

**NOMINATION**

**1996 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN EXCELLENCE  
IN PROBLEM SOLVING AWARD**

**TEAM AWARD**

**POLICE OFFICER III JAMES J. STAPLETON, III  
COMMANDER I MARK R. PATTERSON  
COMMANDER II GARY W. REYNOLDS**

**LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**"RESPONSE TO NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT AND  
CREATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE UNIT"**



POLICE DEPARTMENT

The following is an overview of the problem solving techniques utilized by three officers of the Lynchburg, Virginia Police Department to address the problem of neighborhood blight as a result of graffiti, litter and abandoned/junk vehicles.

A. Scanning:

Police officers and citizens were alarmed at the increase of neighborhood blight in our inner city that was the direct result of graffiti, trash and abandoned vehicles yet no one, including the police, seemed to be able to find a solution to the problem. Traditional "enforcement" methods were obviously having no impact on the problems thus they continued to escalate at an alarming rate. Many of these areas were in direct proximity to locations known by the police and citizens to be "open air drug markets". Other City department's did not have the manpower and equipment to address these problems thus they continued to grow unabated. An integral component in the growth of these problems was that no one wanted to assume accountability for them and no one wanted to assume the responsibility to solve them.

The problem was identified as being directly related to the sale and use of drugs in residential neighborhoods. Traditional enforcement action targeted toward drug dealers and users was increased with the result of more people arrested for drug violations. The selling of drugs in these areas continued though at a reduced rate. However, regardless of how many drug arrests were made, other problems remained. With graffiti, litter and abandoned vehicles remaining in plain view for all to see, citizens continued to report a "fear of crime" in their neighborhoods as the neighborhoods continued to "look like crime areas" despite the increased arrests of drug dealers. Additionally, drug dealers continued to utilize abandoned vehicles as locations to "stash" their drugs and drug users continued to utilize these vehicles to consume drugs as well as to hide from the Police.

This problem was not viewed as being mutually exclusive from other problems i.e. related order maintenance problems. Rather, the problem was viewed by these officers as an integral part of the "total problem" and certainly significant as the trash, graffiti, and abandoned vehicles led citizens to *believe* that crime was still occurring in their neighborhoods even though there was an actual proven reduction in crime. Thus, this "perception" of continued crime, drug sales and drug use continued to heighten our citizens fear of crime and their notion the Police Department was not doing anything to help them.

Police Officer III James J. Stapleton III, Police Officer III Mark Patterson (Patterson has been recently promoted to the rank of Commander I) and Commander II Gary W. Reynolds of the Lynchburg, VA Police Department Support Services Unit met several times to discuss what initiatives their Unit could institute to address these problems which they viewed as significant.

Their concerns were based upon the frequent complaints they received during neighborhood watch meetings as well as their own observations of certain neighborhoods. They had received training in the concepts of community oriented policing and problem solving techniques thus they decided that addressing the aforementioned problems utilizing the problem solving model would be an appropriate and worthwhile project for them to experiment with these concepts. Also, they felt strongly that their identified problem was one that was generating much citizen concern and thus worthy of immediate attention. They then began to explore methods to address these problems utilizing non-traditional law enforcement methods in conjunction with maintaining the Department's continuing law enforcement initiatives.

They theorized that perhaps the problem of drug sales and attendant problems could best be addressed with a new strategy that focused on neighborhood cleanup. Newly appointed Chief of Police Charles W. Bennett Jr. discussed with Commander Reynolds, Officer Stapleton and Officer Patterson on several occasions the importance of being willing to assume risk and accept failure as part of the learning process. He was highly supportive of the officer's initiative, allowed them to work on the problem without administrative constraints and proposed they adopt the theme "trashy neighborhoods lead to trashy behavior".

## B. Analysis

Officer Stapleton, Officer Patterson and Commander Reynolds utilized information received from citizens during neighborhood watch meetings, Vice & Narcotics Investigators and our patrol officers to analyze the extent of the problem. Areas that received frequent complaints were visited by these officers so that they could study the problem first hand and view it as it truly existed. They photographed the blighted areas to provide a historical record as well as document the extent of the problem. Additionally, Commander Reynolds, who is a pilot, utilized his personal funds to rent an aircraft on several occasions so that he and Officer Patterson could view the extent of the problem from a much better vantage point. Aerial photographs were taken during these flights to document the extent of the problem, to assist them in further analyzing the extent of the problem and to identify critical areas as well as to provide them a historical record.

They turned to an analysis of Police Department records generated by the Computer Aided Dispatch system. Their analysis revealed that calls for service to specific neighborhoods with high rates of calls for service pertaining to drug activity and disorderly conduct were also the same areas that appeared unkempt and essentially trashed.

The analysis of calls for service coupled with information from citizen interviews revealed that the problem had been essentially non-existent until the prior five (5) years when the selling of crack cocaine became more open and wide spread.

The analysis phase included many open discussions with community leaders and neighborhood watches regarding what specific neighborhood problems gave citizens the greatest concern. They learned that drug sales were not the only problems in these neighborhoods and that the fear of crime was just as important to the residents as the actual amount of crime that was occurring.

They then recognized that the actual fear of crime as just as disconcerting to residents as the actual sales of drugs were. They also discovered that the residents of these neighborhoods were not actually the "target" of criminal activity. It then became apparent that the reason residents in these neighborhoods were not actual victims of crime was because they had essentially "fortressed" themselves in their homes which turned the streets over to the control of the drug dealers and drug users. Of course, it was readily apparent to the officers that these residents were still "victims" in the sense that they had lost the freedom of movement in their neighborhoods and were forced to reside in fear while drug sales and related disorderly conduct occurred in their streets.

The analysis further revealed that we, the police, had perceived the problem of trash, graffiti and abandoned vehicles as not an important police issue in neighborhoods however the neighborhood residents in fact viewed trash, graffiti and abandoned vehicles just as important a problem as drug sales. The end result was that these officers recognized that we, the police, had "tunnel visioned" for too long on the necessity of more and more drug arrests however we had paid little to no attention to the other problems associated with the quality of life in neighborhoods. With this information they better understood what the fears and concerns of our citizens actually were.

It became readily apparent that action was needed to adopt new strategies to reduce the problem of trash, graffiti and abandoned vehicles in neighborhoods with the end result hopefully being that citizens would have a reduced fear of crime, come out of their homes and become more involved in taking back their streets. This action would hopefully improve the quality of life in these neighborhoods and instill a sense of "ownership" and "pride" once again to neighborhood residents.

### **C Response**

An existing City ordinance banned abandoned vehicles on properly for more than ten (10) days and gave authority to the Department of Community Planning and Development to have the vehicles removed and sold for salvage. Unfortunately, it took the initiative of Officer Stapleton to insist that this ordinance be enforced and to show members of that department how it could be accomplished. Officer Stapleton learned that one reason this ordinance was not enforced was an expressed fear by some City employees that they did not want to go into certain neighborhoods to confront the property owners and remove the vehicles. Officer Stapleton proposed a simple solution to this; he devised a system in which all the City workers needed to do when they were going to tow vehicles was contact him or Commander Reynolds and they would coordinate the Police Department providing security and assistance to the City workers at whatever location they requested.

In many instances Officer Stapleton personally assisted with the removal of these vehicles so as not to tax the staffing of our Field Operations Bureau.

Property owners who had abandoned vehicles on their property were notified by the Department of Community Planning & Development by letter that they had thirty (30) days to comply with this ordinance. The Department of Community Planning and Development stated that they did not have the staffing to locate these vehicles thus offering another reason this ordinance had not been enforced by them. These police officers offered a solution to that problem. Patrol officers along with Officers Stapleton and Patterson and Commander Reynolds simply compiled a list of addresses where these vehicles were located; this information was forwarded to the Department of Community Planning and Development. The letters of notification followed shortly thereafter.

If the citizens then did not comply with the dictate to remove the vehicles, the tow trucks were called and the vehicles removed for salvage.

The City only had to tow a small number of abandoned vehicles until the message got out among the community that the City was serious about this project. Voluntary compliance with this ordinance increased about 98% within a few short months and compliance has continued throughout the year.

Patrol officers, members of the Vice & Narcotics Unit and citizens also saw firsthand that this strategy worked after observing the towing of the first few abandoned vehicles. Information to the Police and the Department of Community Planning and Development regarding these and other problems increased as everyone involved was encouraged to see that something positive could be done to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods.

Moneys derived from the sale of these vehicles was utilized to pay the towing costs for these vehicles thus providing a solution to this problem without having to increase taxes and/or utilize existing funds budgeted for other projects. The solution to the problem had actually been in place for years, it simply took the response of Officer Stapleton and Commander Reynolds to coordinate the efforts of the Police Department and the Department of Community Planning and Development to obtain positive results.

This left to be addressed the problems of trash and graffiti in neighborhoods. The problem of trash and graffiti were issues these officers believed were best controlled by the residents themselves through an appeal to their sense of pride and ownership in their neighborhoods. The officers believed that neighborhoods could only be reclaimed after residents living there began to take pride in their neighborhoods and were willing to join in the neighborhood cleanup efforts.

Officer Stapleton proposed to Commander Reynolds the concept of the Police Department initiating the first neighborhood cleanup as a test as well as a demonstration to citizens that positive improvements in the quality of life for neighborhoods could be accomplished in ways other than by the police simply making arrests.

Realizing that the Police Department did not have the staffing and fiscal resources to accomplish this experiment, they solicited the cooperation of the Lynchburg Sheriffs Department and requested that they provide inmate labor to assist Reynolds, Patterson and Stapleton with the cleanup project. The Sheriff agreed to provide inmate labor for the experiment provided that these officers assisted with ensuring supervision and security of the inmates. Reynolds, Patterson and Stapleton accepted this additional responsibility.

After analyzing all neighborhoods to determine which one the cleanup would provide the most visibility in and thus have the greatest impact, a major inner city thoroughfare leading to the city's business district was identified as the test site. They identified a three block area that was particularly trashy and also had a reputation for drug sales and disorderly conduct. Representatives of the Department of Public Works were called to provide trash containers. The cleanup was making great progress and by noon a call was made for the City to supply the cleanup crew with a large dumpster and more trash containers.

The Public Works employees, upon seeing the progress being made, stopped their current projects, and called in their co-workers to help and bring to the site specialized equipment such as a front end loader.

Local media representatives were invited to monitor and report on this project to assist the Police Department in spreading the word to *all* communities that something other than arresting people could improve a neighborhoods quality of life and that the Police Department was willing to help neighborhoods overcome these problems.

Their first outing, utilizing inmate and the labor of these three officers, produced almost 9 *tons* of trash in the three (3) block experimental area.

Shortly after this endeavor, Officers Patterson and Stapleton attended a meeting of the "Citizens For A Clean Lynchburg" which is a volunteer organization comprised of citizens who promote the theory that "clean is better". As a result of Officer Stapleton sharing the results of our first cleanup effort and the Police Department's desire to take this philosophy of neighborhood cleanup to a higher level, this organization approved funding to further the concept of purchasing equipment for the Police Department to utilize in order to begin the process of neighborhoods helping themselves by assisting with the removal of trash and graffiti.

"Citizens For A Clean Lynchburg" awarded the Police Department \$7,000.00 for this project. Officer Stapleton advanced the idea of creating an "Environmental Response Unit"; the "unit" being an equipped trailer for neighborhood cleanup and an additional job responsibility for the officers. This was a completely new concept yet these officers decided to take a risk, develop a plan then analyze its results.

The next step was to determine what equipment was needed to remove graffiti as well as to advance the concept of neighborhood involvement in the cleanup effort. The officers talked to paint professionals, contractors and members of our Public Works Department to gain as much information as possible to ensure they initiated the proper response to the problem. With the information they received, they developed a list of equipment and supplies that would be needed. The next concern was how do they get this equipment to the citizens in an "user friendly" way?

With the funds received from "Citizens For A Clean Lynchburg", a trailer was purchased and equipped with "cleanup items" such as a pressure washer/sand blaster, airless paint sprayer, generator, rakes, shovels, gloves, brooms and everything else they could think of that would be needed to go into a neighborhood and be a self-contained "unit" to assist citizens in helping themselves.

Being "user friendly"<sup>11</sup> was deemed as being an important component of this project as the officers recognized this was absolutely necessary if they were going to stimulate citizen involvement in this project. The officers personally built shelves and installed racks inside the trailer so that it was "user friendly" and well organized.

The \$7,000.00 was a good start however more items were needed. The officers explored what "found and abandoned property" was in the possession of the Police Department that might be valuable additions to the project.

It should be noted that after every attempt to identify the rightful owners of such property is made by the Police Department, "found and abandoned property" is publicly auctioned and generally only provides the City general fund approximately 10 cents for every 1 dollar value. Thus, they were able to add items to the trailer such as drills, hand tools, a chain saw and a tool box etc. without the expenditure of taxpayer and/or donated funds. All of these items were inventoried and recorded, and, were marked by engraver utilized the concepts of "Operation Identification".

The City Department of Waste Management supported the concept of the Environmental Response Unit and provided the officers with a large number of bright orange trash bags to be stored in the "Environmental Response Unit" so that an adequate supply would always be readily available. Additionally, they pledged that once a cleanup was completed, all the officers needed to do was call the Waste Management office and a truck would be dispatched to immediately remove the filled trash bags for disposal in the city landfill. This assisted them greatly as trash was removed from a neighborhood within hours from the time it was picked up.

Amazingly, as soon as businesses found out what they officers were doing they began to donate money to the project as well as in kind services such as stripping and marking the trailer to conform with our patrol car markings. They also donated equipment such as back pack blowers, paint, sand etc.

To publicize the existence and utility of this "unit"<sup>1</sup>, the officers met with Commander Reynolds to determine what step should be taken next. They decided that a program with elementary schools in conjunction with classes on science and environmental issues would be a good starting place for the "unit"<sup>1</sup> and their concepts to undergo further experimentation.

In addition to facilitating students cleaning up their school yard and adjacent streets, Officer Stapleton and Officer Patterson spent time in classrooms educating the students about the effects of litter and graffiti, they arranged for student tours of the City landfill and ended the sessions with a pizza lunch donated by a local pizza franchise. In short time, the students persuaded their teachers to allow them to have a clean-up day at their schools with contests and prizes for the individual classroom collecting the most trash. This led to discussions among the students about the importance of recycling and further student contests to determine which classroom could recycle the most "trash".

The officers began to receive more and more requests from scout groups, civic organizations and neighborhood watch groups who wanted to initiate neighborhood cleanup projects. The Environmental Response Unit responded to all calls for assistance and averages two neighborhood cleanup initiatives each week. Additionally, Officers Stapleton and Patterson and Commander Reynolds actually patrolled neighborhoods to locate trashed areas, abandoned vehicles and graffiti.

If they located an area they believed needed to be cleaned up, they contacted the appropriate neighborhood watch and arranged a cleanup day.

Graffiti removal was given first priority as the officers felt it important to remove graffiti as soon as it was detected. After removing graffiti, these officers would return to the area periodically to see if the graffiti had returned. They also notified beat officers and neighborhood watch members of all graffiti removal and requested their assistance in patrolling the area to deter graffiti as well as report it, especially if it returned to those locations that had already been cleaned by the Environmental Response Unit.

The number of requests for the Environmental Response Unit to assist with neighborhood cleanup has exceeded all expectations.

#### D. Evaluation

Evaluation of this project is a constant and on-going process. After the Environmental Response Unit was operational for three months, Commander Reynolds and Officer Patterson conducted another aerial observation of the neighborhoods in which the "unit<sup>1</sup> had been utilized. It was clear that the areas cleaned were remaining free of trash and abandoned vehicles. By utilizing aerial observation, it was determined that their efforts were not necessarily displacing the drug dealers and the litterers to other areas. This was evidenced by their observation that even though trash was still clearly apparent in some areas that had not been visited by the Environmental Response Unit, it was encouraging to note that several of these areas actually had less trash and litter.

The officers only logical explanation for this is citizens in these neighborhoods had not stopped their efforts by simply cleaning up certain streets but rather had taken the initiative to venture out into other areas and clean them also! They further based their assumption on the fact that they knew the Police Department did not sponsor a cleanup of these areas and that the cleanup was not performed by other departments of our City government.

Additionally, the officers conducted an analysis of calls for service specifically regarding littering and graffiti. They discovered that in those areas in which the Environmental Response Unit has operated, there has been an actual increase in litter and graffiti related calls for service to the Police Department. The percentage of increased calls to the police during the period of July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996 was 120%. The officers were encouraged with this statistic as they believe this was another indicator of the success of this problem solving technique in that citizens had indeed taken an interest in improving their neighborhoods and were willing to report to the police what they observed. This was further evidenced by the officers on-site inspections, their aerial inspections, reports from patrol officers and citizen reports that litter and graffiti had been reduced in their neighborhoods.

These officers believe that the increase in related calls for service to the police are the direct result of citizens now having a new sense of pride and ownership in their neighborhoods thus they are more prone to call us to report these incidents as they know there is a program in place to deal with the problem. They suspect, and believe the statistics verify this, that citizens prior to the implementation of this problem solving technique simply did not report litter and graffiti problems to the police because they believed nothing would be done.



Unfortunately, based upon past practices of the Police Department and other City departments this was an accurate perception.

Perhaps their best source of information to evaluate this project has been the Police Department's customers, our citizens. The Police Department has received nothing but praise from citizens regarding this new approach to solving the aforementioned problems. The reality is that through the efforts of Stapleton, Patterson and Reynolds, these problems have been addressed with a high degree of success as the incidents of litter, graffiti and abandoned vehicles have been significantly reduced.

Absolutely no one has objected to the concept of citizens themselves assuming responsibility for their neighborhoods and performing these cleanups versus the previous notion among many citizens that the " problem can only be solved by government and they are not willing to do anything about it.

There were problems encountered during implementation of the response. One of the problems encountered was how do these officers and citizens remove graffiti that is on private property {and in many cases the property owner is not known and/or not a resident of this city thus they were unable to be located). The first step was to contact other cities who were known for their progressive problem solving to learn what techniques they had used to combat this problem. From the responses received, these officers determined that the best solution would require enacting a change to our City code. Thus, the City Attorney was consulted regarding proposed changes in our City code which would enable the Police Department to enter private property to remove graffiti and the removal would be done at no expense to the property owner by utilizing the Environmental Response Unit.

The officers learned during their meetings with citizens that many property owners in the blighted areas were actually victims of the graffiti being placed on their property and did not have neither the financial resources to have the graffiti removed nor the equipment to remove it themselves. Prior to asking for this code change, these officers consulted neighborhood watch members to determine their level of support. Citizen support for the code change was overwhelming thus it was accomplished in an expedient manner.

The revised code also contains a provision that the affected property owner will be contacted prior to any removal of graffiti from private property in an attempt to receive permission for the removal. If permission is not received within ten days, the code gives City employees (including the police) the right to enter the private property and remove the graffiti.

Another concern that developed during the response phase dealt with parental responsibility for juveniles caught applying graffiti and what to do about it. Also, the issue of continued funding for the Environmental Response Unit became a priority due to the increased requests to utilize the unit. These officers proposed that our City code be revised to reflect wording to the effect that parents of juveniles convicted of applying graffiti would be subject to paying for all cleanup costs associated with the removal of graffiti. Any money collected in this manner would be channeled back to the Environmental Response Unit for equipment and supply replacement.

Finally, the City code was revised to reflect a new penalty for anyone caught applying graffiti. The previous maximum punishment was \$250.00. The code change reflected a possible maximum jail sentence up to 12 months and a maximum fine of \$2,500.00. The officers were directly responsible for all of these City code revisions which now placed much substance in our graffiti law.

Another problem encountered during the response was, unfortunately, from within the ranks of this Police Department. The officers involved with this project initially received comments from their peers such as "all you are doing is wasting time" and "what you are doing is not *real* police work" and "what you are doing may look good but it will not make any difference in the real world" etc. Officers Patterson, Stapleton and Commander Reynolds had anticipated this problem would occur however they were not deterred as they were willing to take the risk that their response would work and make a difference. Additionally, they believed that if their project was indeed successful then the skeptics would eventually be proven wrong. Fortunately *many* members of the Police Department observed that in fact this response to the problem was making a difference.

One of the selling points of this response made to skeptics was that through the efforts of the Environmental Response Unit, there would be less bricks and bottles in the street readily available for drug dealers and users to throw at patrol officers. This explanation of the utility of the Environmental Response Unit and neighborhood clean-up made sense to some of the skeptics who had previously made negative comments to these officers; especially those who had experienced the previous summer several incidents wherein our officers were pelted with bottles and other objects that were readily available from the piles of trash openly located along the streets.

Commander Reynolds thought that he had encountered all expected problems with their response until he received a telephone call from a member of City Council. The council member stated he was supportive of the Environmental Response Unit and thought it would be appropriate, at the suggestion of one of his constituents, to remove a mural painted on a wall several years prior by a fifth grade class as a class project. The citizen thought the mural was unsightly therefore it detracted from the appearance of the neighborhood and thus should be removed by the Environmental Response Unit.

The unanticipated problem was to decide what constitutes "art" versus what constitutes "graffiti"? Officers Stapleton and Patterson met with Commander Reynolds to discuss this issue. They decided to rely upon what citizens had told them was "offensive" and considered graffiti. Additionally, they researched the Virginia State Code for legal definitions of graffiti. Utilizing legal definitions and citizen input, a definition of what constitutes graffiti was established as well as guidelines for use by the Police Department to determine what will be removed by the Environmental Response Unit.

This unanticipated inquiry by the City Councilman turned out to be helpful to the officers as they now had established guidelines regarding graffiti removal as well as what types of incidents they would respond to for removal action.

The successful record of this project has been utilized this year during problem solving training provided to all of our employees as an example of what can be accomplished utilizing the problem solving model. The negative and teasing comments to these officers has stopped.

The specific response goals they accomplished were (1) the Police Department would take a pro-active problem solving approach to the aforementioned concerns (2) the Police Department would lead the City's response and the communities response to the problems but only do so with the understanding that for the project to be successful other components of City government *and* neighborhood residents would have to be involved during the scanning, analysis, response and evaluation phases (3) as this was the officer's *first* experiment utilizing the problem solving model, they would maintain flexible in their response and continue analysis of their efforts throughout the process.

Officers Stapleton and Patterson and Commander Reynolds believe they were highly successful in meeting their response goals as they were clearly achieved as evidenced in the aforementioned statements pertaining to the evaluation of this project.

At this time the officers have not determined any other actions they should have initiated to make their response to these problems more effective. There always existed the concern that the project would "displace" related problems to other neighborhoods. The response has indeed displaced some of the drug sale and drug use problems to other neighborhoods. However, the officers believed it important to note that the drug dealers and users continued their illegal activity however they did so in a less "trashy" manner. It is believe this is the direct result of the projects success in that the drug dealers and users realized that the Police Department was utilizing this response as a means of tracking and monitoring their behavior and whereabouts based upon whether or not litter and graffiti began to appear in areas that previously had not been subjected to these problems.

Of course, whenever displacement of the problem occurred, one of the officer's goals was to expediently move their cleanup efforts to the new location so that the message would be sent that litter and graffiti are just as much of a concern to the Police Department as drug sales and drug use, and, wherever you move to you can expect the Police Department to move there with you.

The officers anticipated their response to these problems would require continued monitoring and that they needed to remain flexible and ever vigilant in their efforts. This proved to be even more important than first realized as they were "tested" several times by drug dealers and users with litter and graffiti showing up in areas that had not previously experienced these problems. As previously stated, the officers remained flexible and responded to the problems as they were identified.

Due to this philosophy, the message was clearly sent and apparently understood that "trashy behavior and trashy neighborhoods" would not be tolerated and could be successful impacted through the combined efforts of the Environmental Response Unit, other City departments and citizen cooperation. As of this writing, citizen reports and on-site inspections clearly reveal that the problems of litter, graffiti and abandoned vehicles are on the decrease. Additionally, citizens are reporting to us that in some neighborhoods their fear of crime has lessened since the inception of the Environmental Response Unit.

Since implementation of this response, citizens have begun to work closer with the Police Department and the Department of Community Planning and Development to determine a response to abandoned and sub-standard housing in the blighted areas of this city.

Citizens have obviously taken an increased interest in improving their neighborhoods and want to move beyond the problems of litter, abandoned vehicles and graffiti. We believe this increased sense of citizen involvement in all aspects of neighborhood cleanup is directly attributable to the success of the Environmental Response Unit.

It is clear that the response technique utilized will require continued monitoring as well as a continuing effort to maintain the positive results achieved. Also, it is clear that a number of years of evaluation of this response will be required before the true results are known however the early analysis reveals results that are very promising.

#### E. Philosophy and Organization

This problem solving initiative was initiated at the police officer level and the middle management level. No one was "selected" to address this problem but rather it was self initiated by Officer Stapleton, Officer Patterson and Commander Reynolds.

Newly appointed Chief of Police Charles W. Bennett, Jr. has received much training in problem solving techniques and had utilized these techniques during his tenure with the Richmond, Virginia Police Department. Prior to this project, Commander Reynolds had received specialized training at the Southern Police Institute in "The Practical Implementation of Community Oriented Policing". Also, Officers Stapleton and Patterson had received specialized training on problem solving and community oriented policing during a variety of specialized training courses offered by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Crime Prevention Association. Materials and information received during this training were utilized throughout the problem solving experiment.

Chief Bennett was instrumental in laying the foundation for this Police Department to make a gradual, but deliberately paced, shift to this department utilizing the problem solving model. His philosophy is change will be best accepted in the department through "evolution and not revolution" meaning that he believes it best to provide officers the necessary training, information and values to assist them in decision making and then allow them to step forward and take risks by attempting new solutions to old problems. Taking risks and making decisions based upon principles of the Police Department's mission and values statements that may eventually turn out to not be the best course of action are not now viewed as necessarily negative but rather are now viewed as part of the learning process. Also, he has advanced the philosophy that organizational change that occurs as "forced change from the top down" is less likely to be received and embraced at all levels of the organization.

Chief Bennett has accomplished much toward educating and training members of this department at all levels (including all civilian employees) in the concepts and utility of utilizing the problem solving model while not losing sight of the importance of law enforcement as an important and effective means for order maintenance. In fact, during the response stage of this project the Police Department increased the number of officers assigned to the Vice & Narcotics Unit as well as taken other enforcement measures such as the creation of a bicycle patrol. Thus, this department's philosophy is to utilize a response of traditional police measures coupled with non-traditional police measures to respond to neighborhood problems.

For too many years we relied upon other agencies and departments to solve many of the problems identified by neighborhoods. Now that the Lynchburg Police Department, other City departments and citizens have seen firsthand that the problem solving model works, acceptance of this concept has become more widespread throughout this department and is being watched closely by other components of City government. Most importantly, more members of this department are willing to make decisions and are willing to apply the principles of problem solving when dealing with internal and external concerns.

The community has also taken notice of the change in our Police Department's response to problems which is evidenced by the increased dialogue between the community and this department as well as the requests we receive from citizens for the Environmental Response Unit. Upon seeing this new police response, residents of troubled areas began to see police officers in their neighborhoods actually being the catalyst to eliminate problems instead of simply being involved in traditional law enforcement duties. Examples of this are that several citizens have offered their homes as surveillance sites and many are much more prone to call the police with information that they once were reluctant to provide us.

One of our patrol officers was recently stopped by residents in a neighborhood who had observed graffiti being placed on a bridge shortly after the Environmental Response Unit had removed graffiti from the bridge. Their reason for telling us who the culprits were and offering to come to court was in their words "because you guy's are trying to help us, it just doesn't make sense what these kids are doing, they don't even live in the neighborhood". Admittedly this kind of assistance is still more the exception rather than the rule; nevertheless it demonstrates this Police Department has gained community support and that we are headed in the right direction with our utilization of the problem solving model.

These positive interactions with citizens and patrol officers have paid immeasurable dividends in moving this organization toward the much needed change of adopting the problem solving model. This was accomplished without a "forced" organizational change in philosophy.

The Lynchburg, Virginia Police Department does not provide any "tangible" benefits to those officers who practice the problem solving model. However, during a recent promotional process it was evident that those officers who understood the model and had demonstrated the willingness and capacity to utilize it were clearly the ones who rose to the top for promotional consideration. Perhaps the best benefit this Police Department awards to those who practice problem solving is that the Chief of Police, and now more supervisors, understand that this too is "real police work" and are commending officers on a more frequent basis for their use of problem solving techniques.

In summation, this middle size southern Police Department had officers who were willing to take the risk associated with an experiment and did their level best to utilize the principles of problem solving to address a significant community concern. Through their imagination, creativity and "unwillingness to simply go with the flow", they have proven that the problem solving model does work and thus they have provided the catalyst for others within the Police Department to take risks and apply the problem solving model to other issues that face this Police Department and the City of Lynchburg, Virginia. This was successfully accomplished without the expenditure of additional tax dollars and without having to increase personnel.

Additionally, Chief Bennett has continually promoted the philosophy that "we can not just arrest our way out of neighborhood problems". This utilization of the problem solving model by Officer Stapleton, Commander Patterson and Commander Reynolds has done much to prove to the community, other components of City government and our own officers that there indeed are alternatives to problem solving and that it involves more than simply making arrests.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Selected news articles that report on the first community cleanup effort by the Lynchburg, VA Police Department, the Police Department's efforts to enact an anti-graffiti law, and implementation of the Environmental Response Unit in neighborhood cleanup,
2. Photograph of the Lynchburg, VA Police Department Environmental Response Unit,
3. Copy of the Lynchburg, VA Police Department "Vision, Values, and Mission" statements.