

**2007 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING (POP)
Devonshire Area
Devonshire Police Activity League Supporters (PALS)
Giving Youth a Brighter Tomorrow**

Summary

Programs and facilities are needed to provide youths with a positive alternative to drug and alcohol use, criminal activity and gang involvement. The Devonshire Police Activity League Supporters (PALS) is such a program, in which youths, community members and law enforcement officers form a partnership to provide enriching programs for at-risk youths.

Activities are designed to deter youths from crime, gangs, drugs and build trusting relationships. PALS is dedicated to building character, reducing juvenile crime and creating safer communities.

PALS is supported by the Devonshire Division of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and sponsored by local businesses and community leaders. PALS is unique because it is planned and supervised by two full-time LAPD officers. Community members supporting PALS are dedicated individuals who have assisted in making the program a success. The partnership between PALS youths, community members and law enforcement officers has evolved and strengthened over the course of thirty years.

Scanning

For many years, PALS operated out of a facility leased in a strip mall. In May 2005, the newest LAPD station, Mission Division, opened and the Devonshire PALS facility became part of the territory encompassed by Mission Division. Devonshire needed to find a facility, which would best service the needs of the community.

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Community members became aware of the plight for a facility and in 2005, community member Lorraine New, donated a facility for PALS to utilize. The PALS facility opened in an impoverished neighborhood, plagued by gang violence and drug sales. Many youths attending PALS come from single parent households, and unsupervised youths, are more likely to become the victim of a crime or become involved in criminal activity. There is a greater likelihood that they will drop out of school. Many PALS youths have a sibling in prison or youth camp for criminal acts.

Over 800 youths live in the area, making the facility within easy walking and bicycle riding distance. PALS provide educational tutoring, computer training, cultural activities, field trips and sports. In addition to the after school and weekend programs, PALS provides youths with life changing experiences. The "Sacramento Experience" is one such activity sponsored by PALS. This year, four PALS youths will attend a three-day event in Sacramento. The youths will go before members of the Legislature and petition for funds to finance the PALS program. This once in a lifetime opportunity, will empower the youths to possibly become future leaders.

PALS also sponsors a "Life after High School" trip for youths attending high school. PALS youths spend four nights in a college dorm at California State University San Jose, where they obtain a first hand look of student life in college. The youths interact with college students and attend presentations provided by local unions, vocational schools and apprentice programs. The youths are taught how to obtain and maintain living accommodations and bank accounts.

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PALS youths go on camping and Disneyland trips, which they may not be otherwise able to afford. PALS youths also complete in soccer and basketball tournaments. There is no doubt that PALS positively impacts these youths, and there are many success stories. To name a couple, one PALS youth is getting ready to graduate from high school with a 4.39 grade point average, and is currently applying to Ivy League colleges. Another former PALS member was recently accepted to Berkeley University. There are numerous other success stories involving current and former PALS members.

Analysis

The PALS facility currently provides service to 176 children and there are approximately 40 children on the waiting list. There are no other facilities or programs in the area, which provide youths with programs such as PALS.

Response

Lorraine New and other community members recognized the need for a larger facility to meet the growing demands. The community members came together and organized themselves into the Capital Campaign, which was comprised of approximately 30 members and included a Board President and Co-Chairs. Through the Capital Campaign, these community members raised funds in charitable gifts and pledges to build a new facility.

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Assessment

To date, the Capital Campaign has raised \$2.3 million in grants and is within their goal of breaking ground for the new center. The new facility is a few blocks away from the current facility. The new facility will contain an area for studies, a computer lab, library, community room/mini-gymnasium, and offices and will accommodate approximately 1000 youths.

The PALS programs are free and assist in counteracting negative influences such as gang, criminal activity and drug use. With a focus on prevention, the PALS center is cost effective in keeping youths out of the juvenile justice system and expensive rehabilitation programs.

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