# Problem Solving Quarterly

**A Police Executive Research Forum Publication** 

Reporting on Innovative Approaches to Policing

Volume 5, Number 3 Summer 1992

#### Solving Crimes Against Immigrants in Yonkers

By Lt. Thomas Sullivan

A patrol car cruises slowly down a darkened street and comes upon a group of men beating and robbing another man. The officers apprehend the suspects. The victim is shaken and afraid. The officers attempt to interview the victim, but he refuses to cooperate and seems more frightened of the police than his attackers. Speaking in broken English, the victim tells the police that he does not want to prosecute and just wants to go home. He is adamant, so the police release the suspects, file a report and resume patrol, frustrated by the victim's apparent apathy.

This scenario is played out over and over again in comounities where undocumented immigrants comprise a portion of the population. The city of Yonkers, New York, is one such community. Located just north of New York City, Yonkers is the fourth largest city in New York State with a population around 188,000. The latest census showed that Hispanics had recently supplanted blacks as the largest racial or ethnic group in the city, comprising 17 percent of the population. Yet police officials and Hispanic leaders feel this percentage undercounts Yonkers' large number of illegal immigrants, believed to be approximately 10,000.

# The Influx of such a large, diverse group of Immigrants created new and unique challenges for the Yonkers Police Department.

The majority of these illegal immigrants are from Mexico, Central and South America. The influx of such a large, diverse group created new and unique challenges for the Yonkers Police Department, particularly the officers of the third precinct.

(Cont. on nertpage)

#### Editor's Note: The Next Generation

By Rana Sampson

The current generation of police leaders contains a number of chiefs who have a new vision about policing that includes transforming the profession away from an efficiency model towards an effectiveness model. Within policing, this has been a time for change. These reform-minded police executives have had the courage to speak out about altering the course of police work and the determination to try and refocus police departments towards that end.

Change, however, does not occur overnight, especially in poliring. One individual in a department cannot change police work for the long term. The change must come from or be supported within a department to sustain itself. It will, in all likelihood, take at least

(Cont. on page 7)

(Immigrants, cont. from page 1)

Officers started noticing an <u>alarming</u> increase in the number of robberies and assaults in which illegal immigrants were the via tims. Conventional methods of policing were unable to reduce these incidents.

## Speaking in broken English, the victim told the police that he did not want to prosecute.

In June 1991, the POP concept was introduced to the Yonkers Police Department. All precinct supervisors attended a two-day seminar given by PERF. Problem solving, through analysis and community involvement, would be the new direction for the department. This concept is the basis of Police Com\*nksioner Robert K. Olson's approach to policing in the 1990s for Yonkers.

Using concepts learned at the seminar, a program was started by then Sergeant Thomas Sullivan and three Spanish-speaking officers in his squad, Luis Le-Bran, Wilson Gonzalez and Jose Pina. They determined that the problem of immigrant victimization could not be addressed until two questions had been answered:

- Why was this group being targeted as victims?
- S Why were they afraid to report or prosecute?

The officers went into the community for answers. They discovered a new derogatory term being used by the criminal element to describe these robberies called "taco hunting." This term

referred to the attackers' beliefs that members of the target group were easy victims. Analysis showed that because of the illegal status of the victims, few had social security numbers. Without a social security number, they were unable to open a bank account or get paid by check. Therefore, they tended to carry large amounts of cash on their person, sometimes their entire savings.

As for the second question on why these victims were afraid to report and prosecute, a survey of crime victims uncovered several reasons:

- Language barriers
- Fear and mistrust of police
- Fear of deportation
- A lack of understanding of the justice system.

Armed with this knowledge, the officers were able to focus their attention on the next step. An outreach program was implemented with the assistance of community and religious leaders. To generate trust and inform people of the program, the officers attended various social and church functions. Spanish language flyers were distributed that encouraged crime victims to come forward. If necessary, they were instructed to contact the officers directly at the precinct, creating a more personalized form of service.

Next, community meetings were organized. At these meetings, Spanish-speaking officers addressed each group in their native tongue. For the first time, the workings of the police department and the criminal justice systern were explained in a simple and familiar manner.

The most important message at the meetings communicated was the department's policy on the **handling** of illegal immigrant crime victims. Community members were informed that the Yonkers Police Department was not the immigration authority, the immigration status of victims would not be questioned: and their complaints would be handled, "no questions asked." Assistance would be given to all equally. This policy alone seemed to allay the fear many illegal immigrants had before attending the meetings.

Crime prevention and personal safety instruction on how to avoid becoming a victim was also provided. In addition, representatives from the Victim Assistance Services Agency attended and provided counseling and informational materials. Lastly, an AT&T "language translation hotline" was introduced, facilitating communication and resulting in improved police response time.

# Because they could not get social security numbers or bank accounts, immigrants tended to carry large amounts of cash.

The feedback received from these meetings has been extremely positive. It was suggested that more Spanish-speaking officers be assigned in neighborhoods that are predominantly Hispanic. In response, recent redeployment of personnel virtually as-

(Cone on page 9)

PSO.

## Leading The Change: When The Chief Leaves

By Darrel W. Stephens

In a recent look at the largest 100 cities in America. T7 of these cities have had at least one change of police chiefs in the past five years. Nineteen cities have had two or more changes. What is the impact of these increasing departures on police executives' efforts to change the way their communities are policed? And given the tenuous nature of the chiefs position, what can police executives do to minimize the negative effects of a change in leadership on problemoriented policing efforts?

Clearly, bringing about a change in a police department is hard work, particularly the type of fundamental change required to successfully move the focus of the police from reacting to incidents to working with the community to solve problems. But an important responsibility of the chief executive is to think about and, to the extent possible, to indude in the planning process the possibility that he or she will not be around throughout the implementation process.

#### Establish a Plan

There are several important issues a police executive might consider to help minimize the impact of a chiefs departure. First, it is important for the chief to develop a plan to guide the department's implementation effort. The implementation plan does not have to be elaborate,

but it should identify the direction the department is heading, the key objectives that must be achieved and who is responsible for specific objectives. A plan helps build support inside and outside the organization and will facilitate the transition from one chief to the next.

## What can ponce executives do to minimize the negative effects of a change in leader-ship?

NYPD Commissioner Lee P. Brown, who recently resigned (for understandable personal reasons) after over two years in the job, designed such a plan for his department and the city. He left a solid and partially implemented plan for the department's transition to community policing, a core group of people who share the vision and several pilot initiatives to consider for later implementation.

Brown takes with him, though, a personal commitment to community-oriented policing that has its roots in the early days of his police career, a quiet confidence in this approach that has served as a source of support for people in New York (and the nation) and the immense respect he has earned as one of America's few nationally recognized police leaders.

#### Develop Strong Commanders

Second, the development of an organizational environment conducive to the proposed change is one of the most critical

### PERF Offers Problem-Oriented Policing Training

PERF provides POP training for command staff, mid-management, first line supervisors and field officers. Each training program covers:

- The evolution of problem-oriented policing
- The problem-solving process
- Examples and case studies in problem solving
- Implementing problem solving in your department

Some of the jurisdictions in which PERF has trained personnel in POP are Kansas City (MO), Santa Monica (CA) and Suffolk County (NY). If your agency is interested in training, please contact Halley Porter of PERF at (202) 466-7820.

responsibilities a police executive must perform in leading the change process. That environment includes the development of command-level staff who are as committed to the new philosophy as the chief.

The chief executive needs to place a high priority on developing strong commanders. They will be able to serve as organizational "champions" of the philosophy with other employees during the transition process and

(Cont. on next page)

PSQ 3

#### Third Annual Problem-Oriented Policing Conference Set For October

Registration has commenced for the Third National Problem-Oriented Policing Conference, to be held in San Diego, California, from Oct. 14-16, 1992. The featured speakers will be:

- Dr. Herman Goldstein, developer of POP and professor at University of Wisconsin Law School
- Chris Braiden, superintendent of Edmonton (Canada) Police Services
- Clarence Harmon, chief of police of St. Louis Police Department
- Dennis Nowicki, executive director of Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
- Jack McGrory, city manager of San Diego
- Molly Wetzel, executive director of "Safe Streets," Oakland, California
- Felice Kirby, associate director of Citizens Committee of New York.

Experienced POP practitioners from agencies across the country will serve as workshop leaders and panel participants and will share their experiences with conference attendees in discussion-oriented workshops. The San Diego Police Department and PERF are co-sponsoring the conference.

You must register before Sept. 30 to ensure your spot at the conference. For more information or a brochure, please contact Jennifer Brooks of PERF at (202) 466-7820.

(Stephens, cont. from p. 3)

when the new chief executive arrives.

#### **Involve Staff In Change Process**

Third, the department's implementation plan for change should involve as many people in the department as possible.

Most people in policing know that employee resistance to change is to be expected. The key to overcoming this resistance is the support and commitment of the chief executive to the success of any change process. Therefore, the broader the base of involvement of employees, the greater the potential for the effort to survive a change in the chief executive.

With respect to implementing POP, this involvement can be in a

variety of ways. Officers at all levels of the department can participate in committees, attend or conduct training programs, use problem-solving *methods* in their daily work or work with neighborhood residents to identify problems and implement solutions.

A chief who develops strong commanders will have organizational "champions" of the POP philosophy during the transition to the new chief.

#### Encourage Community Support

The chief executive needs to devote considerable attention to developing support for the POP philosophy in the political and community arenas. If support for POP in the community and among city council members develops, then those responsible for the selection of a new chief are much likely to look for someone who shares the community-oriented, problem-solving philosophy.

All of these suggestions for leading the change process will be helpful to the increasingly rare chief executive who enjoys long tenure in office. For police chiefs who move on, these ideas will help ensure their work is not lost on the organization and community.

Darrel Stephens is executive director of PERF and former chief of police in Newport News, Virginia.

#### A Dance Club Dilemma

By Sgt. Guy Swanger

The city of San Diego has its share of dance dubs and their assoicated problems: drunk and disorderly behavior, underage drinking, excessive trash and traffic problems. Most night dubs work hard to provide a safe, nuisance-free environment for patrons and surrounding neighbors. However, some do not.

The Bronco Club is a new night spot in east San Diego that is currently operating with only a dance license. It is Iocated between a large business area and a quiet residential neighborhood. The owner had planned to apply for a liquor license until problems at the dub came to her attention. What began as typical noise complaints from residents and other businesses evolved into something more serious for the owner and the police.

#### **Scanning**

Residents complained about traffic problems, loud music and the drunken behavior of the club's patrons. The adjoining businesses complained about the trash being left behind from the club's customers. Between May-Nov. 1991, the police department received 15 radio calls related to the Bronco Club. Officers responded to calls for fights, loud noise and drinking in the parking lots and streets around this address.

Patrol officers Troy Gibson, Dan Longwell and Steve Spurlock worked in this area and had answered radio calls at the Bronco Club on several occasions. The officers gave the dub special attention and strictly enforced violations in an attempt to regain order. Most of the arrests and citations for underage drinking as it turned out, were not in the dub but in the parking lot across the street from the club. Club patrons drank in the lot because the club sold no liquor.

Frustrated by continuing calls for fights, noise and drinking near the club, officers seized the chance to apply POP to the problems.

While enforcement in the parking lots reduced some of the complaints, the officers knew that their approach was not addressing other related problems from the club. The loud noise, speeding and drunk driving, and trash left in the parking lots were still present. Frustrated with the continuing calls for fights, noise and drinking near the club, the officers saw an opportunity to apply a problem-oriented approach to this recurring nuisance.

Gibson, Longwell and Spurlock met with the owner and explained their concern about her customers' behavior. She was initially reluctant to assist the officers but decided to hire a security firm to patrol her parking lot and to control the customers' drunk and disorderly conduct. Private security only curtailed some of the illegal drinking and loud noise on her parking lot. The owner then volunteered to clean the adjoining businesses' parking lots after the club dosed for the evening

and this satisfied the other businesses in the area.

While the officers continued to meet with the owner, they also sought the assistance of other units and agencies. A code enforcement officer was called to measure the noise level of the dub from the street and cited the owner for violating the municipal code. The vice unit made an inspection and cited the owner for permitting alcohol on the premises. The licensing unit supplied the information about the type of permit and specific regulations the club needed to follow.

The local supermarket that sold beer and wine near the club agreed to strictly abide by the age requirements for purchasing alcohol. The home furnishing business where the night club's patrons parked agreed to leave their parking lot lights on to assist the officers in curtailing drinking in the lot.

#### **Analysis**

Gibson, Longwell and Spurlock presented their case at a monthly Problem Analysis Advisory Committee (PAAC) meeting where officers, other units and agencies gather to brainstorm over specific policecommunity problems. The meeting was a chance for the officers to collect new ideas and information. Suggestions ranged from drafting an ordinance to prohibit drinking alcohol in the home furnishing parking lot to dosing that parking lot when the business dosed in the evening. Both of these, though, would severely affect the neighbors who live near the dub by displacing parking and drinking to the public

(Cone on next page)

PSQ\_\_\_\_\_5

(Bronco Club, cont. from p. 5)

streets. There was also a suggestion to continue the strict enforcement on the club in hopes that the business' lcense would eventually be revoked.

#### The officers wanted the club owner to control patrons' behavior, not to close down the club.

Participants at this meeting asked the officers to define their goals for this problem-solving effort. The officers responded that they did not want to dose the business since it was a place for persons between 18-21 years of age to meet. They simply wanted the owner to control the behavior of her patrons in and around the club.

#### Response

officers again worked with the owner and she agreed to modify the entrance into the club to limit the noise when the front door of the dub opens. The long hallway she eventually added muffled the noise. Private security officers started checking identification into the club, but stopped when the number of customers fell dramatically, even though the club was prohibited by law from admitting anyone under the age of 18 into the premises. Because of repeated age violations, the city attorney, the licensing unit

Problem-Solving Quarterly is published four times a year by the Police Executive Research Forum and seeks to foster exchanges of information regarding problemoriented policing

Rana Sampson, Editor

Lorraine Griffin, Managing Editor

and the vice unit went forward with a license suspension hearing.

The owner was hit with a 10-day suspension and 90-day probation period\_The hearing officer acknowledged the owner's efforts to curtail some of the unlawful activity, but reprimanded her for failing to follow rules related to underage admission. She was ordered to strictly follow the license regulations and was reminded of her responsibility for the behavior of her customers.

#### **Assessment**

There have been no radio calls at the club since the hearing. The neighbors and the adjoining businesses have told the officers they are comfortable with the current level of activity around the club. Gibson, Longwell and Spurlock realized from the beginning that the owner's full cooperation was a must in order to remedy this problem. They also understood that, late any business, those changes that affect revenue won't be adopted easily. Researching the laws that apply to businesses and ensuring that the owner is aware of them often can convince a business owner to take care of the problem.

## The owner's cooperation was a must in order to remedy the club's problems.

But in this case, malting the owner aware was not enough. The officers were only able to persuade the owner after they enforced the applicable laws.

Sgt. Guy Swinger is a supervisor in the San Diego (CA) Police Department.

#### **Submissions**

When submitting descriptions of problem-solving efforts to PSQ, remember to consider the following questions:

- What is the problem?
- For whom is it a problem?
- Who is affected by the problem, and how are they affected?
- How has the department handled the problem in the past?
- What information was collected about the problem?
- Were there any difficulties in getting the information?
- What was the goal of the problem-solving effort?
- What strategies were developed to reach that goal?
- What agencies assisted the police department in acheiving the goal?
- Was the goal accomplished?
- What would you recommend to other police agencies interested in addressing similar problems?

Send submissions to: Problem-Solving Quarterly 2300 M Street, NW, Snite 910 Washington, DC 20037 (202) 466-7820 PAX (202) 466-7825 (Sampson, cont. from p. I) another generation in policing to see the kind of daily differences that will outlast the tenure of the leader or leaders within the organization who originally pushed for the reforms.

Who are the members of this next generation" of police reformers? They are already in our police departments because they are the officers, sergeants and lieutenants who are part of the "generation of action." They are already making some of the necessary changes. But there is still much to be done.

The next generation of police reformers are the officers, sergeants and lieutenants who are making some of the necessary changes to institutionalize POP.

The leaders of policing reform have fought a number of battles for policing, but many more lay ahead. At least one major battle is looming on the horizon regarding the breadth and depth of problem-oriented policing (POP). Many in the profession tend to marginalize or narrow problem-oriented policing. This tendency to marginalize the reforms is something that the next generation of reformers will have to fight against.

Rather than thinking of POP as an organizational approach, direction and vision, it is often only thought of as a strategy. Rather than recognizing POP as a philosophy of policing, one of POP's attributes- problem solv-

ing-is seen as its sole component. And many departments narrow that even further and allow only some people *in* their organization to focus on problems as part of their daily work.

But POP is not just problem soling by a handful of officers in a department. It is the recognition that the work of police agencies is substantive, and the substance of it is crime and disorder problems. Everyone in the organization should be focused towards that end since outcomes or end results are important in policing

POP also involves the examination by police organizations of their operations, policies, training, hiring, recruiting and structure to make sure that each part supports the substantive, problem-focused work of first line field and detective personnel. If POP is not all this and more, then we risk having made a lot of noise over just another team policing effort which was a good concept but, for the most part, not organizationally adopted.

Others in policing tend to narrow problem-oriented policing in a second way. One often hears people say, even knowledgeable people, that POP (and here they are focusing on the problem-solving aspect of POP) is a strategy that can only be applied when you don't need to engage the community to solve the problem. In those cases when you need the community's help to solve the problem, then community policing is the answer.

In other words, POP is seen as an approach that is solely engaged in by and within the police community, not by its citizenry. This is just not true. POP is all about community engagement and focusing on substantive crime and disorder problems-problems that the community feels affect them. If we don't find out how a particular problem affects a community, then how do we even know it's a problem?

POP is the recognition that the work of police agencies Is substantive, and the substance of It Is crime and disorder problems.

A problem has to be of concern to the community. And we can't work nth the community to address a problem unless we know how the community is affected by it. Relying solely on police information concerning a problem skews the response. From what we can tell so far, the most lasting solutions to problems, not surprisingly, are not ones in which the police alone find remedies to; rather, working with the community towards solutions provides for a stronger commitment towards the maintenance of a long term resolution.

Thus, while the contributions the current reform leaders have made to policing are quite substantial, it will take the officers, sergeants and lieutenants in their departments to keep them alive, flourishing and resistant to efforts to marginalize those contributions.

Rana Sampson, editor of PSQ, will be spending the upcoming year on a leave of absence from PERF as a White House Fellow.

PSO

#### Police-Community Efforts Reduce Crime in Reno Trailer Park

The spring 1992 issue of PSQ featured an article on problem solving in mobile home parks in Gaston County, North Carolina. As a follow-up, the article below reports on a different approach to solving similar problems in a trailerpark in Reno, Nevada.

by Ron W. Glensor

Reno, NV-Panther Valley is a small, secluded community of approximately 3,500 residents located in the northeast section of the city. It is comprised of middle- to low-income single family residences, a small industrial park and a campground that was converted into a residential trailer park.

The trailer park is located on a main thoroughfare that passes through the middle of the community. It contains 150 trailer spaces that are rented on a weekly basis. Residents of the park are among the area's poorest citizens.

#### Scanning

A short time after the conversion of the campground to the trailer park, officers from the Reno Police Department noticed a significant increase in calls for service relating to disturbances, thefts, burglaries and drug activity. Calls for service increased from 2 to 3 low priority calls per night to 2 to 3 high priority calls per day, and included calls for drug dealing, shootings, assaults and prowlers, which required the

response of 2 or more police units. Residents living outside the park also complained about its deteriorated condition and the people who lived in the trailer park, whom they suspected were responsible for the increased crime in the surrounding area.

Sgt. Jerry Tone, swingshift supervisor for the department's north patrol, approved Officer Wayne Haney's request to work on the problems in this Panther Valley trailer park as a POP project.

Shortly after the campground was converted to a trailer park, there was a significant Increase in calls for service relating to thefts, burglaries and drug activity at the park.

#### **Analysis**

Officer Haney requested a crime analysis for the area and discovered there was a significant increase in reported crimes related to burglary, vandalism, larceny, assault and domestic violence. There was also an increase in complaints of vehicles speeding, juvenile disturbances and drug activity.

Sgt. Tone and Officer Haney conducted an extensive inspection of the area and identified several factors that contributed to the park's deteriorated condition. Abandoned vehicles cluttered the narrow streets, creating a hazardous condition for children who used them as a playground. Most of the

teenagers living in the park were unsupervised and allegedly responsible, for the majority of drug activity and vandalism.

Trailer spaces were improperly marked and created a slower response by the police and fire departments. Poor lighting existed throughout the park. making it convenient to conduct drug transactions and other crimes. The public bathroom did not work and had become an "office" for narcotic activity. Residents were afraid to use the public bathroom so they urinated and defecated in open spaces around the park. These conditions raised serious concerns about health risks of the park.

The swimming pool at the park was not in use because of major structural problems. It became a dumping ground for refuse because of the unavailability of garbage containers for the park. Residents also deposited garbage in the =-rented trailer spaces throughout the park.

It was apparent that the overall condition of the park had deteriorated rapidly and had an adverse effect on the community as a whole. Although many residents complained about the situation, there were no plans to fix the problems.

#### Response

Officer Haney began by contacting the manager of the trailer park. He learned that new owners were in the process of purchasing the park. He presented the problems and his observations to the manager who agreed with Officer Haney's assessment but did not know how

(Cont. on nett page)

8 · PSO

(Panther Valley, cont. from p. 8)

to go about changing the conditions.

Officer Haney suggested a series of meetings between the manager, police and residents to discuss possible solutions. The meetings focused on both crimerelated incidents and environmental factors that contributed to the park's poor condition. Several meetings were held over a period of months and resulted in the following responses:

- New tenant rules were established requiring residents to keep their spaces clean and uncluttered by abandoned vehicles.
- Several problem residents were quickly evicted from the park.
- A new trailer park resident renumbered all of the trailer spaces in exchange for rent. Since lighting was too expensive, fluorescent paint was used so the numbers could be seen at night.
- Ten abandoned vehicles were towed from the park. A local salvage company removed the vehicles for scrap metal.
- Residents of the park organized a general cleanup of trash and refuse.
- The public bathroom was repaired, repainted and proper lighting installed by the manager.
- Students from job corps vocational training programs repaired a

- number of plumbing and lighting problems.
- The <u>swimming</u> pool was cleaned, Iepainted and a new filtering system was installed. The pool was opened to the entire community.
- Speed bumps were installed to slow vehicles and reduce residents' complaints.

#### **Assessment**

The mutual efforts of the police department, trailer park management and residents resulted in a significant reduction in crime and calls for service. Calls for service have been reduced to their prior level of 2 to 3 low priority calls per month. And the neighborhood meetings greatly improved the relationship between the park manager and residents.

In their follow-up inspections, the health department and city building inspector found significant improvements. The improvements were attributed to the work completed by job corps students.

As a result of this collective effort, the overall environment and quality of life in Panther Valley was improved. The police department continues to monitor the area, but they are confident that the work by Sgt. Tone and Officer Haney with the trailer park manager and residents will have a long-term, positive effect on crime and disorder in Panther Valley.

Ronald Glensor is deputy chief of police for the Reno (NV) Police Department.

# WATCH OUT FOR THE FALL ISSUE OF PSQ! IT WILL FEATURE SPECIAL ARTICLES FROM THE 1992 POP CONFERENCE IN SAN DIEGO.

(Immigrants, cont. from p. 2) sures the availability of a Spanish-speaking officer around the dock. In the future, Spanish language courses wdl be made available to all officers. Officers have responded enthusiastically to the proposed classes, which will be given on a voluntary basis.

It is too early in the program to measure its success quantitatively. But, if word of mouth is any indication, this approach was well-received. Hispanics from out-of-town and out-ofstate have come to Yonkers to report incidents committed in their hometowns. The local Hispanic community appears less hostile and more trusting of the police. This improved perception in and of itself is a small victory for the Yonkers Police Department. These accomplishments and new ideas bode well for the future of Yonkers' POP efforts.

Lt. Thomas Sullivan is a member of the Yonkers Police Department.

#### Subscribe Now To PROBLEM-SOLVING QUARTERLY The Authoritative Information Source on Problem-Oriented Policing

#### **Subscription Rates:**

#### \$25 for Individual (for personal use only) \$80 for Agency or Department (includes reproduction and circulation rights)

Name		
Agency		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Type of Subscription: Individual (\$25)		Agency (\$80)
Method of Payment: Check	Visa	Mastercard
	Card Number	
	Expiration D	Pate
Make checks payable to: Police Execut	tive Research Fo	orum

Problem-Solving Quarterly Police Executive Research Forum 2300 M Street NW, Suite 910 Washington, DC 20037