

# **SAVANNAH IMPACT**

# **PROGRAM**

A problem Oriented Policing

project # 03045002

03-41

**2003 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD  
EXCELLENCE IN  
PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING**

**SAVANNAH IMPACT PROGRAM  
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA**

**MAY 2003**



**CITY OF SAVANNAH • Department of Police**  
P.O. Box 8032 • Savannah, Georgia 31412

April 28, 2003

Police Executive Research Forum  
Attn: Herman Goldstein Award  
1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Suite 930  
Washington, D. C. 20036

Dear Sirs:

It is with great pride that I nominate the Savannah Impact Program for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing. We have developed this program from its initial concept to its present success as a fully functional offender reentry program.

The Savannah Impact Program's (SIP) approach to reducing recidivism is identification and confrontation of serious offenders' core problems of poor education, lack of job skills, substance abuse and lack of community resources. The program combines all the necessary resources into a single location, thereby eliminating the hurdle of accessibility. The Savannah Impact Program is unique and it can now be considered an successful prototype.

The Savannah Impact Program supervises the highest risk offenders in our city. Yet, because of the SIP, these offenders continue to have a high employment rate and low drug abuse rate. These high-risk offenders have performed better than their counterparts under conventional supervision. As a result, revocations for SIP parolees are 14%, 8% for SIP probationers, and 24% for SIP juveniles. These numbers are markedly lower than both the local and national averages. Violent crime has been, and is still, declining in the City of Savannah. Part of this success is obviously due to the efforts of the Savannah Impact Program and its staff. This program is a paradigm of Problem Oriented Policing.

Sincerely,

Dan Flynn  
Chief of Police

daj

# SAVANNAH IMPACT PROGRAM

A Problem Oriented Policing

Project:

2003 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN  
PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING  
SAVANNAH IMPACT PROGRAM

Summary

Beginning in the late 1990's, the City of Savannah, Georgia (population 131,510) experienced an increase in violent crime especially crime committed by adult and juvenile repeat offenders on probation or parole. The Savannah Police Department (SPD) had previously adopted (October 1, 1991) a Community Oriented Policing strategy which included a Problem Oriented Policing component. SPD recognized that violent criminality of any type is a substantive community concern. An analysis of offender data compiled by Savannah's Crime Control Collaborative data confirmed anecdotal information from police officers and other law enforcement personnel in the field: interdiction is needed to direct corrective measures on the core problems afflicting offenders— substance abuse, poor education, lack of job skills - with more effective sanctions to protect public safety and more effective support for offenders who want to avoid recidivism.

The response to this problem analysis was a decision by the Savannah City Council, City Manager, Police Chief and others to develop the Savannah Impact Program (**SIP**) to address *throughout the city all* of the core problems afflicting offenders. A partial program focusing only on some parts of the problem will produce only partial results. However, in Georgia, city governments are not responsible for parole, probation or general education. A collaborative among SPD, Chatham County Adult Education, State Board of Pardons and Parole and the Georgia Department of Corrections, Juvenile Justice and Labor was created in July 2001 using \$539,000 in State funding for additional State personnel to be assigned to SIP and \$500,000 from the City of Savannah for police officers, administrative staff, **operating/startup** supplies, office space and vehicles.

An assessment of results from the SIP is encouraging. Through December 2002, the 26 staff

members supervised 1,080 cases. Although the SIP receives only sentenced offenders who have been assessed as high risk for violent behavior and/or a history of drug usage, the revocation rate for parolees was only 14%, for probationers, 8% and for juveniles, 23%. By comparison, the combined revocation rate for probationers and parolees in Chatham County is 39%. Only 15% of random and scheduled drug tests were returned positive and 83% of all adults in the program were employed. **Most importantly, violent crime in Savannah has been reduced by 5.7% from 2000 to 2002 and is down by 30.4% so far in 2003 (through March).**

Further, the model of financial and operational collaboration shown among local and state law enforcement agencies, job training and educational entities, and private substance abuse treatment providers can be replicated in other jurisdictions.

**Problem Scanning**

After several years of declining violent crime in Savannah, in 1999 the number of incidences of violent crime began to move upward increasing 22.4% from 1998 to 2001. This increase was a substantive community concern.

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Homicide	29	27	21	25	29	42	35	26	34
Rape	76	76	63	61	62	60	68	64	56
Commercial Robbery	122	125	121	107	88	135	163	175	193
Street Robbery	749	715	726	512	481	523	587	519	513
Aggravated Assault	526	447	484	467	448	489	479	516	460
<b>Total Part I Violent Crime</b>			1,415					1,471	1,356

A large portion of the violent crime in Savannah - and elsewhere in Georgia ~ is committed by repetitive offenders. They represent a violent subculture who are often involved in drug trade and are substance abusers themselves. They often participate in gangs or gang-like activity and repeatedly commit violent crimes and property crimes. Most of these offenders have had previous encounters with the criminal justice system and may be on probation or parole.

In April 2003, in Chatham County, more than 4,000 people were on active felony probation imposed by a court. An additional 1,093 were on unsupervised status and 1,100 were on parole. In fact, probation<sup>1</sup> serves as the disposition most often imposed by the courts. Though they are expected to abide by the rules of probation or other special conditions of supervision, the probationers' range of freedom is comparable to that enjoyed by the citizenry at large. This freedom means they may move about their neighborhoods, shop, go to work and pursue other activities that form the fabric of daily living. To remain out of jail, the majority of probationers are ordered by the courts to get substance abuse counseling, abide by a curfew, perform community service or meet other such **specific** conditions. Regrettably, many probationers do not comply with these terms, and nationally only a **fifth** of those who

violate their sentences ever go to jail for noncompliance. Worse yet, in addition to those who don't comply with orders are those who don't even stay in contact with probation officers - the probation absconders. Locally, more than 20% of probationers have an outstanding warrant for probation violation and are being sought.

In spite of the recognized potential for committing violent crimes, due to very large case loads among parole and probation officers, these violent offenders were not routinely subject to intensive supervision nor were they provided specific drug treatment, education or job training programs.

Criminal history data from the Savannah Police Department (SPD), the Chatham County Police Department and the District Attorney's Office verified that the increase in violent crime in the community was largely attributed to a relatively small number of repeat offenders who commit a hugely disproportionate number of crimes. Often these offenders are on probation for previous offenses or are on parole following a period of incarceration. Of this number, approximately 10% are prone to further violent behavior: that is, they have a previous violent offense and are under 30 years old. These offenders share a profile of dysfunction and very low achievement. In a study of adult offenders, the Savannah Crime Control Collaborative reported that 87% of offenders had less than a high school education. In fact, 68% tested below an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level and 83% tested below an 8<sup>th</sup> grade math level; 68% were unemployed at the time of the offense. Abuse of drugs and alcohol is rampant with 38% reporting addiction. Juvenile offenders are characterized by parental neglect/abandonment, cause disruption in school, substance abuse and a family history of encounters with the criminal justice system<sup>2</sup>.

The Crime Control Collaborative data confirmed the anecdotal information obtained from police officers and other law enforcement personnel in the field: interdiction is needed to direct corrective measures on the core problems afflicting offenders— substance abuse, poor education and lack of job skills — with more effective sanctions and more effective support for offenders who want



to avoid recidivism. Neither the public nor the offender is helped, if for example, a parolee is closely monitored for infractions of parole conditions, but is given no assistance to obtain job skills. The offender would in all likelihood return to criminal behavior. The Savannah City Manager working with SPD staff, local mental health/ substance abuse service providers and the Weed & Seed Policy Board decided that to be effective, a strategy to fight violent crime must provide *real long term* improvements to public safety. To achieve this goal, the strategy must address *all* of the core problems afflicting offenders. A partial program focusing only on some parts of the problem will produce only partial results. **The specific goal identified was: Protect the public from those probationers and parolees who willfully violate terms of their probation and who commit crimes while on community supervision.** Although rehabilitation of offenders is sought, the most important measurable objective of the SIP is the violent crime rate in the community.

The challenge was to develop a crime fighting strategy that is balanced between strong measures such as revocation of parole or probation and incarceration of offenders with other means to change the behavior of offenders and provide them marketable skills to reduce the number of repetitive offenses. There is also a need to support those probationers who deserve a second chance at building a sustainable crime-free, economically independent life.

### **Problem Analysis**

The first step in the development of a crime fighting strategy focusing on violent probationers and parolees was to ascertain those common characteristics of the target population that could be addressed in a rehabilitation program. The portrait of repetitive offenders presented in the previous section was verified in a report prepared by the Savannah Police Department <sup>3</sup>which showed that:

- 74.1 % of aggravated assault offenders have committed some type of crime before.
- 55.5% of aggravated assault offenders have previously committed some type of violent crime.
- 18.5% of aggravated assault offenders have previously committed an aggravated assault.

- 38.5% of simple assault offenders have previously committed a simple assault.
- 92.3% of homicide offenders and/or suspects have been previously involved in some type of crime as a suspect or arrestee.
- Approximately 74% of violent offenders are regular drug users.
- Those who "get drunk" at least once a month are 30% more likely to commit an act of violence than those who use alcohol recreationally.
- Those who use marijuana regularly are 3 times more likely to commit an act of violence than those who use alcohol recreationally.
- Those who use cocaine regularly are 5 times more likely to commit an act of violence than those who use alcohol recreationally.
- Between 25% and 42% of violent offenders are under the influence of controlled substances at the time of their offense.
- Between 20% and 32% of violent offenders are under the influence of alcohol at the time of their offense.
- Between 33% and 57% of violent offenders were raised in households without a father.
- 80% of violent offenders were unmarried at the time of their crime.
- Over 80 % of aggravated assault and homicide offenders did not complete high school.
- Over 80 % of aggravated assault and homicide offenders did not have full time jobs at the time of their crime.
- 45% of inmates in Georgia prisons read at a sixth grade level or below.
- Nationally, about 66% of probationers commit another crime within three years of their sentence and many of these crimes are serious<sup>4</sup>.

These data reveal several characteristics of offenders that **must** be addressed in a successful crime fighting strategy. First, three-quarters of violent offenders are regular drug users and abuse of controlled

substances and alcohol play important roles in other crimes. Second, many adult offenders are poorly educated and have limited job skills and job experience. Often they are unemployed, uneducated and live on the fringes of society.

The characteristics of the offending population revealed by the data confirmed a common portrait of violent criminals such as, substance abusers, products of dysfunctional families, poorly educated and likely to be repeat offenders. The strategy developed in response to this portrait of offenders is presented in the following section.

### Response

When the City of Savannah decided to address the range of core problems afflicting violent offenders, it was necessary to involve agencies from other levels of government. That is, parole of prisoners is handled by the Georgia Pardons and Parole Board; probation is handled by the court system and the Georgia Department of Corrections; job training is the function of the Georgia Department of Labor (although the City has separate job training programs) and substance abuse treatment is provided by quasi-public community mental health centers and by private counselors. In late 1999, Savannah's City Council proposed to our legislative delegation to the Georgia General Assembly a collaboration of local and State agencies to be known as the Savannah Impact Program (SIP). The goals of the Savannah Impact program are:

- Reduce repetitive criminality especially those violent crimes committed by persons on probation or parole;
- Change the behavior of young offenders to steer them away from a life of crime through substance abuse treatment, general education and job training;
  
- Reduce long term unemployment by assisting adult offenders obtain the skills and job experience

needed for secure, long term employment.

In 2000, the Georgia General Assembly agreed to support the SIP by providing \$539,000 for additional personnel in Pardons & Parole, the Departments of Labor, Corrections and Juvenile Justice. The City of Savannah agreed to assign five police officers to SIP, provide a director, administrative support and a building. **The SIP became operational on July 1, 2001.** In FY 2003, the budget for the program is \$1.1 million consisting of a \$607,000 contribution from the City of Savannah and approximately \$500,000 from the State of Georgia for personnel.

The SIP receives only sentenced offenders who have been assessed as high-risk for violent behavior and/or a history of drug usage. The SIP is designed to overcome the obstacles - substance abuse, lack of effective supervision, lack of education and job skills - that hinder reintegration of these offenders into the community. To protect the public, intensive supervision is provided by a team of probation officers, parole officers and city police officers using home checks, curfew checks and electronic monitoring. The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder are summarized in the following table.

Agency	Responsibility
Savannah Police Dept	Supervision of parolees/ probationers & enforcement of warrants. Executive Director and administrative support
Georgia Dept of Corrections	Supervision of probationers
State Board of Pardons & Parole	Supervision of parolees
Georgia Dept of Labor	Job training and job placement
Georgia Dept of Juvenile Justice	Supervision of juvenile probationers/parolees
Chatham County Adult Education	Education for General Equivalency Diploma (GED)
Private service providers	Substance abuse treatment

An organization chart is included in the supporting documents.

A key element of the SIP is Intensive Supervision of Probationers and Parolees. The rationale here is that public safety is the paramount objective for any supervision program. For probation to be

effective, probationers must be held accountable for their actions. All conditions of probation or parole must be enforced and all violations must be responded to in a timely fashion. Response to violations must be swift and sure. To achieve these accountability standards several initiatives have been implemented:

- A new Probation/Parole Unit was established in Savannah. This unit consists of one Supervisor, four Probation Officers and three Parole Officers who direct their activities to the Maximum Supervision/High Risk offenders: approximately 600 in Savannah. To provide intensive case management and in-field monitoring, the case load per officer is limited.
- The new unit is organizationally part of the existing Savannah offices of the Georgia Department of Corrections and the State Board of Pardons and Parole. But to focus maximum attention on possible repetitive offenders and to further develop partnerships among agencies, the unit is headquartered with the SIP and operates closely with the Savannah Police Department to monitor these high-risk probationers and parolees.
- Probation/Parole officers are paired with SPD officers so they can initiate unannounced home visits to probationers/parolees. Many of the probationers/ parolees are very dangerous individuals. Since the Officers look for violations such as firearms, drugs and contraband that may constitute violations, the pairing enhances safety for the Officers while increasing effectiveness of supervision.

The second component of the SIP is Building Better Lives. Many probationers and parolees deserve a second chance to get their lives straightened out. Probation all too often fails to help probationers avoid drugs, obtain substance abuse treatment, learn to read or learn job skills. The SIP uses intensive case management to link probationers and parolees with drug counseling, appropriate education programs and to marketable job skills training. The Georgia Department of Labor provides a Labor Specialist to the SIP. He/she provides information to prospective employers and networks with

businesses in the community to increase the number and range of job openings for offenders commensurate with their skills. In addition, for individual clients, the Labor Specialist conducts:

- In-depth interviewing, evaluation and diagnostic assessment
- Development of Individualized Employment Plan
- Individual or group career counseling
- Service coordination or case management
- Basic workforce readiness, pre-vocational skills
- Out-of-area job search, relocation assistance
- Internships, work experience
- Referrals to training
- Intensive job development

Also, two teachers from the Chatham County Adult Education Program have been assigned to the SIP. They meet with program participants three nights a week to pursue a GED. *Class attendance is mandatory as part of the offender's probation/parole requirement.*

The **substance abuse treatment** program offered by the SIP provides the offender the opportunity to change his/her life and break the cycle of abuse and criminal activity. These services are provided in an intensive outpatient setting **and participation is mandatory as a condition of the offender's parole/probation.** Drug testing is frequent in a scheduled and random manner.

The SIP substance abuse program's curriculum is based on the "What Works" literature and adheres to the National Institute of Drug Abuse principles of effective treatment<sup>5</sup>. The program utilizes the cognitive behavioral theory approach to treatment with emphasis on the 12-step program of abstinence and change leading to recovery. The nine month treatment program includes drug/alcohol group therapy, individual counseling and case management together with other resources. The five stages of treatment begin with stabilization for new participants progressing through four stages of treatment and

supervision, each stage depending on the level of success of the previous stage.

To provide administrative oversight of the SIP programs, a single point of contact, compliance with performance measures and to ensure accountability, a Director and two clerical staff were hired by the City of Savannah.

Prior to implementation of the SIP, on average, a parole/probation officer managed between 150 to 200 cases; a workload that did not permit intensive supervision. In the SIP, the workload is no more than 50 cases per officer and, by partnering with a Savannah police officer, intensive 24/7 supervision is the norm.

### Assessment

In the scanning portion of the POP analysis, the most important measurable objective identified was the violent crime rate in Savannah. **Violent crime in Savannah has been reduced by 5.7% from 2000 to 2002 and is down by 30.4% so far in 2003 (through March).** The response plan has had a significant effect on the problem of violent crime in the city. Other objectives were also achieved.

- Intensive supervision of probationers and paroles can change behavior of those persons supervised. The 2002 Production Report included in the supporting documents show that revocations were only 14% for parolees, 8% for probationers and 24% for juveniles. These numbers are significantly lower than national averages.
- In the Building Better Lives component, job training and substance abuse treatment programs can have a positive effect on even violence prone offenders. In 2002, 83% of adult participants in the SIP were employed as were 50% of juveniles (some were in school). In comparison, in Georgia 76% of probationers are employed and only 65% in Chatham County. For parolees, 62% were employed statewide and 82% in Chatham County.

The SIP demonstrated that POP is an effective means of getting at the root causes of crime. Herman Goldstein stated, "the first step in problem-oriented policing is to move beyond just handling

incidents....it requires they (the police) take a more in-depth interest in incidents by acquainting themselves with some of the conditions and factors that give rise to them<sup>6</sup>." The SIP strives to reduce violent crime in the city and to reduce recidivism by focusing directly on the conditions and factors which give rise to crime; i.e., substance abuse, poor education and poor job skills. Goldstein also states that problem oriented policing stresses solving problems - identifying them, analyzing them, and developing creative, innovative responses that eliminate or reduce them<sup>7</sup>. The collaborative created to deal with violence prone offenders in Savannah was an innovative program on several levels. It demonstrated:

- In a collaborative of local and state agencies, potential problems of parity among officers from different agencies and of financial accountability of the program can be avoided if responsibilities of each agency are clearly delineated in a Memorandum of Agreement and if each agency maintains separate financial and personnel systems. Officers assigned to the SIP receive all pay and benefits of their "home" agency.
- As the primary beneficiary of the SIP, the City of Savannah recognized that it had additional responsibilities to support the program. In 2003, the City will contribute \$607,678 to the program and will purchase a building for its use at a cost of \$675,000 of which \$370,000 is from a federal grant and \$305,000 from the City. The response plan indicates that a continuing effort will be needed to maintain the results achieved so far. The City is committed to the SIP.

The response to the problem of violent crime in Savannah could have been improved by expanding the number of clients receiving substance abuse treatment, especially the number of juveniles. Grant applications have been submitted to expand the juvenile treatment program. The program focuses on intensively supervised offenders who cannot change address without approval, so there was no concern about displacement of the problem.

### **Agency and Officer Information**

The proposal for a collaborative among local and state agencies for reintegration of high risk



offenders was introduced to City Council by City Manager, Michael Brown. The formation and implementation of the SIP was the responsibility of SIP Director Keith Vermillion; Joe Califero, Georgia Department of Corrections; Jay Lacienski, State Board of Pardons and Parole; Diane Fitch, Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice; and Cecil Wilkerson of the Georgia Department of Labor. Vermillion selected five Savannah police officers to serve in SIP. Parole and probation officers were transferred to the SIP. Chatham County Adult Education provided GED teachers and the for-profit company, Southern Crescent, was contracted to provide substance abuse treatment.

Problem Oriented Policing and Community Oriented Policing are an integral part of training at SPD. All SIP officers must have completed several blocks of this training. A public ceremony is held for all officers who complete a POP project. They are also awarded a certificate and a pin. There is public recognition through media coverage.

A number of resources and guidelines were used both in training SPD officers in POP and in developing the SIP. Dr. Vance McLaughlin, Director of Training for SPD co-authored *Problem-Oriented Policing: Assessing the Process*<sup>8</sup> which has examples of successful SPD POP projects and *Training for Community Oriented Policing*<sup>9</sup> which describes actual training modules used in COP. *Problem -Oriented Policing* by Herman Goldstein provided direction to the POP strategies developed by SPD.

The POP model used in the SIP showed that the increase in violent crime in the late 1990's in Savannah was due to a small number of repeat offenders already under supervision through probation or parole. The common characteristics of these offenders were dysfunctional families, a lack of education, lack of job skills and substance abuse.

The City of Savannah created the program and covers the cost of a director, two administrative support staff, one police sergeant, five police officers, 15 vehicles, the lease and overhead for an 8,000 sq. ft. building. The City also contracted with Southern Crescent, a private company, for substance abuse counseling. The Department of Corrections contributed four Probation Officers and one supervisor. State

Board of Pardons and Parole contributed three Parole Officers. Georgia. Department of Juvenile Justice provided two Probation Officers. Chatham County Adult Education provided two GED teachers and Georgia Department of Labor contributed one specialist to the program. Total 2003 budget for the SIP is \$1.1 million.

Project Contact Person

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kvermillion@ci.savannah.ga.us

1. Probation is a court imposed criminal sentence that, subject to stated conditions, releases a convicted person into the community instead of sending the criminal to jail or prison. Parole is the release of a prisoner from imprisonment before the full sentence has been served. Parole is usually granted for good behavior on the condition that the parolee regularly report to a supervising officer for a specified period.

2. Crime Control Collaborative, *Offender and Agency Profiles*, Savannah, 1994

3. Savannah Police Department, *Violence Reduction Plan: A Cooperative Effort to Combat Violence in Savannah*, August 2000

4. "Broken Windows" Probation: The Next Step in Fighting Crime, American Probation and Parole Association, in *Civic Report*, August 1999

5. National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research Based Guide*, Washington, D.C. 1999

6. Goldstein, Herman (1990). *Problem-Oriented Policing*, New York, McGraw-Hill, p.33

7. Ibid. P. 163-164

8. McLaughlin, C.V. & Donahue, M.E. (1997). Problem-Oriented Policing: Assessing the Process. *The Justice Professional*, 10,47-59

9. McLaughlin, V. & Donahue, M. (1995) Training for Community Oriented Policing, in *Community Policing*, edited by Kratcoski, P. and Dukes, D., Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing, 125-138.

# Savannah Impact Program

Documentation

## Savannah Impact Program



MOST WANTED  
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### The Savannah Impact Program *"An Intensive Probation/Parole Supervision, Juvenile Outreach & Offender Employment Program"*



The mission of the **Savannah Impact Program** is to protect the public from high-risk offenders (adult & youth) who are on parole/probation through a collaborative community corrections program with State and local Agencies by means of intense supervision, substance abuse counseling, and support programs to enhance the offender's reentry into the community.

#### Goals

- To reduce recidivism committed by high-risk offenders who are supervised by the Savannah Impact Program.
- To maintain a continuum of supervision prior to release from a secured facility back into the community through intense supervision and support programs by addressing the individual needs of the offender.
- To provide the opportunity and resources to re-direct their lives into law abiding paths.
- To support those high-risk offenders who deserve a second chance at building a sustainable crime-free, economically independent life through education, training and skills programs, and employment opportunities.

Once the offender's educational needs are identified, the Labor Specialist are consulted to identify training programs that are matched to the individuals skill level. Additionally, the Labor Specialist review training programs with the demands of an ever-changing economy, and to collaborate with employers to help design and shape curriculum. The **Savannah Impact Program** intends to prepare offenders for the workplace by having a holistic educational curriculum that is a bridge between the anti-achievement culture and learning deficits of offenders and the skills, behaviors and attitudes necessary to succeed.

For more information  
Contact Program Director Keith Vermillion  
912-651-4350



SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS ON the WES

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## Savannah Impact finally has a home

*Work is being completed on downtown building which will house the city's newest crime-fighting initiative.*

By [Paula Reed Ward](#)  
[Savannah Morning News](#)

Just a month ago, the 10,000-square-foot building was filled with dead roaches, musty carpet and not a lot of promise.



Keith Vermillion, Director of the Savannah Impact program, talks about the program as he stands in the building being renovated that will house the project.

—Bob Morris/Savannah Morning News

But by the end of September, the city of Savannah will have placed a great deal of hope in that building and the people that will work in it.

Savannah Impact, a program designed to rehabilitate the worst criminal offenders in the city, is in the process of moving into the brick building at Oglethorpe Avenue and Drayton Street.

Over the last few weeks, city employees have been cleaning out the building. The old carpet has been removed, a new wall has been constructed in what will be the lobby, and the bathroom is being made handicapped accessible.



"This is a long time getting here," said Keith Vermillion, who will head the program.

The plans for Impact have been in the works for several months, but one of

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The building at Oglethorpe Ave. and Drayton St. that will house the Savannah Impact program.

—Bob Morris/Savannah Morning News

facility, the police department and the jail.

"This is an ideal building for what we want to do," he said.

Despite that, Vermillion said, the building at Oglethorpe and Drayton will not be Impact's permanent home.

The city is renting it — at \$4,000 per month ~ with a six-month lease, continuing month-to-month after that.

The reason, Vermillion said, is that city officials want to buy their own building eventually.

But until then, the only sign of the building's older style is the rust-colored carpet covering the walls heading up the steps.

There are three interview rooms downstairs for the parole, probation and juvenile justice officers, as well as a large room for group counseling sessions.

Drug testing of the clients will be done in-house, and eventually workers with the planned drug court will move in.

In the upstairs of the building, there are administrative offices, as well as a large squad room for the various officers to assemble.

"They can communicate day-to-day, to discuss any problems with any of the offenders," Vermillion said. "With team treatment, we can try to resolve any problems."

In addition to the probation, parole and police officers, Savannah Impact will also have a job counselor from the Department of Labor, as well as one substance abuse counselor.

"That's going to determine the success of this program ~ if we have a good substance abuse

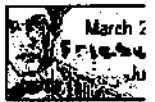
the problems the city ran into was finding a place to put the offices.

The new building is centrally located, Vermillion said. It's close to the courthouse, the drug-treatment



One of several interview rooms being readied in a building at Oglethorpe Ave. and Drayton St. that will house the Savannah Impact program.

—Bob Morris/Savannah Morning News



The program Savannah Impact is an intensive supervision program, including a collaborative effort among various agencies to attempt to reduce crime in the city.

The offenders will be given substance abuse treatment,

counselor," Vermillion said.

City Manager Michael Brown, who pushed to get the Impact program started, is thrilled to see it moving forward.

"I really am elated, even though this may be our temporary home, I think it suits us well," Brown said.

Savannah Impact will have at least 350 clients when it is fully up and running, Vermillion said. About 175 of those will be on parole, 50 from the Department of Juvenile Justice, and the rest will be on probation.

The clients will be those repeat offenders who are the most at risk to slip back into criminal behavior.

To be in the program, Vermillion said, the offenders must be on high or maximum-level supervision, which includes those with violent charges.

"The others don't need the intense supervision," Vermillion said.

Each officer is expected to have about 40 clients on his case load, which is significantly lower than the average.

"It will certainly be more contacts than they've ever done before," Vermillion said. "And that's what this program's all about."

Crystal Taylor, who will supervise the probation officers in the Impact program, said her officers normally have a case load of more than 100 clients.

"Because of the small number of cases, and with more resources available, the officers will have more time to deal with the offender and be a lot more hands-on."

The officers are also looking forward to having a lot of visits outside the office, Taylor said.

"We're going to be a more constant presence and make the offender more accountable," she said.

job training and behavior modification counseling.

The facility will house five SPD officers, five probation officers, five parole officers, one employee with the Department of Labor and two employees from the Department of Juvenile Justice.

The probation officers are expected to start working Impact cases on Sept. 17, and the parole officers have already started their work with Impact.

.Keith Vermillion, the director of the program, hopes to have everything in place at the new building to accept clients by the beginning of October.



In addition to Impact, Brown also wants to see continued efforts within the community to fight crime, which means having effective police patrols and neighborhood involvement. Other weapons in the arsenal against crime are Project Ceasefire and the already operational Career Offender Tracking Unit.

To ensure the continuation of Impact, the city is already going after state funding for next year, Brown said.

As part of the city's long-range goals, Brown said they will look at the criminal justice and educational systems, as well as the available mental health and substance abuse treatment centers.

The Impact program, which offers mid-range solutions will offer criminals and repeat offenders the chance to rehabilitate and change their lives to become productive citizens, Brown said.

"To me, it's the ideal way to approach this," he said. "We're not just locking people up and throwing away the key, and neither are we practicing some fuzzy model ..."

Crime and public safety reporter Paula Reed Ward can be reached at 652-0360 or at paulaw@savannahnow.com



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**Local News** Web posted Monday, August 5, 2002

## Savannah Impact probation officer supervises maximum offenders

By Anne Hart  
Savannah Morning News

Don't tell Diane Robinson that she wants to lock people up.

She knocks on the doors of convicted murderers, rapists and drug dealers. She scans their kitchen tables and garbage for beer cans, crack pipes, joints - clues that they're violating the rules set when released from prison or jail. She checks out their jobs at restaurants, construction sites and hospitals.

But the 29-year-old probation officer in Savannah isn't trying to catch probationers doing wrong.


She's aims to keep them straight.

Locking up someone on probation signifies failure - for the criminal and probation officer.

"Most people we work with think that we are out to get them," said Robinson, who has been a Chatham County probation officer for two years. "But that's not it at all. Our goal is to help them get back into the community."

Home visits are the most difficult. You don't know what to expect.


Robinson carries a gun and usually goes with her partner, a Savannah police officer. She leaves if things get violent, like the time an accused killer became verbally abusive.



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Diane Robinson.  
--Bob Morris/Savannah Morning News

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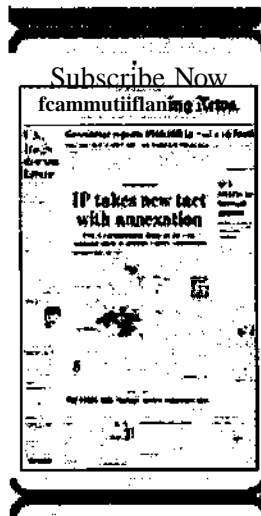
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One of five probation officers assigned to the Savannah Impact Program, Robinson deals with roughly 40 active probationers. Savannah Impact concentrates on maximum offenders - those who continually churn through the criminal system.

She winds up repeating the same stock phrases.

You've got to stop using drugs. Are you working? You can't beat your children. Or simply - get out of bed.

And she hears the same excuses, especially when a drug test turns up dirty.

"Most will say the test is wrong," Robinson said.

Some do whatever it takes to fake a clean drug test - including carrying in bags of bought urine.

But every so often, a success story comes along like a former crack user Robinson has been supervising since the woman was released from jail about three months ago.

The woman enrolled in Savannah Impact's substance abuse program. She's been clean ever since.

Those small victories make knocking on all those doors and hearing all those excuses worth it.

Public safety and crime reporter Anne Hart can be reached at 652-0374 or [ahart@savannahnow.com](mailto:ahart@savannahnow.com)

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## SAVANNAH IMPACT PROGRAM 2002 Production Report

**SIP**

	Parole	Probation	DJJ	Totals
<b>Cases</b>				
Total Active Cases	697	317	66	<b>1,080</b>

Contact Stats	Parole	Probation	DJJ	Totals
Successful	9058	8752	983	18,793
Unsuccessful	0	892	60	952
<b>Total</b>	<b>9058</b>	<b>9644</b>	<b>1043</b>	<b>19,745</b>

Type of Contact	Parole	Probation	DJJ	Totals
Field	1929	2731	273	4,933
Office	2914	3632	323	6,869
Collateral	4215	2389	387	6,991
<b>Total</b>	<b>9058</b>	<b>8752</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>18,793</b>

Referrals	Parole	Probation	DJJ	Total	% Referred to Programs
Cognitive	92	32	16	140	13%
Education	69	74	17	160	15%
Employment	143	198	19	360	33%
Substance Abuse	140	144	6	290	27%
Other	17	24	1	42	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>90%</b>

Drug Tests	Parole	Probation	DJJ	Total	
Tested	529	1204	34	1,767	
Positive	109	135	28	272	15%
Negative	420	1069	6	1,495	85%
<b>Percentage Negative</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>85%</b>	

Employment	Parole	Probation	DJJ
Percentage Employed	<b>86%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Adult Average	<b>83%</b>		
Juvenile Average	<b>50%</b>		

Revocations	Parole	Probation	DJJ
Total	<b>95</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>
Percentage	<b>14%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>23%</b>

# GDOUSAVANNAH IMPACT EMPLOYMENT REPORT 2002

This report effective 15 Mar 2002.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOT
CUSTOMER SERVED	0	0	18	39	54	21	24	37	27	57	58	68	403
JOB REFERRALS	0	0	20	40	53	20	26	36	33	98	94	91	511
WORKSHOP	0	0	14	5	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	12	43
JOB PLACEMENTS	0	0	0	3	4	2	2	8	4	15	14	20	72
OBTAIN EMPLOYMENT	0	0	1	1	4	0	6	5	1	20	10	6	54
ENTERED EMPLOYMENT	0	0	1	4	8	2	8	13	5	35	24	26	126

