

Problem Solving Quarterly

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Reporting on Innovative Approaches in Policing

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Multi-Agency Effort Eliminates Eyesore

Brownwooca TX—Brownwood is a town in central Texas of 20,000 people. On almost any given night, the relative peacefulness of the Beaver and Bailey streets intersection was punctuated by gunfire, stabbings, fights and a steady flow of automobiles, whose occupants were seeking to purchase narcotics. Sitting on the southeast corner of this intersection was the focus of all this activity, Cozette's.

Cozette's, a white frame, run-down house, was in an area referred to as the "flats." This area of Brownwood consisted mostly of residences, with a smattering of businesses. The house was rented and operated by a long-time bootlegger, Aaron Gaines.

Cozette's operated as a "brown bag" club with tables, chairs, pool table, jukebox and bar. Customers brought their own alcohol, or the Gaines family gladly sold them some from their unlicensed stock. The kitchen was used to produce a variety of food

items. The garage area was used as a gambling hall and the surrounding yard was a combination landfill, junk yard and open restroom. Except for Mondays, nearly every night, one could find a very large crowd gathered at this nightspot.

Cozette's was the focal point of numerous complaints. Prostitution, alcohol abuse, drug trafficking, fencing of stolen property, shootings, stabbings and a host of other violations occurred within its walls.

Cozette's was the focal point of numerous complaints. Prostitution, alcohol abuse, drug trafficking, fencing of stolen property, **shootings, stabbings and a host of other violations occurred within its walls.** Yet, for all of this illegal activity, little was

(Cont. on p. 2)

Conference Filled with Valuable Information

By Rana Sampson

In November, the Police Executive Research Forum and the San Diego Police Department, with funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance hosted the first annual National Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) Conference. *The* three-day conference in San Diego brought together more than 150 practitioners from across the United States, Canada and New Zealand. Leading experts in the problem-oriented policing field conducted seminars and workshops on such diverse topics as drug control in public housing, cooperation with other governmental agencies, and the role of the police chief in a problem-oriented police department.

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(Multi Agency, cont. from pg. 1)
accomplished **through** traditional law enforcement approaches to solve the problems. All of the arrests made at Cozette's were viewed by the law-breakers as merely the cost of doing business. Even making arrests was difficult; lookouts stood in the darkness in all directions to provide early warning of police presence. The police department was applying band-aids to a festering sore.

Local Officials Analyze the Problem

Local officials decided to study the problem in depth. District Attorney Stephen Ellis called a meeting of city and county officials who could be instrumental in the investigation. The police department and sheriff's department provided copies of all reports on criminal violations taking place in and around Cozette's. The fire marshal conducted two detailed

inspections of the property and compiled a **lengthy** listing of fire hazards and violations. The **housing** codes inspector, with police assistance, entered the premises during peak hours and recorded occupancy violations. The city electrical inspector and sanitation departments also made inspections and prepared detailed reports on code violations and the condition of the location.

Even the health department got into the act, and based on Cozette's selling of on-site prepared food, was able to cite the operation for health violations.

Chief Investigator Arthur Gerringer obtained the assistance of the State Alcoholic Beverage Commission in making undercover purchases of alcoholic beverages. He, with other officers, made a number of narcotics arrests based on illegal sales. Even the health department got into the act and, based on Cozette's selling of on-site prepared food, was able to cite the operation for health violations. The owner of the premises was identified and the materials documenting violations were collated into logical order.

Strategy Set

The strategy chosen by the district attorney's office was a civil approach which incorporated all of the **criminal activity** as well as regulatory and administrative sanctions under the Texas Code. These statutes and the home rule authority of the City of Brownwood to abate nuisances

were seen as being appropriate for the problem.

Permanent Injunction Filed

Ellis filed a petition in the district court for a permanent injunction, naming both the owner and operator of the property as defendants. Ellis stated that "the atmosphere produces a common nuisance which is detrimental to the health, life and property of all citizens in the city of Brownwood." After several months of legal wrangling, a **permanent** injunction was ordered by the court. The city of Brownwood then moved to condemn the property. Because of the pressure brought on the owner, she finally agreed to have the structure known as Cozette's torn down.

For more information contact: **Chief Investigator Arthur E. Gerringer**, Attorney General's Office, Brownville, TX; at (915) 646-0444.

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BJA Funding Ends

This issue of Problem-Solving Quarterly marks the last under PEPF's Problem-Oriented Approach to Drug Enforcement grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. In order for PERF to continue to publish PSQ we must move to a paid subscription. We regret that we can no longer provide you with updates on problem-solving efforts on a complimentary basis.

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Constable Finds Creative Way to Close Club

Edmonton, Alberta —Tin Lizzies is a nightclub located in the middle of the oldest section of Edmonton. Over the years, many drug and weapons charges, fights and disturbances involving the club were reported. The management provided little or no help to police in resolving the recurring problems.

Constable Tony Harder, the officer assigned to the beat, quickly identified the place as an eyesore and persistent problem. His perception was confirmed by interviews with the citizens and businesses in the area. The police had already tried a number of responses to the problem. These included using the liquor control codes and fire and health regulations. None was effective. The club was always able to meet the basic requirements.

Constable Harder did some investigating and discovered that city zoning regulations require that one parking stall be available for every four seats in a club. Tin Lizzies seats about 200 people. Harder suspected they lacked the necessary parking.

Harder checked zoning records back through 1981. The plans submitted to the zoning board at the time showed parking stalls that either did not exist or belonged to other businesses in the area. Harder went to these other businesses and verified that their stalls had never been leased to Tin Lizzies. He checked the zoning legislation and determined that it created sufficient authority to close down the club, unless Tin Lizzies could provide sufficient parking for customers.

Harder urged government officials to enforce the legislation, which mandated that the club had one month to provide the necessary parking before eviction proceedings would begin. The club needed to come up with 40 additional spaces. This was no small task.

Constable Harder discovered that city zoning regulations require that one parking stall be available for every four seats in a club.

Tin Lizzies attempted to lease 40 stalls from a nearby parking lot, which was about to be sold to the local Merchants' Association. Constable Harder arranged a meeting with the association and explained the situation to them; by agreeing to lease the stalls to Tin Lizzies they would allow the disturbances to continue. The Merchants' Association declined to lease the stalls.

Harder informed city officials of the Merchants' Association's decision. The city then notified the club owners of the pending eviction. In the meanwhile, Harder continued to ticket and tow patrons' vehicles illegally parked on adjacent business parking lots.

The lack of legal parking hurt business so much that the club could no longer operate at a profit. It has closed and a quiet dinner theatre has since moved in.

For more information contact: **Constable Tony Harder** Edmonton Police Department at (403) 421-2357.

Briefs

In Santa Ana, CA, a vacant apartment had become a haven for narcotic users and prostitutes. The owner had shown no intention of renting it and had allowed it to deteriorate to the point that it created a threat to the health of other tenants. After inspecting and citing the location for numerous violations, Officers Debbie Reyes and Tony Duran contacted the owner and described to him how they could petition the State Franchise Tax Board to take away the tax benefits he received through depreciation of the property. The following day the owner had the entire building cleaned and boarded up.

In Edmonton, the prostitutes who frequent one of the streets in the area around 96th Street, and had begun to work the street in front of the Scattered Leaves apartment building. Constable Mike Crustolo invested the time to count the number of vehicles whose drivers were stopping on the street to speak with the women. He then took the totals to the traffic section. Because of the traffic volume and patterns, the street in question was made one-way and the prostitutes have since decided to move elsewhere.

[Editor's note: The articles in "Briefs" are not intended to be prescriptive. These abbreviated synopses describe one part of a process that also includes an analysis of the problem and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the action taken.]

(Conference, cont. from p. 1)

Goldstein Cautions Problem-Solvers

The keynote speaker was Herman Goldstein, author of the book, **Problem-Oriented Policing**. Goldstein, while enthused over the positive response problem-oriented policing has gained over the past few years, pointed out the need to resist the temptation to oversell the capabilities of problem-oriented policing. Goldstein stated that problem-oriented policing is not a cure-all for each and every social problem. He also spoke about one of the stumbling blocks facing departments implementing the POP approach - resistance by field officers who have come to feel they own their free time between 911 calls.

Some of the issues that Goldstein raised during his keynote speech were subsequently addressed *in* interactive workshops during the conference. These workshops provided both practical responses to common problems and opportunities for theoretical discussions of substantive issues.

Cooperation With Other Agencies

One workshop, conducted by Inspector Ed McLaughlin of the Philadelphia Police Department, dealt with the difficulties his department encountered in trying to develop cooperation with other government agencies when addressing community problems requiring a multi-agency response. In the past, officers under McLaughlin's command experienced some measure of success in working with other agencies. However, when the volume of problems the officers handled increased, a more formal

mechanism to gain inter-agency cooperation was needed

In response, Lt. Mike Hasson, a member of McLaughlin's command, established a multi-agency partnership consisting of 20 to 25 agencies and organizations that serve the South Philadelphia area. The partnership included both governmental bodies and private agencies.

Goldstein pointed out the need to resist the temptation to oversell the capabilities of problem-oriented policing.

Initially, police department officials brought the neighborhood's problems before the partnership. But McLaughlin quickly realized that the success of the partnership approach was dependent upon the ability of the police department to extricate itself from playing the lead role in the process. The community as a whole, McLaughlin said, must take the primary role in forming solutions to neighborhood problems if the improvements provided by the partnership are to retain some measure of permanence.

As a result, neighborhood representatives were encouraged to come before the partnership and request assistance. In exchange for the assistance, the neighborhood groups would promise to maintain and safeguard the services provided by the partnership. For instance, in exchange for the sealing of community-identified abandoned buildings, the residents promised to keep watch over the sealed

properties and replace the window coverings if vandalized.

Other Workshops

Other workshops discussed civil law responses to crime, how to measure the effectiveness of problem solving, domestic violence, youth gangs, how to use surveys to solve problems and ways to evaluate personnel who are using problem solving techniques.

The Problem-Oriented Policing Conference offered participants an opportunity to exchange information on a wide range of topics. For example, Aurora, CO, Division Chief Ron Sloan will be sharing information on domestic violence responses with the sergeant in charge of San Diego's domestic violence unit.

Other participants also appreciated the wealth of practical information disseminated at the conference. Sonoma County Sheriff-elect Mark Ihde found two of the seminars especially helpful, one conducted by Assistant Chief Norm Stamper on the role of the chief in implementing problem-oriented policing; and the other by Commander Jerry Sanders, on supervising problem-solving efforts. Both are from the San Diego Police Department. These two workshops provided Ihde with "an insight into how to implement a change of philosophy in the organization and what role the chief or sheriff has in that implementation process."

The second annual Problem-Oriented Policing Conference will be held in November 1991.

Rana Sampson is a senior researcher at PERF.

Overcrowding Overwhelms Neighborhood

West New Rochelle, IVY — Historically, West New Rochelle has been a lower middle class, blue collar neighborhood of single and multiple family homes. Italians and blacks were the two predominant ethnic groups in the area until 1984 when illegal aliens of Mexican descent began to move into the neighborhood.

Initially drawn by the need for unskilled labor in the landscaping industry, many of the aliens would obtain jobs in the restaurant business to stay into the winter months, if not permanently. With each year, the number of aliens increased and the duration of their stay lengthened.

The increased population caused a number of community problems. Many of the aliens were victims of unscrupulous landlords who warehoused them in illegal rooming houses. By the spring of 1989, reports of loitering, littering, public drinking and disorder had risen dramatically, and many of the residents were frustrated at the inability of the New Rochelle Police Department to deal effectively with the problems.

The situation provided an opportunity for using a new approach. After a series of discussions at the command staff level, a decision was made to implement problem-oriented policing (POP).

As a first step, Lieutenant Luis Garcia was freed from his regular patrol duties and began staffing a POP unit with officers recruited from patrol squads and special operations. Five officers were chosen from a list of volunteers. Selection was made on the basis of

communication skills and familiarity with the neighborhood.

The Analysis

Garcia began analyzing police incidents occurring in West New Rochelle with special attention to pattern, frequency and location. He compared his analysis of reported police incidents with the personal observations of the other members of the unit.

Problems of chief concern to the community were public drinking, loitering, public urinating, loud radios and general disorderly behavior.

The analysis showed that a several block stretch of Union Avenue was the area of most concern. Many residents passed through the neighborhood via Union Avenue, and its deterioration seemed to signal the unravelling of the entire West New Rochelle community.

To develop further insight into the community's perception of the problem, a meeting was scheduled with the West End Property Owners Association. At this meeting, the members of the POP unit listened and recorded complaints in an effort to establish priorities in developing a response. Problems of chief concern to the community were public drinking, loitering, public urinating, loud radios and general disorderly behavior. Secondary problems included litter and garbage and problems related to overcrowding.

Links With Other Agencies Established

Realizing that many of the factors contributing to the situation did not fall within the police jurisdiction, Garcia established links to other city agencies. For instance, the Department of Public Works was enlisted to conduct more street sweeping operations than usual. In an effort to combat the littering, they were asked to distribute more public trash cans around the neighborhood.

Hispanic Community Approached

While this cleanup was underway, contact was made with the Hispanic community. In an effort to establish a dialogue, POP members scheduled a community meeting of the neighborhood, moderated by a Catholic clergyman and a prominent Hispanic community member.

(Cont. on p. 6)

Great Moments in Non Sequitur Oriented Policing

While commenting establishing problem-oriented policing in his agency, one senior official stated:

We were going to have **problem-oriented policing but our building burned down.**

||...|| ... ||...|| ||...||

*Anon. sequitur is a statement that does not logically follow its premise.

(Overcrowding cont. from p.5)

Local laws were explained and officers informed the audience that this awareness campaign would be followed by a concentrated enforcement effort. Four of the POP unit members, as well as the commander, were fluent in Spanish which facilitated communication.

In the weeks following, the work schedule of the POP unit centered around evenings and weekends, the times when disorderly behavior was at its peak. Patrols focused on the area around Union Avenue. The POP unit officers adopted a posture of strict enforcement. Arrests were made for all the offenses for which the police had received complaints. This policy allowed for positive identification of the offenders, which in turn provided addresses of those residential buildings suspected of illegal overcrowding.

Fire Department Enlisted

The fire department was provided with this information and began occupancy inspections. Scores of inspections were conducted, and 23 buildings were cited for violations of the fire code.

As the streets were cleared of loiterers, the number of calls and complaints from the neighborhood fell.

The fire department's involvement was valuable. Many of the quality of life offenses, such as loitering and public drinking, stemmed from the influx of people into an already densely populated neighborhood.

Coordination with the fire department and attention to the issue of overcrowding were key aspects of the problem-solving effort.

As the streets were cleared of loiterers, the number of calls and complaints from the neighborhood fell. Attitudes in the neighborhood seemed to improve; officers received positive feedback from members of the West End Property Owners Association and the community in general. After a critical review by the command staff, it was determined that the objectives of the program had been met.

Realizing that many of the factors contributing to the situation did not fall within the police jurisdiction, Garcia established links to other city agencies.

During this analysis, a number of factors were cited as reasons for the program's success. Chief among them was the degree of autonomy given to the POP commander. Staffing, scheduling, strategy and methods were all left to his discretion. This responsibility, coupled with the commander's enthusiasm, allowed for an approach uniquely customized to suit the needs of the West New Rochelle community and its problems.

For more information contact: **Captain Kevin Kealy**, Police Services Division, New Rochelle Police Department at (914) 654-2217.

Submissions

We strongly encourage agencies to submit articles describing problem-solving efforts. When submitting descriptions of problem-solving efforts for the newsletter, remember to consider the following questions:

- What is the problem?
- For whom is it a problem?
- How has the department handled the problem in the past?
- What information was collected about the problem?
- Were there any difficulties in getting the information?
- Once the problem was clear, what was the goal?
- What strategies were developed to reach the goal?
- What agencies assisted the police department in achieving the desired goal?
- Was the goal accomplished?
- What would you recommend to other police agencies interested in implementing similar strategies to address similar problems?

Send submissions to:

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BOOK REVIEWS

Skogan Book Summarizes Research

By John Eck

In Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighborhoods (Free Press, 1990), Wesley Skogan presents a balanced and well-written account of the links between social disorder, crime and neighborhood decline. He discusses the influence of two community policing programs community organizing and neighborhood self-help schemes on fear and disorder. His conclusions are sobering: "If one message can be drawn from evaluations of policing and community organizing programs described in this book, it is that well-meaning programs may not work, and may even have unwanted consequences."

Skogan brings together a wide variety of research from many different fields. As a consequence, **Disorder and Decline** is not only important for its findings but also as a coherent synthesis of the research on communities and crime. Skogan finds that crime and disorder in a particular area encourage residential flight. Residential flight indicates a withdrawal of support from the community. Since withdrawal of support from the community is often the first step in area decline, Skogan's analysis supports the notion that disorder creates decline in neighborhoods.

Skogan also looks at community policing in Newark and Houston and points out that, "police could work with whoever they felt most comfortable, and

conveniently avoid conflict over what they should be doing, and to whom. And in the end what they did seemed to have been irrelevant to the lives of many in the **community.**"

Finally, Skogan looks at two rigorous studies of intense community organizing and concludes that although community efforts increased participation of homeowners (and the better-off) in community meetings, the efforts often made people more fearful, decreased residents' interactions and feelings of solidarity, and increased perceptions of social and physical disorder.

Skogan presents a balanced and well-written account of the links between social disorder, crime and neighborhood decline.

Skogan concludes that "relying upon voluntary local organizations to deal with disorder and crime places poorer communities at a disadvantage relative to middle-class areas."

Disorder and Decline is a fascinating, readable and extraordinarily useful addition to the current discussions of communities, crime and policing. For police practitioners this book brings a sense of reality to the utopian discussions of community policing. The debates it will engender are far more important than whether its conclusions are entirely correct. **But** it is difficult to believe that these are too far from the mark.

John Eck is associate director for research at PERF.

PROBLEM - ORIENTED POLICING TRAINING

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Its basic elements

Analysis of the problem-solving process

Examples and case studies of problem-oriented policing

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