

Lakeville Police Department

Conflict Resolution Team

Summary:

Scanning: The City of Lakeville is a 38 square mile suburb of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area with a population of approximately 44,000 residents. Lakeville is unique in that as an outer tier suburb we have both urban/retail areas and rural farm areas. This uniqueness continues because our urban centers are clustered throughout the city. These urban centers are diverse in that some are manufactured housing areas and some are high income and business areas.

Over a period of years we noticed that specific areas were associated with high volumes of calls for police service. Most of the calls were found to be return calls for the same problems, i.e., vandalism, drugs, damage to property, disorderly conduct, theft, juvenile offenses, burglary, domestics, assaults, and other civil problems.

During one 12 month period:

- area of 1200 residents, approximately 700 calls for service.
- area of 250 residents, 223 calls for service.
- area of 1000 residents, 188 calls for service.
- business area, 75 calls of a similar nature.

These alarming statistics were compared with other locations in the city and in some cases found to be 10 times higher than the norm. This was stretching police department resources past their limit.

Analysis: Data was collected over a 24-month period from calls for service, medical runs, interviews with residents and managers of certain complexes. Officers and dispatchers were also sought out for their observations and thoughts on each geographic area's unique problem. Analysis revealed that there were no checks and balances when it came to who was allowed to reside in a certain area. There were no sanctions for unlawful behavior in certain areas. There seemed to be no way to offer long term assistance to the people who were asking for help in stopping someone else's consistent unlawful behavior.

Response: Officers were assigned to each problem area. They took responsibility for that area and opened up important dialog with on-site managers. Through this dialog a new understanding of cooperation developed. New criteria were put into place for admission and retention of those wishing to live in certain residential areas. Law violators began to be held accountable for what they did to disrupt neighborhood tranquility. Increased awareness by law enforcement of the community needs flourished.

Assessment: Statistical data was monitored for six years. Meetings with citizens, property managers, attorney's, judges, probation officers and others were held on an as need basis. The increased Law Enforcement contact with citizens and managers working jointly on a common problem led to remarkable results. New criteria for admission to live in an area were established. Evictions for law violators resulted, and the over all problem for the most part was eliminated. All of this resulted in fewer calls for service.

Lakeville Police Department

Conflict Resolution Team

Scanning:

The City of Lakeville is a 38 square mile suburb south of Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN. The population has grown from just under 25,000 in 1990 to approximately 44,000 in 2000; a 73.5 percent increase. These residents are overwhelmingly white, with the 2000 census showing a minority population of approximately 1,600 citizens. The population is spread throughout the city, and a significant number live in mobile homes or subsidized housing units. As early as 1994, it was evident that these geographically isolated mobile home communities and subsidized housing units had larger than normal calls-for-service, compared to other population centers of similar size within the city.

As the City of Lakeville continues to grow, the call load has increased, but disproportionately so in subsidized housing neighborhoods and mobile home communities. Department members became aware of increasing calls to these areas through personal experience and anecdotal information. The sheer numbers and frequency of the calls were straining the resources of the police department.

In one example, an officer had printed a "calls-for-service" history on a single address in a mobile home community. In an eight-month period, over 68 calls-for-service were received from this one address. These calls included domestics, thefts, loud music, drugs, runaway reports and similar incidents. Several individuals had been arrested from this address, and most of those arrested were not residents of the city, let alone the mobile

home park. In another example, one address was known as a house where drugs were sold; neighbors knew it, mobile home management knew it, and the police knew it. Search warrants were served, drugs were confiscated, and arrests made, only to have the same activity start up again within a few weeks of the arrests.

Frustration with these types of situations mounted. Neighbors were upset and calls were made from residents to mobile home management and police officials, with concerns for children and overall quality-of-life as major issues. Residents felt that the police weren't paying enough attention to the problems in their neighborhoods, and that management wasn't helping resolve their issues.

Police were also frustrated with the situation. Officers would begin their shifts by wondering how long into the shift they would be before their first call to a mobile home community. Police officers became disappointed when their increasing presence at certain locations yielded no long-term results. This was compounded when an individual was jailed or sent to court and ended up back in the community within weeks or days of being removed.

Analysis:

Department members started to analyze data that was already collected in the police department's computerized records system. This research revealed that not only were increasing numbers of repeat calls-for-service happening in a single mobile home park, but in four of the five mobile home parks in the city. (The fifth mobile home park had a

lower incidence of calls overall, and a much lower incidence of repeat calls. This was believed to be due to a higher level of peer pressure in this particular mobile home community.) This was compounded by similar problems in certain subsidized housing units. Additional information was collected from other city departments, crime prevention meetings with citizen groups, and housing managers.

An analysis of calls-for-service in these areas showed that most calls could be related to a small group of individuals, and most of these calls were of the same types. Additionally, it became apparent that when these "problem" residents chose or were forced by neighborhood pressure to move, they generally moved within the city and the problems would begin again in a new neighborhood. Instead of decreasing calls-for-service or increasing quality of life within the city, the problem merely moved to a new location.

Location specific or individual specific re-calls were found to be a continuing problem that dated back more than 15 years in some residential areas. Those involved generally had one or more of the following factors in common:

- Homes with dependent children.
- Single parent residences.
- Unemployed, or low-income households.
- Drug/alcohol addiction or drug sales in the home.
- Individuals present who don't live in the household.
- + Abusive behavior towards spouse and/or others.

Lakeville Police Officers responded to these incidents on a call-by-call basis. A call for service would come in, officers would be assigned, and the incident would be handled, as

the individual officer deemed appropriate. In most cases, the responding officer would have no idea how many times the police department had been called previously to the residence, and no idea how similar calls there had been handled. The typical "Band-Aid" response created the typical result — calls-for-service continued and the neighborhood residents became more and more frustrated.

In addition to increased call load for dispatchers and patrol, these problems led to increased work for investigators, police records/clerical personnel, social services, and the court system. Other effects from the high call levels included:

- . Decreased coverage by police to other duties within the City of Lakeville.
- Increased risks to law-abiding citizens and police officers.
- Public disturbances.
- Frustration within the affected community that the problems would ever be solved.
- Belief from the communities that the overall quality of life in certain neighborhoods was decreasing.

Response:

As would be expected, different members of the community and the department had varying expectations on how these issues should be resolved. Some members felt that a tougher enforcement policy should be implemented for the entire area where repeat calls were occurring. Some felt that the management of each mobile home park or housing unit should be held responsible for actions on that property. Some members felt that the status quo was the only option available - with each individual officer making the decision based on incident specific criteria. However, several members of the police

department made an active choice to look at the problem from a community policing standpoint to see if a plan could be formed that would impact these calls-for-service.

The project started out with working with the communities that were most strongly affected. This involvement led to increased communication between law enforcement and residents. With the increased communication came a better dialogue on several issues, along with a higher level of trust. These two points, trust and communication, became the cornerstones for the success of CRT (Conflict Resolution Team).

Initially the CRT chose to address the problem in the mobile home communities, since many of the repeat calls-for-service centered at these locations. Management from each mobile home park was contacted, along with the owners of the property (most owners were from out of state). Meetings were arranged between the police department, management, owners, and their attorneys. The police listened to management's concerns, and management listened to the police department's concerns. As a result of these meetings, several priorities were identified:

- Protecting the families and children from those who violate laws.
- Decreasing/eliminating repeat calls-for-service.
- Evicting law violators from residential areas.
- Preventing law violators from becoming residents.
- Holding those who violate the laws accountable for their actions.
- Identifying consequences for unlawful actions.

All participants agreed that we would need to work collectively to have a positive impact on the problem. The first step was to find a course of action that all parties could agree

on and work towards. Ultimately, the group came up with a list of actions we felt would positively impact the quality of life for their mobile home communities:

- Improve screening of applicants for vacancies in the park.
- Keep track of criminal violations committed by residents.
- Keep track of criminal violations by address.
- Work with attorneys to set guidelines to evict residents committing criminal acts.
- Establish a "Crime Free" zone.
- Improve tenant agreements promising a no drug, no violence approach to everyday life.
- Improve and maintain communications between the police and citizens.
- Educate all residents on the efforts being made to make their neighborhoods more livable.
- Educate police officers on a unified response when it comes to dealing with contacts of any type in these areas.
- Assign a specific police officer to each of the mobile home communities to monitor calls-for-service in the communities and meet regularly with management to deal with problem individuals or households.
- Change the focus of calls-for-service from single-incident specific actions involving varying officers, to actions coordinated by an officer responsible for certain neighborhoods.

We determined that if we followed the guidelines above, with an emphasis on communication and consistency, we would have an excellent chance to succeed.

Participants in the planning sessions began their individual work to meet our objectives. At our request, attorneys developed a new application process, which involved screening of applicants by doing background checks for prior criminal activity. Applicants are prohibited from residency in the "crime free" development if they are a convicted felon.

New application documents placed an emphasis on the promise to remain drug and violence free as a condition for moving into the area. Children as well as adults were required to meet this criteria, thus holding parents responsible for the actions of their children.

Management began the process of educating residents in the park about the new expectations in the community. Management warned residents who were not law-abiding that continued behavior would result in eviction. Finally, management followed through with those warnings and began to evict tenants that did not follow park rules.

The police department formed a CRT team with individual officers assigned to each mobile home community. Statistics were compiled monthly on each mobile home park and given to the appropriate officer. CRT officers used those statistics to analyze which households and individuals were causing the most problems, and then forwarded that information to park management in their monthly meetings.

These meetings were also used to arrive at other methods to help park management keep their parks safe. In one park, management worked hard to get their certification as a "Crime Free" community. As part of the mandated actions for certification, the department CRT member, working with management and other city staff, helped install new lighting in areas of the park that had previously been a gathering place for troublesome juveniles.

CRT officers also worked with management in the cumbersome process of evicting those tenants that would not meet the standards of their communities. Additionally, CRT officers took on the task of informing other officers in the department of the problem individuals/homes in each mobile home community, and worked with those officers to design a plan of action on how to consistently deal with those problem residents.

The Conflict Resolution Team had regular meetings where all members could update the rest of the team on the progress in their communities. The meetings were also used to generate ideas on how certain situations could be handled. Members relied on each other to help them solve issues, and they relied on other agencies, which had successfully dealt with some of the same issues we were now facing. The team meetings were a strong tool in helping keep the project on task.

While interest was high at the beginning of the project, the CRT members knew that apathy could easily develop as time passed. Could we keep the interest up among the residents for the long term? Would the attorneys and park owner's hold firm in backing up their on-site managers if the threat of a lawsuit surfaced because someone was evicted for violating their agreement? Could the police department stay consistent over time when it came to enforcement activity in the parks? CRT was committed to the project and felt they were on strong legal ground. The team discussed these concerns and felt if those involved began to feel apathetic, the answer was for the team to work harder at communicating with management, owners and their attorneys, park residents, and police

department members. The team knew it was also important to share their successes and to track what they had accomplished through this program.

Assessment:

CRT began to collect statistical data in the following areas:

- Assaults
- Domestic violence
- Burglaries
- Thefts
- Vehicle thefts
- Damage to property
- Disorderly conduct
- Disturbing the peace
- Drug offenses
- Juvenile offenses
- Suspicion calls

CRT members were encouraged to see that the statistical data provided by the police records system showed a decrease in calls-for-service in the areas that had been targeted by the CRT team. The change in calls-for-service in these areas were easy to interpret since the size of the parks stayed the same during the tracking period, and thus there was no need to adjust for population changes, which remained relatively static.

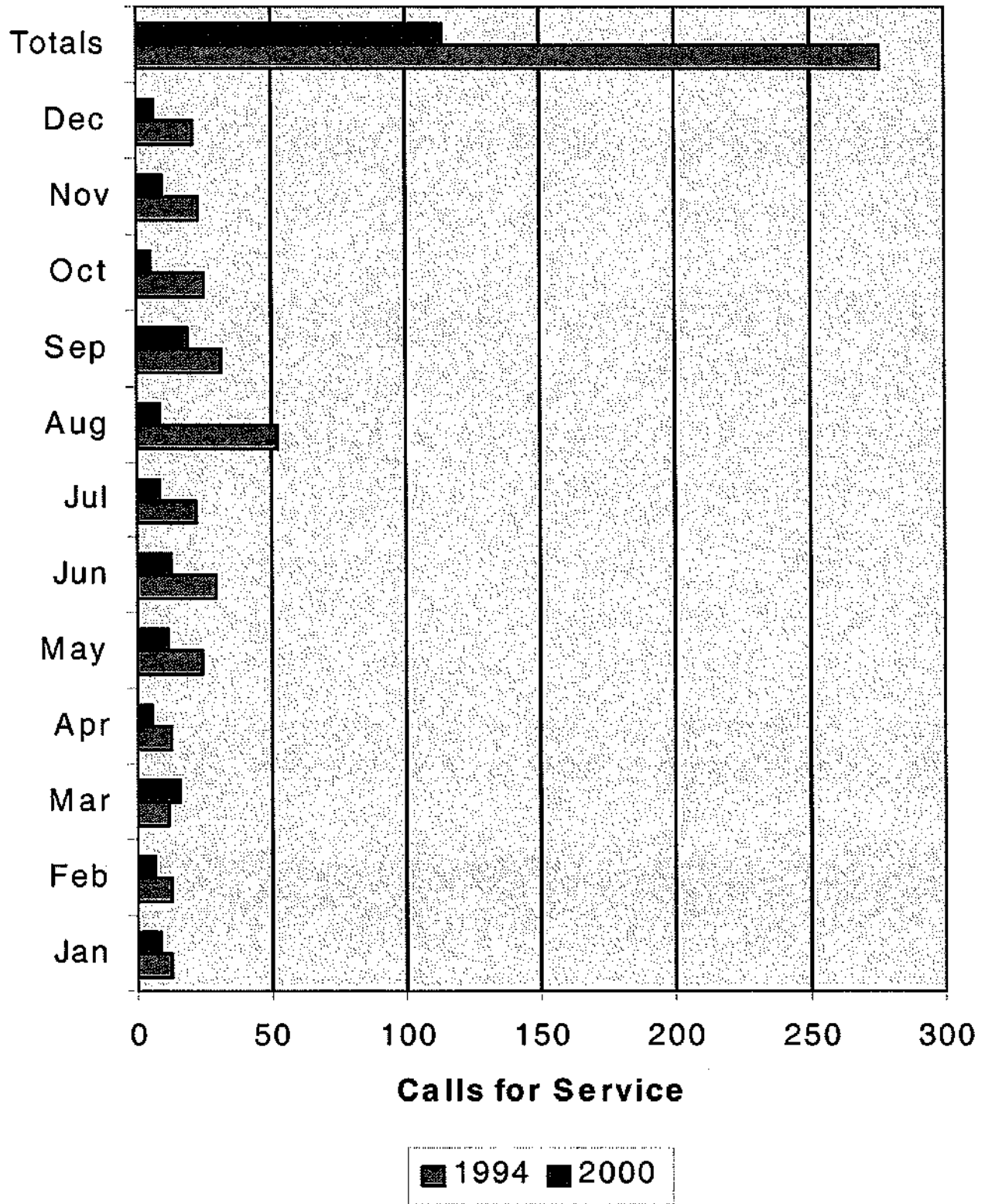
A sample of the statistical data is as follows:

		Calls for service	Evictions over 6 year period	Turndowns over 6 year period
CRT Area # 1 (Ardmor)	1994	286	29	56
	2000	114		
CRT Area # 2 (Countryview)	1994	299	42	98
	2000	225		
CRT Area # 3 (Queen Anne)	1994	82	22	38
	2000	69		
CRT Area # 4 (Northcreek)	1994	81	1	0
	2000	74		

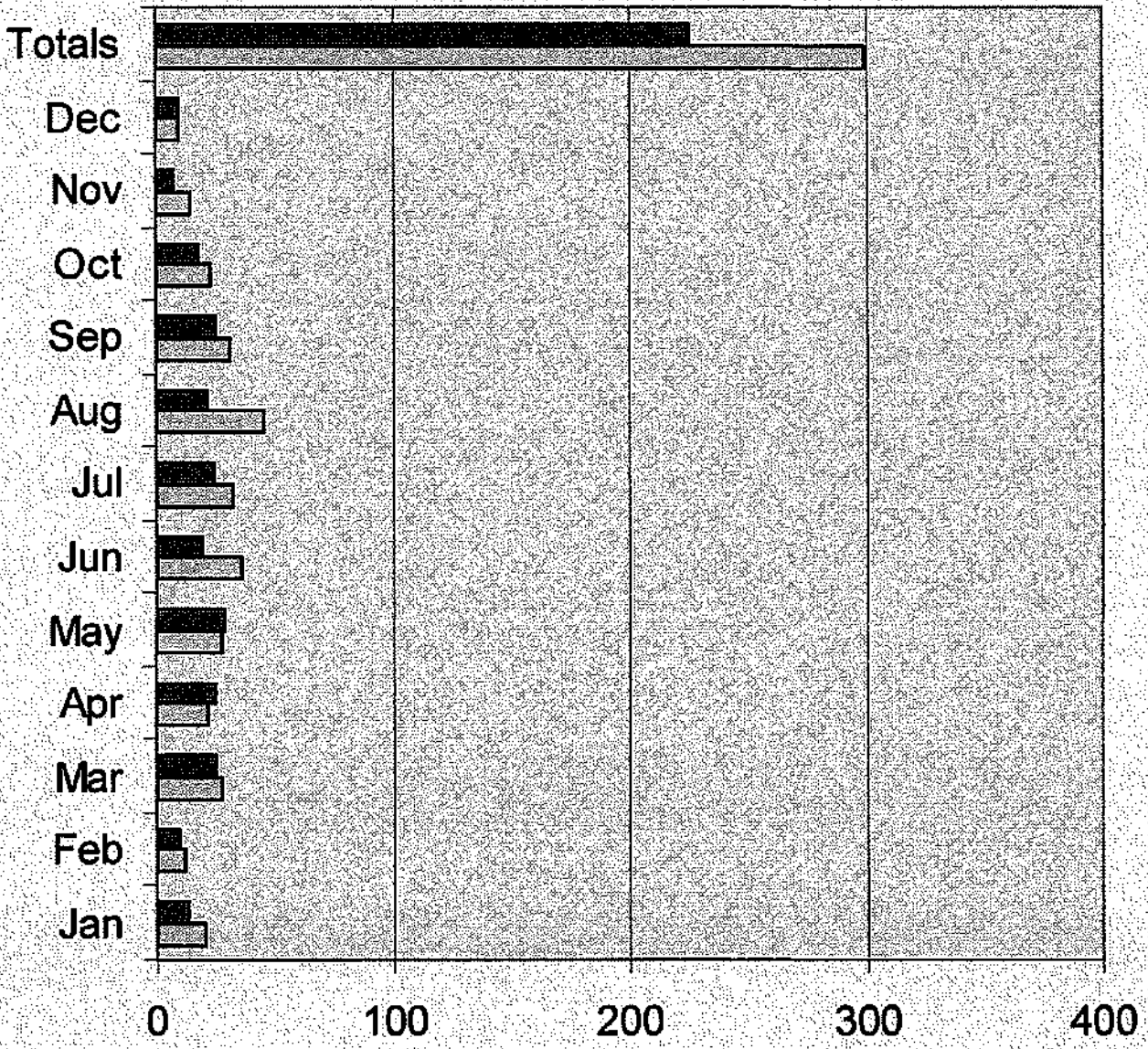
As can be seen by the numbers and the attached charts, a direct correlation between the CRT program and a reduction of overall calls became apparent. The implemented response plans directly affected the number of calls-for-service to which the police were requested to respond. Over the six year period (1994-2000) in which the program was evaluated, there was in most instances a reduction in monthly and annual calls for service. The monthly statistics would fluctuate on occasion, and this was most often related to seasonal changes.

Another result of the CRT effort was the eviction of approximately 42 individuals from one targeted location. These people had violated a criminal law dealing with violence or drugs. With the CRT plan in effect, and the legal support of the park owners,

Ardmor Mobile Home Park



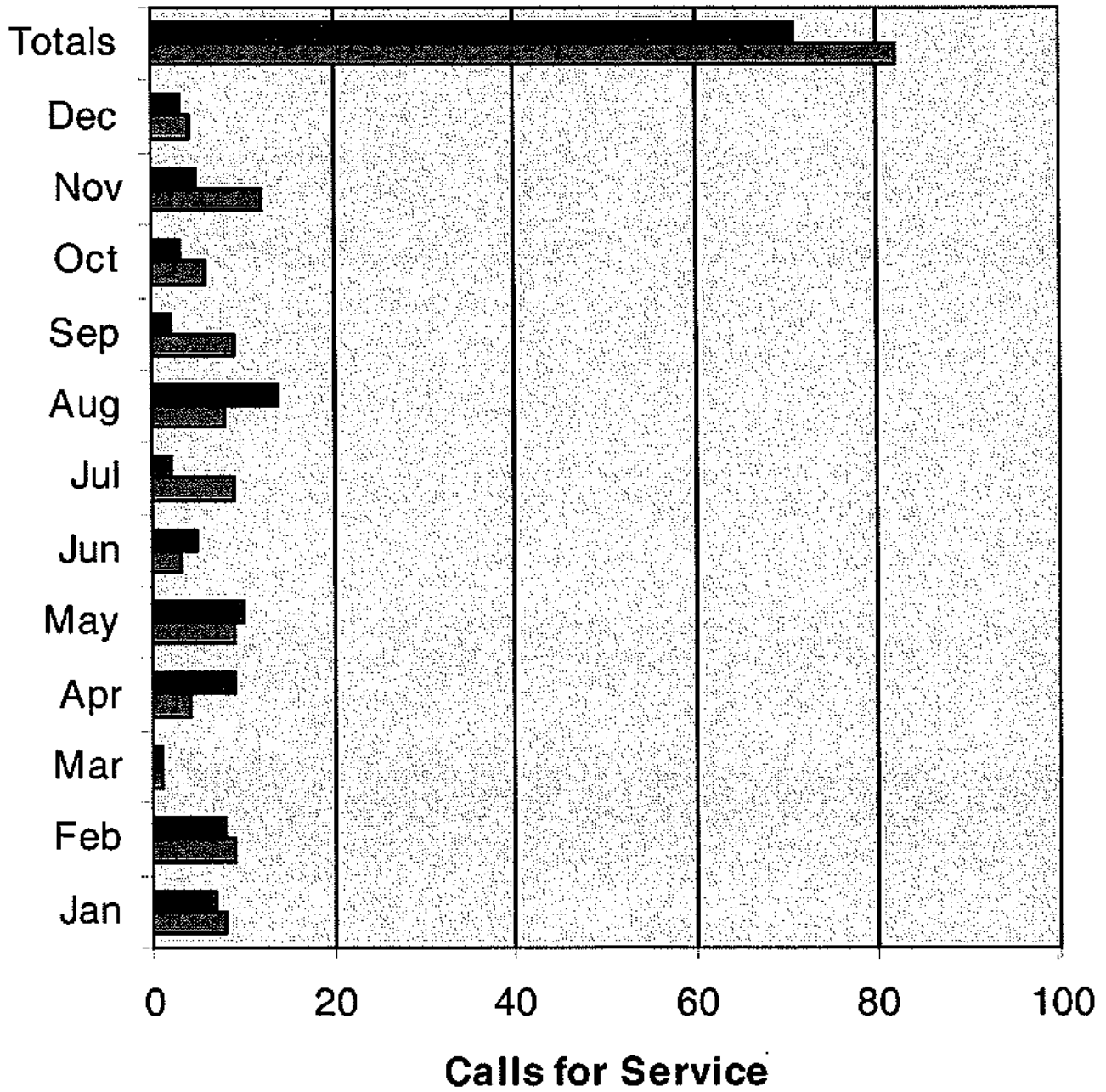
Countryview Mobile Home Community



Calls for Service

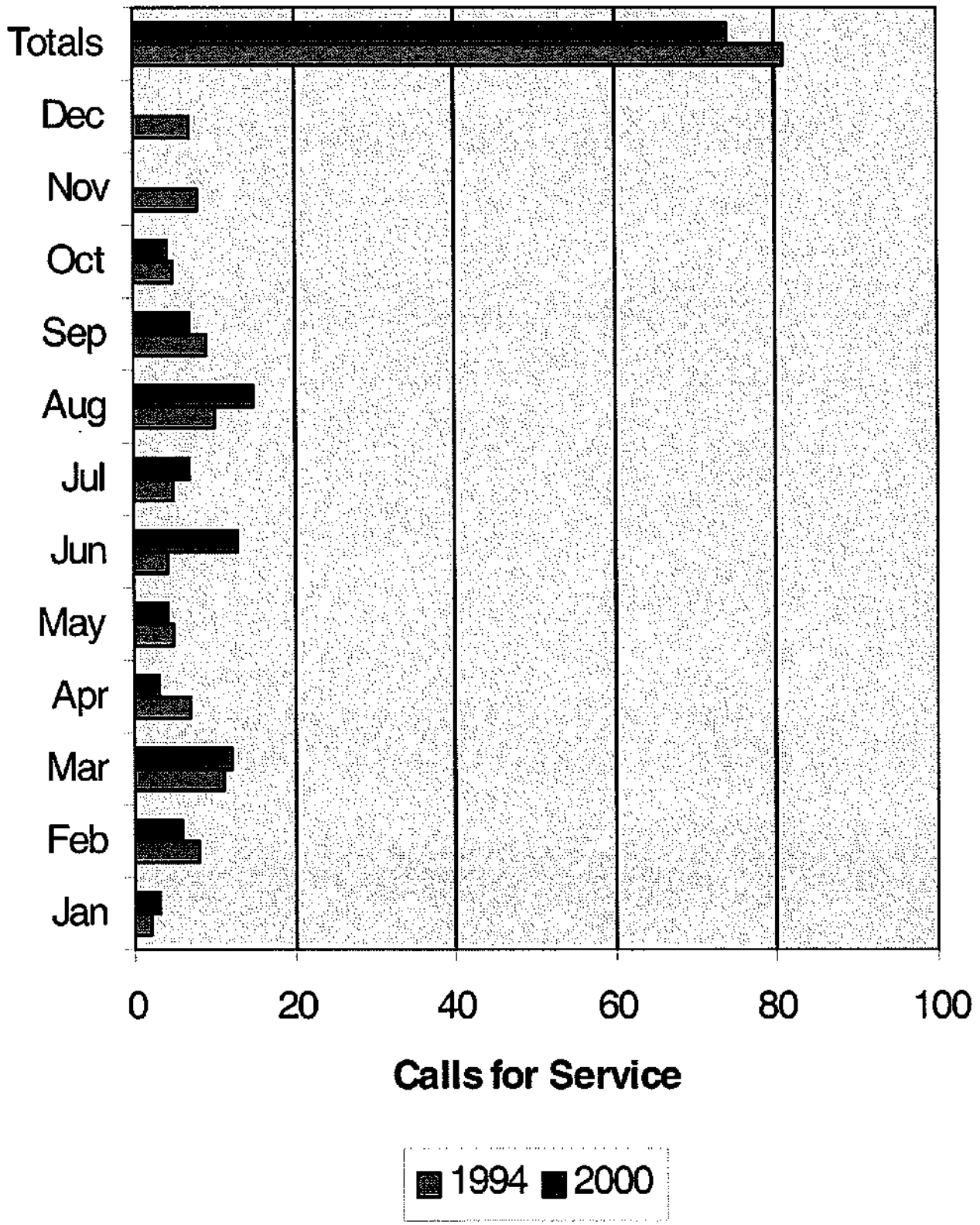


Queen Anne Mobile Home Community

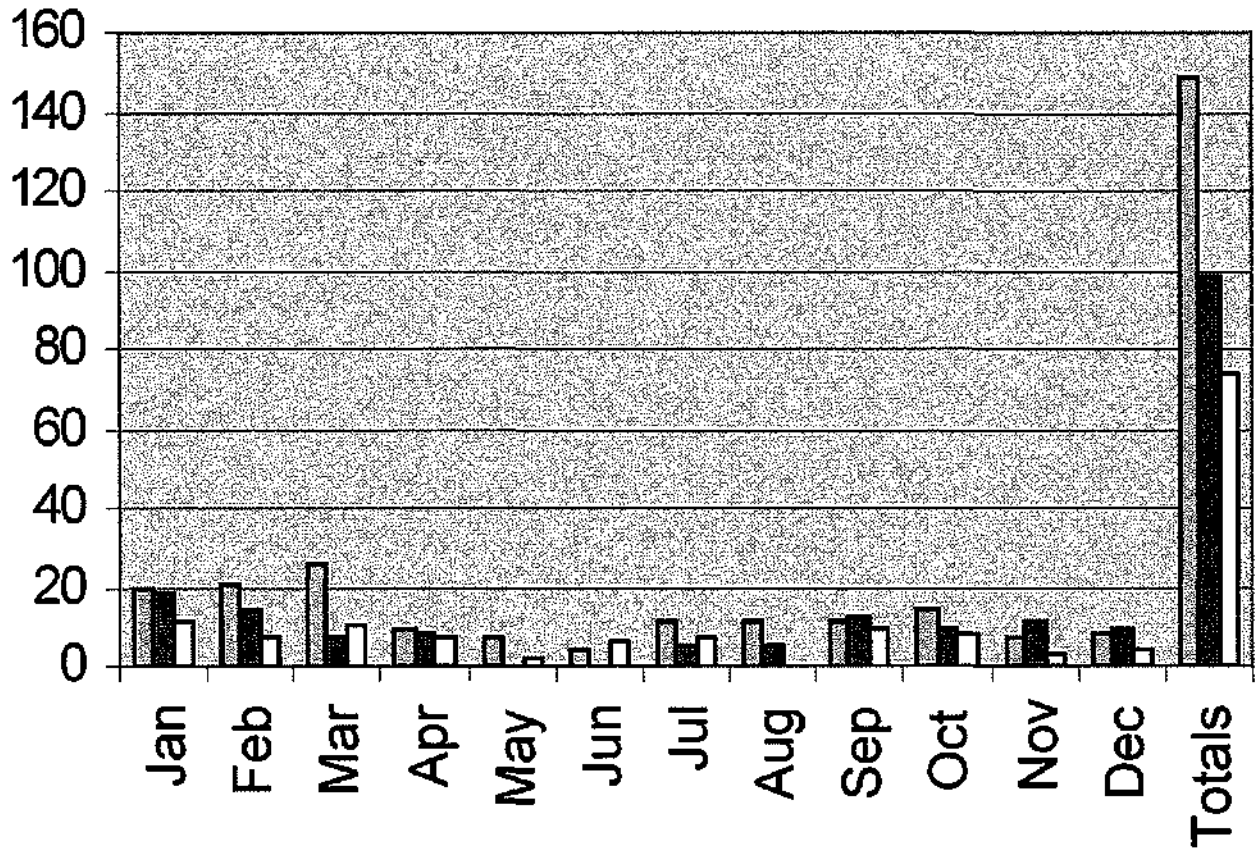


■ 1994 ■ 2000

Northcreek Mobile Home Community



Motel/Hotel Calls for Service



Calls for Service

■ 1998 ■ 1999 □ 2000

management went through the eviction process and the problem person/household was dealt with and removed from the park. As noted above Connelly only had one eviction and zero denials. This was attributed to higher rental prices and rental policies put in place. This was a newer mobile home community than the others in CRT.

We were also able to screen prospective applicants wishing to move into areas covered by CRT. Screening in CRT areas over a six year period led to the refusal of over 190 applicants who had previous records for violating laws. We can only speculate as to the number of problems avoided by screening out these applicants, however, we're sure that this made a huge impact on over-all calls-for-service.

While quantitative analysis was used with the statistical data, we also judged our success through some qualitative criteria. Some of these measures were:

- Relationships between the police and park management had improved.
- Officers no longer avoided area assignments that would include mobile home communities.
- Mobile home community residents told police and other city officials about a new feeling of safety in their communities.
- Other department officers volunteered to become part of the Conflict Resolution Team and involve other locations in the city in the CRT plan.

The Conflict Resolution Team gradually expanded to include subsidized housing areas, area motels/hotels, and a new movie complex built within the city limits. Statistical data showed that calls-for-service at these locations also were reduced as CRT members worked with management to resolve issues. The attached charts show some of the statistical successes in these areas also.

The implementation of CRT was not without problems. Most of these related to updating current contacts and sharing the information police had with the civilian managers of the CRT areas. Some managers moved away without contacting their CRT representative or advising the new manager of the program. This would cause some delay in monitoring CRT areas until we could bring the new manager up-to-date on the CRT project. In some cases, we needed to start from the beginning in educating the new management on the benefits of the CRT program and its affects on the quality of life in their area.

We also found several managers in the project areas who became frustrated when they could not get specific information from the police department on a person or vehicle causing problems in their area. Minnesota has some very specific data privacy laws and in some cases, the department's data privacy expert could not release specific information to park management. While this was our most significant problem for a while, we did find a resolution for it. We worked with the police department's attorney and found that we could give out some of the information under certain conditions, one of which was to have the residents sign release forms at the time of application. This change in the application process made it easier for management to monitor their problem tenants.

Our statistics show that neighborhoods and communities with active CRT representation have been successful in keeping problem households or individuals to a minimum. While all locations occasionally have higher calls for service, the specific problems are addressed much more quickly because of the CRT program and the willingness of the management to address these concerns immediately. As a result, increases in calls to some locations may occur, but they are quickly resolved. The CRT program has also found that increased call load to a specific address can quickly be resolved by our commitment to communication with management in these locations. Maintenance of the program in the form of monthly meetings with management, a specific officer for management to contact when there are problems, and coordination between that CRT representative and patrol officers who work the area, led to more results with less time devoted to any one area.

The results of our CRT efforts, in some cases, displaced the problem instead of correcting it. The displacement occurred to adjoining cities, or in some cases neighboring states. We never intended for the CRT program to be an answer for all problems, or to solve individual psychological or community social problems. Our intent for the CRT program was to resolve issues with repeat calls at specified locations and to encourage community members to become involved in resolving problems in their areas.

The countless hundreds of hours spent on identifying, and analyzing information, then implementing the CRT plan has well been worth the effort. CRT is a solid program that the entire community can depend on to work, stopping a problem before it gets out of

hand. Even though hundreds of hours were spent on CRT we know it isn't anywhere near the number of hours we would have spent doing the "business as usual" approach.

The Conflict Resolution Team is and will remain a huge asset for the men and women of the Lakeville Police Department and the city we serve.

Lakeville Police Departments

Conflict Resolution Team

Agency and Officer information:

Lakeville Police Departments Conflict Resolution Team started with several officers noting the problem and two officers developing the concept. Although no officers received any formal training prior to the program starting, one officer was attending a Masters Class and used what he was learning to help spark the project.

Without added incentive other than expanding personal knowledge officers signed on to make a difference for the betterment of the community they serve. This added knowledge helped in overall self-improvement in officer's professional and private lives.

Officers had no manuals or set guidelines the first few years of the program, but as the months and years went on a set procedure was established and followed for future egresses into other project areas.

The biggest problem encountered was in the data privacy area. Due to Minnesota laws some vital information police had could not be shared with civilian project managers until residents of project areas completed release forms.

Our biggest resource expenditure was time. Time away from other duties which officers should have been working on. We made up for manpower loses by having officers that were willing to go the extra mile. They were willing to stay late to attend just one more meeting. Officers were willing to contribute to the team effort to solve a common problem. At times it required juggling shifts or working several hours of overtime to devote the necessary time to the CRT project and duty responsibilities.

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