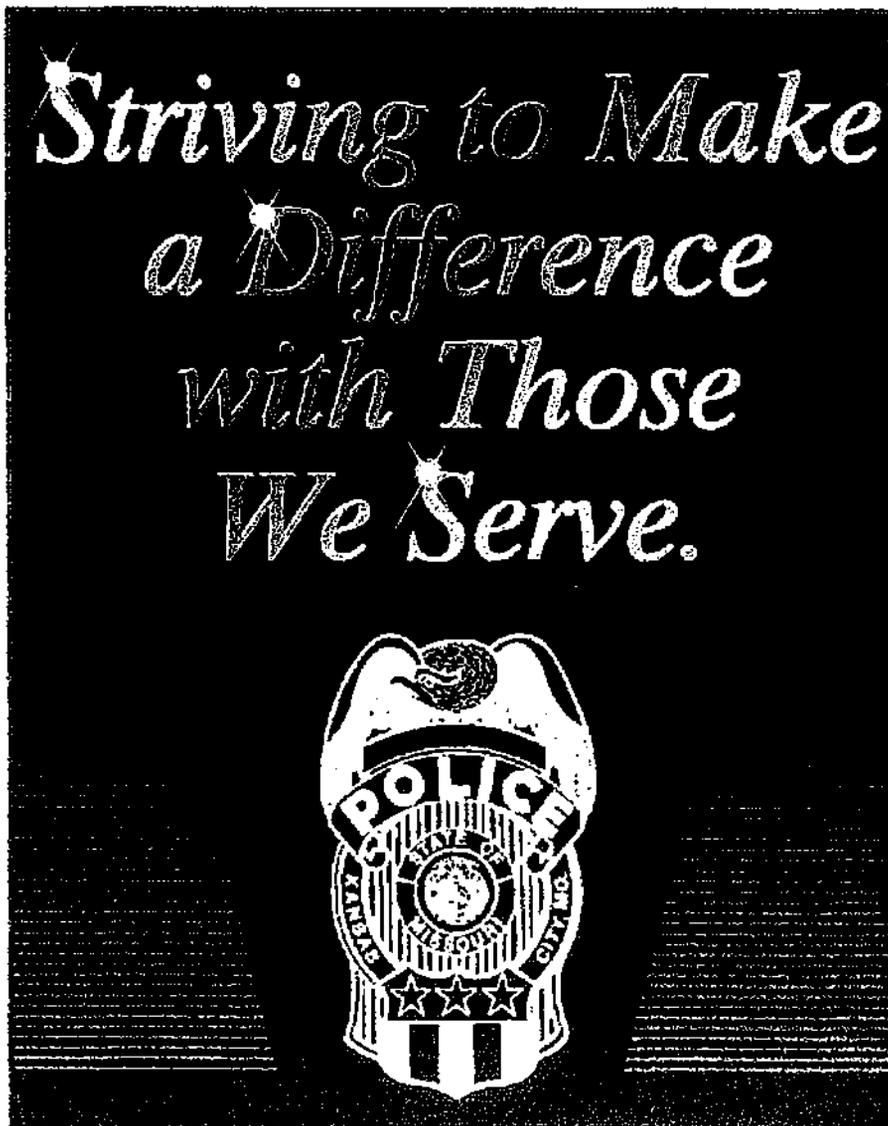


**NOMINATION FOR THE HERMAN G
EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM SOLVING AWARD**

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Stonewall Court is an¹-eighty-one unit apartment complex comprised of nine buildings, each with nine apartments. The residents are mainly older and one-parent families. Since the fall of 1995, there have been many calls regarding drug sales, prostitution, crimes against persons, homicide, and property crimes. These calls, coupled with citizen complaints, and the officers themselves seeing the problems, brought this area to attention. A Community Action Team, was assigned to work on the problem full time. Two district officers worked on the problem proactively during the evening shift.

Although Kansas City, Missouri has many problems, this area was selected for aggressive/policing for specific reasons. The activities at Stonewall Court impacted other sites close by geographically, all of which were high narcotics trafficking and prostitution areas. This area was chosen because the activities in this area were highly visible to citizens and officers in the area. Neighborhood groups were very strong which made for ideal cooperation between citizens and the police.

The initial crime types in this area were drug dealers/buyers, prostitutes, pimps, and gang members. The neighborhood is predominately urban residential containing a mix of single family homes and multi-family apartments. Small businesses are located along Independence Avenue. Offender groups were identified as young black males involved in the sales of narcotics and young white female prostitutes. Many in both groups were addicted to crack cocaine. The property crimes, (stealing, burglary, etc.) were for the purpose of obtaining money for crack cocaine. The crimes against persons (robbery, assault, homicide) were drug related, usually the result of bad drug deals.

Choosing the area to be selected was the easy part, putting it into action took hard work and dedication from a lot of people. The first concern was controlling the problems at Stonewall Court. To do this, we became close to the manager and by meeting many of the residents and obtaining their trust. With the help of the residents and manager, we conducted surveillance of the apartments that were suspected drug locations. Keys to the complex's security doors were given to the officers. Neighborhood meetings were publicized for residents of the complex and the citizens in the surrounding areas. The officers attended these meetings and an alliance formed between the officers and those directly affected.

Pedestrian checks were conducted on the prostitutes and drug dealers/buyers. A parking lot across the street from the complex provided an excellent location to write reports, which in turn curbed prostitution and drug activities. A few of the criminals came to trust us and supplied information about drug sales and hiding places. The prostitutes would go so far as to tell where wanted prostitutes were hiding so that we could arrest them.

The primary method for obtaining data was officer observation. These observations were shared by the officers involved and transcended to all three Watches. Officers shared information with other officers from surrounding divisions that might be impacted. It was obvious that calls for service were rising and a problem was developing. The citizen complaints and officer observations confirmed our suspicions. Weekly meetings were held with representatives from all of the neighborhoods, area organizations. Stonewall Court management, residents, and

officers. These meetings were held to exchange information and provide feedback on strategies being used to fight the problems.

Before the project started, the problems in the area were not addressed. The calls for service were handled, but nothing was done beyond that point. The officers began looking at the problem from a different viewpoint. We needed to look at each group involved (offenders, victims, officers) and how the problem impacted each of those groups. The offenders involved were motivated by greed and addiction. Their losses included jail time, fines, eviction, drug addiction (health problems), and low self-esteem. The victims involved were residents, Stonewall Court management, and businesses. Their collective motivation was to improve quality of life and feel safe in their neighborhood. The gains to be made were a better feeling about their area, a safer place for children, more patronage to businesses, better living conditions, a larger occupancy for Stonewall Court, and an improved city image. Losses were fear, loss of business and tenants, property damage, and bodily harm. The officers motivations were better and safer work environments and better relations between themselves and the community. Losses were manpower devoted to that area and increased work load. Gains were a reduction of calls for service, improved police/community relations, and safer work environment.

There were many harms that resulted from the problem. Businesses had low patronage due to fear of being victims of crime. The businesses were victims of robberies, burglaries, and thefts. The residents were frightened to go out. They experienced property damage, thefts from their cars, and homes. The worst harm

was the lack of trust in the police and the perception that there was no hope for change. Home owners were on the verge of selling their houses. No one wanted to live in an area known as the "red light district" of Kansas City.

Before an answer could be found, the problem had to be properly addressed. The underlying causes of the problem were analyzed and identified. The first problem was inadequate screening of tenants at Stonewall Court, which led to bad tenants. The bad tenants let other criminals stay with them or let the drug dealers/buyers hide in their apartments if the police came. Another cause was the physical layout of the complex. The complex was a mecca for illegal activities due to separate buildings and lack of external security. There was animosity from the neighborhood toward the complex management, which hampered cooperation and communication. There was little police presence.

The extent of the problem was much larger than first anticipated. This was contributed to by the close proximity of areas, such as Admiral and Paseo and 9th and Harrison. There was more activity and problem apartments than appeared on the surface. We experienced a problem that had not yet been addressed, lack of desire to cooperate between the neighborhood and the Stonewall management. All of these problems had to be addressed and reassessed as the project came together.

The officers needed as much information as they could gather. The most important situational information needed would be: who was involved, what apartments were being used, what were the peak times for criminal activity, what exact crimes were being committed, what was the layout of the complex, and what

other areas were being impacted by the problem? The answers to all of these problems relied heavily on the community and residents of the complex. Although the police saw criminal activity, it was nothing compared to what the citizens saw after the officers left. The dumbest criminal knew our shift times and when the optimum hours for criminal activity were. The residents needed to become our eyes and ears when we were gone.

At the meetings several response alternatives arose to help combat our problem. The first was increased police visibility, with more emphasis on proactive enforcement. The second was surveillance by officers of the property to determine where problem apartments were, who the key players were, and later, to facilitate arrest sweeps. The implementation and use of "No Trespassing" agreements were discussed. We considered using the Narcotics/Vice units. The use and enforcement of the lease provisions toward eviction of the problem tenants was also an option. The use of the Jackson County Drug Abatement Response Team (DART), with the power to seize property, was considered. Another option was the possibility of having off-duty police officers work as security, or hiring a private security firm. Anti-crime rallies and citizen activism were discussed. The idea of physical deterrence was looked into. Finally, the formation of a tenant's council and crime committee was considered. All of the above strategies were used, with the exception of using the Narcotics/Vice unit, DART, and the option of on-site security. The specialized units were not used because those units were either too busy or not interested. The option of on-site security was not utilized because of monetary/liability reasons.

A response was formulated by brainstorming at our weekly meetings and by talking with other department elements. We fine-tuned these strategies with feedback. We also watched the calls-for-service to determine if our strategies were effective.

The most important evaluation criteria for the police department before implementation of the response alternative was the legality of our solutions. At no time did any officers want to cross the line of legality, and possibly jeopardize jobs, nor did we want to violate the citizen's rights. The second, from the department, was practicality and costs. Would the strategies really help reduce or solve the problem or would we simply displace the problem (long-term vs. short-term)? The department's final criteria would be the reduction of calls for service. This related to the idea of solving vs displacing the problem. We decided the problem could not be allowed to continue, especially in the manner it was manifesting. We knew if we displaced the criminals, we could at least dilute them, and spread them around, away from their support of each other. We also knew that it would be easier to work on the criminals when they were not entrenched in their apartments. The community's criteria was to reduce the problem to one they could live with. The reduction of crime in this area would also impact other areas, with wide-spread results.

With all these criteria and options available, we had two goals in mind. The department's goal was to reduce the calls for service, thereby reducing the sales of narcotics and prostitution. The community's goal was to improve the quality of life for those who lived in the complex and surrounding areas.

We were lucky to have many resources available to us for this. The most valuable resource was the weekly community meetings and daily contacts with the citizens and tenants. The majority of the community involved now know the officers by name and have come to trust us. At meetings, information is shared, which is then shared throughout the shifts and other divisions. Another resource was the availability of the crime analyst. Through her, we could get current crime statistics and information relating to crimes in the area. The management and residents of Stonewall Court were very helpful and provided ideas and implementing solutions. Our command staff then offered an important resource, time. The sector officers were allowed to work proactively, and concentrate on the area. The officers were also allowed to flex their hours, changing them as the need arose.

Before we implemented our response plan, the only police activity taking place was response to calls for service and sporadic pedestrian checks. The officers would go to the call, handle the call, and clear for service. The citizen response was to call 9-1-1 or write letters of complaint.

As with any plan for action, there are going to be some difficulties encountered which must be overcome. One problem was that citizens were unwilling to go to court as complainants/witnesses. This changed and citizens became involved at taking back their community. The judicial courts were our next hurdle. Traditionally prostitution has been seen as a victimless crime and jail time is not given. Additionally, the majority of the charges we arrested people on were city offenses and did not have a large amount of jail time as penalty. Also with the courts, was the

problem of the eviction process. This process could take up to 90 days, on uncontested evictions. Contested evictions took even longer. Another difficulty with our response was the lack cooperation of other officers that worked with the involved officers. These officers were content to let the officers involved in the project handle the calls and proactive activity in the area. As mentioned before, the physical layout of the complex was difficult to overcome. Separate buildings and security doors often worked in favor of the criminal instead of residents and officers.

The officers involved in this project were P.O.'s Atwood, Oakes, Pronske, and Sicoli. Our Sergeants, Sgt. Atkinson and Fleming, were involved and attended the community meetings. They kept the command staff updated, provided us feedback, and support and ran interference for us, helping our task run smoothly. The two neighborhoods, Pendelton Heights and Independence Plaza, along with Old Northeast Inc. provided representatives to each meeting. The Northeast Mobile Crime Watch became involved and trained the Stonewall Court tenants in block watch activities. The owner of Stonewall Court, along with his staff, became involved. The tenants of Stonewall Court became personally involved. Finally, Missouri State Representative Rizzo became involved and is now working on streamlining the eviction process and on State Statutes concerning prostitution/drug free zones.

Our results were better than we expected. We experienced a huge reduction in calls for service. The complex was in the division's top-ten calls for service list prior to and during the project. After the project, the complex dropped out of the top thirty list and currently has only one or two calls per month. The quality of life has

improved greatly for the residents. One elderly resident stated that she now feels comfortable enough in her apartment complex that for the first time in four years, she allows her grandchildren to visit without worrying about their safety. The complex has also changed physically. There is wrought iron fencing between each building, preventing people from going between buildings to the street. The security doors have also been changed. We also experienced TOTAL dislocation of the criminal tenants. Of the 81 units in the complex, evictions were served on 10 of them. The project was also presented as a model program to several different cities across the country through LISC (Local Initiative Support Corporation).

To evaluate our effectiveness we looked at the reduction of crime statistics and the reduction of calls for service. Citizen feedback and officer observation were used as a method of evaluation. The evaluation started in November, 1995 and continues to this day. The process of evaluation is continuous, never ending. Both officers and citizens are needed to evaluate the problem. Although statistics are a good measurement, nothing is better than hearing the comments of people who actually live in the area. They are the most important group in this project and their evaluation the most important.

Coordinating an effort this big was not an easy task, but luckily our biggest problem came from coordinating efforts between the three shifts. As the day shift officers were leaving for the day, the evening shift officers were coming on duty. Getting all four officers together was not hard, but time consuming. Another small problem came from the fact that other specialized units were not willing to help us

because they had other assignments and were never able to devote time to the project. Even with these setbacks, we always had improvement from the week before.

Several important response goals were accomplished. We reduced the calls for service, our primary goal. We improved the quality of life for the tenants and residents. We have been told that the tenants feel safer and go outside and walk the streets without concern for their well-being. Stonewall Court now has social events at the complex.

From the beginning, displacement was a major concern. To push the problem somewhere else was not a solution, but just a break from the problem. We knew a better solution was to dilute the problem and make it manageable. We tracked most of the people we displaced and found most left our area. Those that stayed in the area moved to other complexes or the city parks and we immediately began to address them. Continuous monitoring has been implemented by the officers, the management of the complex, tenants, neighborhood, and the community to prevent re-occurrences of the problem. The officers conduct walk-throughs of the complex and keep the lines of communication open with the tenants and management.

This project was initiated by the officers involved at the Patrol level. They received Problem Orientated Policing training in the academy and at annual in-service training. No incentives were given to the officers for starting or completing the project. Officers involved in P.O.P. projects can be nominated for department

awards/commendations.

To help us in managing our problem solving initiative, we used the S.A.R.A. model and also enlisted the help of other officers that have completed similar projects. They could help us with problems that we might normally not have perceived or with problems that they had already addressed. The S.A.R.A. model allowed us to categorize each player in the program and define roles for both the police and the citizens. It also helped us focus our efforts on those specific causes, instead of on side issues.

The only resource commitment made by the department was the use of proactive time by the officers. The neighborhoods and Old Northeast Inc. made both a time commitment with their residents and a monetary one as they funded and staffed a field office. Stonewall Court made a substantial commitment with time and money, with eviction fees and the new physical barriers. They were willing to go to court and face possible retribution by their criminal tenants.

This partnership between the community and police officers led to a decrease in criminal activity and calls for service. The residents threw a party to proclaim victory against the criminal elements. It was stressed to the residents that this was the easy part, maintaining this victory would be the hard part. But with the ongoing weekly meetings and continued involvement of the citizens, the results of the project remain strong.