

The police were dispatched to the Center 45 times, generating 21 reports in 1991; 77 times, generating 57 reports in 1992, and 56 times, generating

52 reports through the second week of June 1993. Most of the calls were one of three types - a runaway/missing person, an assault, or an open 911 line.

Jim met with **Ms. Maria Parker**, Hogan Street Facility Manager, and **Mr. Lew Mueller**, Area Supervisor for Juvenile Detention. Jim discovered that the staff was undergoing personnel changes, the result of which was that some areas of the facility were left unsupervised.

For example, most of the open 911 calls were made from a pay phone inside the facility. The kids would simply remove the receiver from the hook, dial 911, and walk away. In the past a staff member would normally be present to prevent such behavior.

The police were also called to make a missing persons report and enter the information into the computer whenever a resident of the Center walked away from or failed to return the facility. Jim inquired whether, under normal circumstances, it was necessary to have an officer respond in person to the Center. The Center staff agreed that the report could be made by telephone and the procedure was changed accordingly.

The final area of concern was the tremendous number of assault reports generated at the Center. Ms. Parker suggested that some of the increase was again due to their staffing problems. Everyone agreed that better supervision held some potential to reduce the number of assaults, but Jim nonetheless wanted to improve the reporting process for minor assaults that would still occur.

Currently, when an assault occurs, the police are dispatched to the Center. There they prepare a police incident report, but because the offender is already in custody, there is nothing more for the responding officers to do.

The facility supervisors agreed that staff members could document minor assaults themselves and relay the information to the Juvenile Court for disposition. This would relieve police officers from completing reports that served little or no useful purpose.

Jim also suggested having a police officer regularly appear at the Center and work with the kids. At first, the staff was skeptical of the idea. They believed that an officer's presence would agitate the kids. Jim explained that this may occur until a trusting relationship is developed between the officers and the juvenile residents, after which the relationship could prove very positive. The Center's supervisors agreed that the idea had merit and would be discussed at future meetings.

A week after the meeting and before any of these proposals were implemented, a mini-riot broke out at the facility. Police responded and arrested twenty-five juveniles. Four instigators of the riot were relocated to other facilities.

After the riot and with the improvements made at the facility, 18 police reports have been filed, but police officers have only been dispatched to the Center four times in the past three months.



DOWN THE ROAD

What ever happened to the review of the Police Manual and Special Orders?

The Policy Review Team, comprised of police officers and non-supervisory civilian employees from each district and bureau has just completed a thorough review of the Police Manual. The only rules not reviewed by this group were the rules on purchasing and personnel (Rules 8 and 11) because other groups in the department were already reviewing them. All of the detailed recommendations have been sent to the Chief of Police for his review.

The Review Team's goals were to reduce the volume of written rules and regulations, make sure the rules and the special orders were not in conflict, and most importantly, propose a set of policies and procedures that allow employees greater latitude to think and act as creative professionals. It was the consensus of the Review Team that the current philosophy of rule-making is designed for controlling employees more than helping them do their jobs better.

Is there a better way to communicate with City Hall employees than through repeated phone calls?

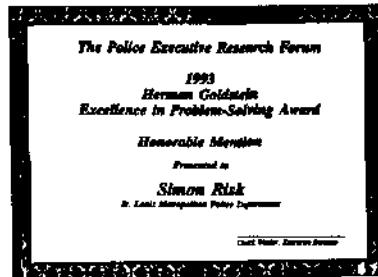
With the approval of the Chief of Police, all ConServ officers are now hooked into our HSL

Keys to the City is a regular publication of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department designed to share examples of good police-community problem solving in the City of St. Louis. Project descriptions should be sent to the COPS Coordinator's Office in Room 607 of Headquarters by departmental or electronic mail. Inquiries can also be directed to 444-5681.

system allowing police officers to send and receive electronic mail messages. This should be especially useful for night watch officers who otherwise have a hard time speaking to anyone who works days. In return, City Hall and the Comptroller's Office have agreed to allow police officers limited access to certain building and code enforcement computer records. This information should be accessible through Area Station computers in the near future.

St. Louis Officer Recognized at National Police Conference

Simon Risk, then an officer and now a sergeant, received one of two honorable mention awards in the first competition for the **Herman Goldstein International Problem Solving Award** for his leadership on the project that led to the closing of the Shangri-la Lounge in the 8th District. The top awards went to a police officer from the Los Angeles Police Department who addressed gang-related problems in south central L.A. and to a team of officers from the Santa Ana Police Department for their work on problems associated with transients and aggressive panhandling. Simon received his award in person at the **4th International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference** this month in San Diego.



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Address correction requested

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