



Gulf Breeze Police Department

Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem- Oriented Policing Award Submission



Summary

The Gulf Breeze Police Department has had significant success in attacking teenage vandalism and malicious mischief in the community that was associated with Homecoming week. During our initiatives in 2002 and 2003 to curtail teenage vandalism and assaults, we observed a dramatic decline in juvenile alcohol offenses. As our efforts proceeded and we achieved measurable success against vandalism, we noted a peripheral reduction in alcohol offenses among youngsters. We were convinced that the decline was significantly attributed to the involvement of parents and teachers in our anti-vandalism initiative. Their involvement also impacted alcohol use. It was felt that their continued involvement would continue to have a significant impact on the problem and their efforts could be recruited to impact drug offenses as well.

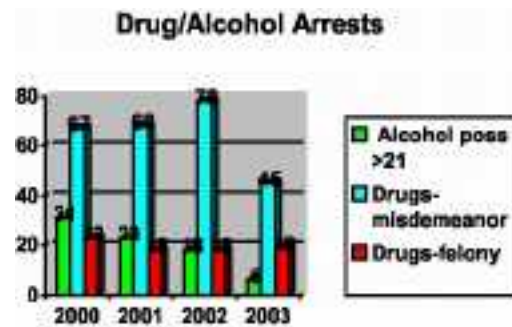
Drug and alcohol use by teenagers has been a problem for many years. Efforts by the police to curtail this activity have been successful against the abuse of these substances to a limited degree. We concluded that we would have greater success if we focused our efforts in the same manner as we did against vandalism. We proposed to add parents and teachers to our patrol activities, our D.A.R.E. initiatives, our drug-trained canines, school resource officers, and our anti-drug bicycle patrols.

By recruiting the assistance of parents and teachers to detect drug and alcohol use, greater success was anticipated. We proposed to educate parents about the dangers and effects of drugs and alcohol. We further educated them about how students mask this behavior, how they learn about masking behaviors and the resources available to them to combat these activities.

Our efforts resulted in a 66.67% reduction in alcohol offenses by minors and a 42.31% decline in misdemeanor drug offenses in 2003. It is felt that our efforts were successful as the vast majority of misdemeanor drug and alcohol offenses by those under the age of 21 are committed by school age youngsters whose behavior can be greatly influenced by vigilant teachers and parents. By coupling these efforts with diligent and aggressive enforcement, results can be leveraged for greater success.

Scanning:

Drug and alcohol use by teenagers has been a problem for many years. Efforts by the police to curtail this activity have been able to make inroads against the abuse of these substances. During our initiative in 2002 and 2003 to curtail teenage vandalism and assaults, we observed a dramatic decline in juvenile misdemeanor alcohol offenses as shown in the chart entitled “Drug/Alcohol Arrests” attached. We were convinced that the decline was significantly attributed to the involvement of parents and teachers in our anti-vandalism initiative. Their involvement also impacted drug and alcohol use. It was felt that their continued involvement would continue to have a significant impact on the problem.



The trend was identified by patrol officers and by police reports of the arrests for drug and alcohol possession among juveniles. When we reviewed our data and observed a significant decrease in alcohol offenses, we determined that the significant involvement of teachers and parents in the youth activities in the Homecoming anti-vandalism initiative was highly influential.

School resource officers brought the matter to the attention of the school authorities and to police management. The initial report indicated more extensive parental and teacher involvement in youth activities during Homecoming week was a highly contributing factor.

The potential for harm was the overriding reason this problem became such an issue. Associated offenses that are directly related to drug and alcohol activity can drive crime statistics. Furthermore, the negative impact of drug and alcohol activity among youngsters affects grades, home life, and is a predictor of future criminal behavior. Using the parental resource to leverage our success in previous years, we decided to elicit their support in 2003. Our timeline called for training to begin before Homecoming week and to educate teachers as soon as school schedules allowed. We sought to reduce drug offenses among youngsters throughout the community and to continue our success suppressing alcohol offenses.

As our enforcement efforts increased and the involvement of schoolteachers and parents came to bear on the juvenile assaults and vandalism activity; the alcohol offenses also declined. We noticed a decline of 25% in 2001 and a further reduction of 21% in 2002 of possession of alcohol offenses by persons under the age of 21. As a result, the school resource officers took the initiative and decided to attack the problem of drugs and alcohol directly by educating the parents and the teachers to detect drug and alcohol use among teens. They created a program that educated many parents and most of the teachers in the middle and high schools. As a result of this initiative, the alcohol

possession offenses were reduced 66.67% this past year and misdemeanor drug offenses declined by 42.31% in the same time period. The teachers were empowered to identify the masking activities in the schools, the parents educated to identify those activities at home and our patrol officers were already vigilant to this action.

Analysis:

The initial response was generated by the school resource officer attempting to respond to Homecoming-week related vandalism. As our enforcement and education efforts produced positive results in addressing juvenile assaults and vandalism; minors in possession of alcohol also decreased. Noting this reduction, we felt that we could leverage our efforts and obtain success reducing drugs and alcohol possession among our youth. We have been diligent in providing a D.A.R.E. program to the youth in the 5th grade. We also have two drug-trained dogs that routinely, but randomly go through the schools and the school parking facilities to deter drug use on school grounds. Our school resource officers are also diligent in detecting and apprehending offenders. We have implemented a D.A.R.E. refresher course in our 7th grades. Furthermore, we have been successful in applying the funds provided by the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant to overtime for bicycle patrols to detect drug offenses. We obtained the first grant in 2002 and have been able to focus efforts in suppressing drug activity in under-patrolled and remote areas of the City using bicycles each year since then.

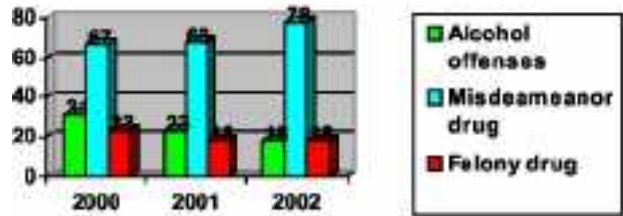
The problem of drug and alcohol possession among teenagers is endemic in most communities and Gulf Breeze is no exception. Our crime data shows a long history of offenses and efforts to curtail it have been on-going for many years. Noting a significant decline in recent years, we decided to focus our efforts more deliberately. In 2001 and 2002 our misdemeanor drug offenses increased 1.49% and 14.71% respectively. However alcohol possession declined 25.81% and 21.74% respectively. Those figures inspired the response to address drug possession. Given our increased drug patrols during that same time period, the increase in drug related arrests was no surprise. However, the significant reduction in alcohol offenses that accompanied increased parental supervision during our Homecoming initiative gave us some hope and guidance for a positive approach to drug reduction.

The student population of the high school was engaged in alcohol offenses and in drug offenses. In recent years, the problem began to trickle down to the middle school as well. Property crimes and motor vehicle offenses were occurring under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Furthermore, most assaults and domestic offenses were drug or alcohol related as well. The school was also faced with disciplinary activity against offenders caught on school grounds or school related activities.

Efforts had been made for several years to curtail the drug and alcohol offenses by increasing patrols and remaining as vigilant as possible. The school resource officer made significant progress in 2001 when he spearheaded an effort in double our enforcement efforts against vandalism during Homecoming week. Officers would conduct field

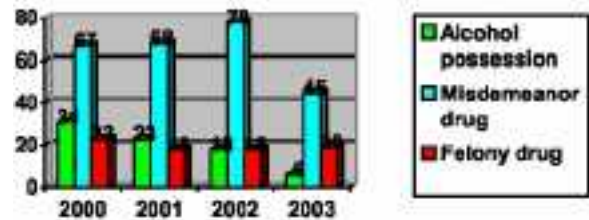
interviews of those caught out in neighborhoods with large amounts of toilet paper. Those detected would be searched for drugs and alcohol whenever appropriate and arrests made. K9 officers and their drug-trained dogs would randomly check the school and the parking facilities to detect and deter drug possession. Each prom season anti-drug and anti-alcohol messages were directed at the students and the students would sign a 'prom pledge'. There was also an all-night "Project Graduation" to deter alcohol and drug use on graduation night. The accompanying graph shows the decline in alcohol offenses as parents became more involved in the problem solution. The increase in misdemeanor drug arrests reflects increased enforcement efforts from the LLEBG funded anti-drug bicycle patrols.

Decline in alcohol offenses with Project Homecoming efforts



The result of the traditional response of increased patrols and increased vigilance by the law enforcement was adequate to maintain a steady offense level. The number of drug and alcohol offenses over the past 4 years had been steady. The results of the school resource officer combating vandalism were encouraging and effective in reducing alcohol offenses also.

Drug and Alcohol Offenses Decline with Direct Intervention



Alcohol possession had often accompanied the offenses during Homecoming week and as inroads were made there, it peripherally affected the drug and alcohol offense problem. Our LLEBG funded drug bicycle patrols that were implemented in 2002 resulted in an increase in drug offenses in 2002 as offenders were detected and arrested. In 2002 we solicited the assistance of parents to impact vandalism offenses. We noted a drop in alcohol offenses at the same time. In 2003 we solicited the assistance from teachers and parents to address drug offenses. In the same way that our efforts had impacted alcohol, we were anticipating positive results in drug offenses. In 2003, the offenses in all categories plummeted as shown in the graph to the right. We experienced a 66.67% reduction in alcohol offenses and a 42.31% decrease in misdemeanor drug offenses in 2003 as a cumulative result of these actions.

Students would go out in groups to 'roll' each other's homes. The intent of the 'rolling' was to cover another's live oak trees in their yard or house with toilet paper. In addition to the large numbers of students out in the city neighborhoods each evening during Homecoming week, many undetected vandals were also out. Drug and alcohol possession often accompanied this activity. The increased patrols and the increased involvement of parents in the Homecoming activities had the effect of reducing alcohol offenses as well. It was felt that this involvement could be leveraged if the parents could be taught the

techniques of detecting the methods that students were employing to avoid detection.

Students were employing many techniques to avoid being detected by law enforcement. They were also using similar techniques to avoid detection by their parents and by the teachers at the school. It was felt that the parents and the teachers could benefit from education to "Know What Your Child Knows About Drugs and Alcohol". The school resource officers have gleaned a tremendous amount of knowledge from their own observations, other law enforcement personnel, training classes, and the students themselves about the methods employed to avoid detection.

An appreciation of the fact that many students shared the knowledge with each other and shared ways to avoid detection made it important to counter this with information to the parents and teachers. Students were using information obtained from each other, from the Internet, from popular television shows and from movies aimed at their age group. Many teachers and parents were not fully attuned to these sources of information, nor did they appreciate the high degree of knowledge and information available in these mediums. By recruiting the parents and the teachers to recognize and detect drug and alcohol use, the problem could be impacted and the number of offenses reduced. Further, a reduction in peripheral offenses would likely occur.

It was through the open forum that the parents were informed of the program. It was the same format that was used with the teachers. The local churches were approached to host educational forums and lend their facilities. The local Catholic Church and the Methodist church both hosted an evening. The forum was published in the newspaper as well as church bulletins. The seminars that were aimed at the teachers were conducted at the schools after hours.

C. Solutions:

In 2001, the school resource officer developed an initiative with the school authorities that demonstrated significant effectiveness to reduce youth violence and vandalism. As these efforts were refined and became more effective, the alcohol and drug possession by youngsters began to be impacted as well. Due to the increased parental involvement in addressing the violence and vandalism issues, illegal substances also began to decline. We have also used a D.A.R.E. program in the 5th grade for many years and in 2002 initiated the reinforcing D.A.R.E. program in the 7th grade. Our K9 drug detection dogs have been employed for many years in random school and parking area checks. The addition of a school resource officer funded by Department of Justice in 2002 has provided a School Resource Officer for each of our schools. We also use our Local Law Enforcement Block Grant funds to pay overtime to bicycle patrol officers to target drug and alcohol usage in remote areas of the city. That anti-drug program began in 2002 and has also been ongoing since then.

While efforts were begun to curb the problem with heightened enforcement efforts, it quickly became clear that this approach would not succeed completely. It was extremely difficult to detect the students in possession of drugs or alcohol or committing a criminal act. Since the action was so deeply ingrained in the social structure of the community it was difficult to control. Efforts by increased numbers of police officers patrolling late at night on bicycles had limited effects and failed to curtail the problem. The number of incidents actually increased in the year following the implementation of the bicycle patrols. These statistics were not too surprising however, since the number of officers targeting drug possession had increased and the result of that increase was a result in arrests. However, it was during those efforts that a decline in alcohol possession offenses became apparent. When the numbers continued to decline as parental involvement increased in the anti-violence/vandalism initiatives proceeded, it seemed that was the key to success. It became clear that the depth of the problem required an approach of community education and voluntary participation of parents and teachers that recruited their assistance fighting the problem.

Our response was based upon the adult education model. By educating the parents and the teachers to recognize the signs of substance use by teenagers and the masking techniques, it was felt that our efforts would be more effective. As we conducted seminars for parents and teachers; demonstrating the techniques of drug usage, masking techniques and the resources we were employing (K9s, education programs targeting youth, bicycle patrols); results became apparent we were having dramatic success.

The effectiveness of response and the ability to actually implement whatever response was developed were overriding. Due to the extreme jeopardy that our youngsters were facing, cost was not an over riding factor and additional resources could be committed without fear of justifying increases in the future. As it turned out, the cost increase was minimal. Our school resource officers worked nights during the seminars and our K9 officers were brought in to demonstrate their capabilities to the parents. Additional patrol officers were also added to patrol on bicycles, however we had a bicycle patrol grant to

offset that expense. Our community is quite homogeneous and we were able to capitalize on that resource and leverage it to our advantage.

We had a twofold intent with these initiatives; eliminate the threat and danger to our youth and to reduce peripheral crime in the community. We approached the solution to the problem with the outlook that we needed the cooperation and voluntary acquiescence of the parents and teachers for our plan to work. We needed for the parents to recognize that there was a problem, to adopt an appropriate response to the problem and then to provide the knowledge to effectively detect drug and alcohol usage among their children. It was stressed that we were seeking compliance and cooperation, but that we would be firm in our dealings with offenders.

We used personnel resources and obtained an excellent drug education PowerPoint from the Miami Police Department. By using the PowerPoint as a starting point, we were able to focus our program on drugs and drug activity commonly experienced in our community. The school, parents, law enforcement and public education were the principal components. The school administrators encouraged the teachers to attend our training and provided classroom and media support. The media agreed to publicize the problem for the community. This was intended to encourage parents and members of the public to attend our training. The police chief attended the parent education forums to address the parents and make them aware of the problem and our responses. The school resource officers and the school administration encouraged the teachers in the high school and the middle school to get the message. We were also successful in recruiting the support of several community churches. They provided facilities for the meetings and publicized our efforts throughout their congregations.

The school administrators, the local law enforcement agencies, active citizens, the press, and teachers helped to create a curriculum from a program obtained from another agency and develop a comprehensive plan for Gulf Breeze. By working closely with student representatives and other law enforcement agencies to create our curriculum, we were able to adopt a plan that was comprehensive and informative. The parents were educated by the police chief and the school resource officers at several community meetings. These meetings were publicized and coordinated with local churches. The problem and the proposed response were laid out for the parents to understand that the overriding concern of our actions was the safety of their children. The meeting outlined the problem and the danger that the students faced and our proposed response. Their feedback was sought and their questions addressed. Law enforcement scheduled additional personnel to work during the seminars and also for our anti-drug bicycle patrols during the year. The officers were also educated about the scope of the problem. The community was made aware of the problem and the anticipated response through media publicity and the City council was kept informed throughout the year.

Few difficulties were experienced during this initiative beyond the ability to enhance attendance. Cooperation was received from every agency and group that had a stake in the issue and workable solutions were generated and offered at every step of the way. Many parents seemed to feel that there was little or no drug problem in the City or with

their child. That perspective created some difficulty getting some parents to attend another meeting. The teacher participation was very high and well received. Our future efforts are focusing on 'capturing' freshman student parents during orientation night and recruiting them to attend the training as their children transition to High School and a higher likelihood of drug activity.

Our broad based response included school administration, law enforcement agencies, students of all grades and the middle school, press, and the community at large. Every aspect of the community that had a stake or an involvement in the problem was invited to participate, and every one did participate during the process. It was felt that this was the only feasible way to achieve success. Since drugs and alcohol are so ingrained in the social fabric of the community, the only way to effectively address the problem was to enlist more help. Parents and teachers are the logical choice for this role due to their intimate interaction with the youngsters in the community.

The data for the Gulf Breeze Police Department is analyzed each month. At year's end, it is reviewed again and trends detected. The focus of the following year's initiatives is largely driven by the empirical data obtained and trends noted. As we succeeded in addressing our vandalism and youth assault problems, we noted that the increased enforcement had a positive impact on alcohol offenses. As our increased drug bicycle patrols impacted drug offenses, we decided to coordinate all of these efforts and bring all of the resources to bear on the substance abuse problem. Our results in 2003 underscore the success of a multi-faceted and multi-resource response to a targeted problem. By increasing patrols, educating students, educating parents and empowering teachers, we were able to dramatically impact drug and alcohol offenses in our community.

D. Results:

Misdemeanor drug possession offenses were reduced by 42.31% in 2003. Minors in possession of alcohol offenses were reduced by 66.67% in 2003. We also continued to enjoy a very reduced vandalism and criminal mischief rate that had seen a reduction by 83% in 2002 and remained at that reduced rate in 2003. These results were outstanding and leads us to the conclusion that the response plan impacted the problem to a significant degree.

Crime statistics analysis and anecdotal reports from parents and officers formed the basis of our evaluation. The crime statistics for misdemeanor drug and alcohol possession by juveniles were analyzed for 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003. Our anecdotal evidence came in several forms. Officers noted a significant reduction in the number of youngsters out in the late hours and the subsequent reduction in juvenile field interviews.

The police chief and the administrative staff of the police department evaluated the data. Furthermore, several teachers wrote complementary letters to the SROs for their initiative and the information they provided.

Once the reasoning was provided and the scope of the problem explained; all parties

approached were willing and diligent participants. In fact, at two of the parental seminars, parents of youngsters who were deceased or incarcerated from drug abuse showed up to provide graphic and compelling testimony for the others in attendance. This 'testimony' proved very powerful to those in attendance and pointed out the concrete need for action. It took the problem from abstract to practical.

We intend to continue with the initiative on an annual and on-going basis. We are also seeking ways to get a better attendance of parents. One idea being pursued is to piggy-back the presentation with school orientation night for the parents of freshman each year.

The crime statistics of the Gulf Breeze Police Department during the years 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 were used to support our conclusions. We also utilized feedback from the teachers and from parents that underscored our conclusions. The results exceeded our expectations. It is felt that we can do a better job of delivering our message to the parents. Efforts are underway to broaden the number of parents that the seminar reaches.

Since the students that go to Gulf Breeze High School live in Santa Rosa County, Pensacola Beach (Escambia County) and within the City limits of Gulf Breeze, all parents had to be actively involved in the plan creation and implementation. If the students realized that their activity would not be monitored in the surrounding jurisdictions, then it was felt the problem and subsequent juvenile crime problem would displace to those areas. If the parents of all of the students were to access this training, they would all be armed to combat the problem and effect meaningful results in our community where their children spend much of their time.

Due to the long-standing tradition of drug and alcohol use it is felt that it will take several years to begin to control the behavior. With that goal in mind, the school and the police will continue their efforts each year with the student parent population and with the teachers to educate each new class of freshman's parents as they transition from the middle to the high school.

It is our conclusion that we will be able to sustain our efforts. The results that were obtained in 2002 to address vandalism were repeated in 2003. In 2002, our concerted efforts resulted in an 83% reduction in vandalism and malicious mischief complaints for the target month of October. This created a 36% reduction in those categories for the year. In 2003, we duplicated the activity and obtained the same success. We then adapted the methodology and the resources to address drug and alcohol possession offenses. The results were dramatic and in concert with our anticipation. Our intention is to continue these efforts and continue to attack the pervasive drug and alcohol problem in our community.

We believe that similar results would be achieved by other agencies that bring the same resources, factors and efforts to bear on this problem.

Agency and Officer Information:

The initiative was adopted by the school resource officers, the canine officers, the chief and the command staff. The program was initiated by school resource officers pointing out the need for action to take advantage of the inroads that had been made from our anti-vandalism efforts.

The entire department attended mandatory community policing training conducted by the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute in 2002. The curriculum included an introduction to Problem Solving Policing. Every supervisor attended advanced training in 2003 conducted by St. Petersburg College, Florida Regional Community Policing Institute entitled "Changing Roles: Supervising Today's Community Policing Officers". The canine officers are trained and certified to Florida standards and maintain current certification. The school resource officers are trained to Florida standards and by the National Center for missing and Exploited Children. The bicycle patrol officers are trained and certified to Florida standards.

Each officer in the Gulf Breeze Police Department is required to complete a problem oriented policing initiative each quarter as a part of our award winning comprehensive community policing program. Noteworthy achievements are recognized at city-wide meetings where all city employees meet for a mandatory monthly breakfast. The school resource officers were given 'credit' for their participation in the plan creation and in the implementation. They were not required to submit an additional community policing activity report for the quarters that the plan was developed and implemented.

The chief worked closely with the school resource officer and attended many community meetings and planning meetings with the officers. The School Resource Officers obtained a comprehensive PowerPoint that was created by Miami Police Department and used as the basis of their presentations when talking about different types of drugs, their effects and the manner in which they are distributed. The officers then expounded on that information to bring the focus to Gulf Breeze and how those drugs that are a problem in this community are used, masked, distributed and how to detect them.

The problems that were identified were the decrease in alcohol violations incidents that occurred in conjunction with an increase in parental involvement and increased patrol activity. As our efforts to curb vandalism increased and our bicycle patrols to curb drug offense increased and the parental involvement that was so essential to our efforts increased, alcohol offenses declined. By applying an educational component to the parents and teachers, we were able to increase the number of allies we were using in these efforts. School and police officials worked in concert with the community and parents to scan the problem, assess the situation, develop a comprehensive response and analyze the results.

The general resources that were committed to this project were personnel and time. The commitment of school administrators, school resource officers was utilized during the

normally scheduled work time of those parties and did not require additional budgetary resources. The bicycle patrol officers, school resource officers and canine officers assigned during the evening hours were our principal increase from routine patrol. By supplementing our patrol force with bicycle patrol officers (working under the funding from an LLEBG grant) and allocating additional hours for the school resource officers to work the evenings, parental seminars were conducted. A PowerPoint presentation was made and displays of drug paraphernalia provided. The amount of additional hours committed during the presentations by the Gulf Breeze Police Department was just about 64 additional hours. Of that total about half was taken as compensatory time and about half paid as overtime. Given the significance of our efforts and the outstanding results achieved; it is felt that the budgetary costs were reasonable and justifiable.

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