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May 30,2008

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Dear Dr. Guerette:

The purpose of this letter is to respectfully submit an application on behalf of the Cordele, Georgia Police Department for the 2008 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing.

Please find enclosed a copy of our application including a summary, narrative, and contact information. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to give me a call at 229-276-2921.

Sincerely,

Dwayne Orrick
Public Safety Director



CITY COMMISSION: ZACK H. WADE, Chairman; A.J. RIVERS, Vice Chairman; JIMMY BLACK, WILLIE COLSGN, Jr.,
JEANIE BARTEE, EDWIN T. COTTON, City Attorney; JEAN H. BURNETTE, City Manager

Dashing the Cordele Easter Bash

Cordele Georgia Police Department

Submission for the

2008 Herman Goldstein Award for

Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing

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Summary

Scanning

Cordele, Georgia is a small (pop. 11,600), rural, economically challenged, community located in South Central Georgia. In the 1990's Cordele residents who attended a large unorganized event in Atlanta called Freaknic wanted to continue their celebratory behavior by starting a mini-Freaknic along the eight-block area of 11th Street (also known as Joe Wright Drive). Cars crept along Joe Wright Drive with persons openly consuming alcoholic beverages, standing atop shouting and dancing to loud music. Neighbors complained of the crowds, criminal behavior, music with profane lyrics, and gunfire. Antagonistic groups and gangs of 10 to 20 persons started fights. When officers responded, the crowd would attack officers by throwing rocks and bottles.

Analysis

Estimated at more than 5,000 persons, the crowd was too large for the police department to address. Pedestrians congregated to watch the cars and their occupants' 'outlandish' behavior while persons in the cars gathered to 'show off' for persons on the sidewalk.

It was determined:

- The vehicle traffic was at the center of the problem in Cordele.
- There had to be some structure provided to the event, but no individuals or groups had stepped up to assume responsibility of leading the event.
- Police could not use an aggressive approach and force a resolution to the problem.

- Police had to increase their presence and relationships with the community throughout the year to be able to address the issues on Easter.
- An overwhelming law enforcement presence was required to address issues before they got out of control.
- A variety of techniques were needed to divert entry into the affected area and make it difficult for potential troublemakers to cause problems.

Response

At first, police attempted a traditional 'hands off incident based approach that was unsuccessful. Enhancements to 'law enforcement only' efforts were met with limited success. After several years, officials reached out to area community groups and developed a comprehensive 'law enforcement/community approach' to reduce the disorder associated with Easter.

Assessment

After developing a true working relationship with area community groups, the unorganized, disruptive mob was transformed into an organized, peaceful event. Through a progressive refinement of law enforcement's response, the Easter Bash became the impetus for rallying a community with low efficacy and citizen involvement into a police-citizen partnership focused on resolving community problems.

Scanning

In the 1990's Atlanta, Georgia experienced a large, unorganized event called Freaknic. Large numbers of young African-Americans descended on the City the third weekend of April and placed roads and businesses in total gridlock. Resolving the issue required a comprehensive response from community leaders, all metropolitan area police departments, state law enforcement agencies, and units of the Georgia National Guard.

Cordele residents who attended the event in Atlanta wanted to continue their celebratory behavior upon returning home by starting a mini-Freaknic along the eight-block area of 11th Street (also known as Joe Wright Drive), from 16th Avenue to 24th Avenue. After the Freaknic event ended in 1999, crowds continued to form in Cordele on Easter Sunday. Dubbed the Easter Bash by the local media, about 1,000 persons would quickly gather around 5:00 p.m. The crowd would continue to grow throughout the evening to an estimated 5,000 or more persons.

Cars crept along Joe Wright Drive at less than two M.P.H. with persons openly consuming alcoholic beverages, standing atop shouting and dancing to loud music. As traffic became more congested, it overflowed and slowed traffic along a major corridor of the community, U.S. 280 (16th Avenue). With so many persons in the area, cars parked along Joe Wright Drive compounded the congestion by forcing pedestrians to walk into the flow of traffic.

Public safety agencies including fire and ambulance reported the crowd was so large they could not respond to calls for assistance in the neighborhood. Residents complained of frequent gunfire. In 2002, a 13-year old girl was shot in the foot and a 7-year old girl was shot in the kneecap.

Neighbors privately complained to law enforcement and elected officials of the crowds, their inability to enter or leave their homes, criminal behavior witnessed, loud music with profane lyrics, and screaming in the area. One resident described how he used a broom to dispatch a female and two males who were having sexual intercourse on top of his truck. A few persons spoke publicly in City Commission meetings and asked for corrective action to be taken. However, officers found most persons were afraid of public exposure, criticism, and retribution. Conversely, a small group of openly critical individuals felt persons should be able to do as they pleased without consequences. These individuals asserted efforts to curb unlawful behavior was racially motivated and openly threatened to oppose law enforcement intervention.

Compounding the problem was the event's proximity to Sunset Homes, a high density, public housing complex adjoining Joe Wright Drive between 22nd and 24th Avenue. Composed of 475 units housing with more than 1200 residents, this complex is the most crime-ridden neighborhood in a five-county area. The greatest part of the crowd would gather in front of this complex. Much of the violent behavior would start in the area adjacent to Sunset Homes.

Because of a history of racial strife within the community, law enforcement leaders were sensitive to executing an overly aggressive police response that could have a negative result and impact the community for years. Although deeply troubled by persons' behavior Cordele police leaders felt for several years the event was a fad like Freaknic and would eventually stop. Regardless, the entire department was activated every Easter and placed on patrol in the area. Officers maintained a 'hands-off approach and responses were incident based.

Despite the increased police presence, antagonistic groups and gangs of 10 to 20 persons would begin fighting in the 11th Street area. When officers arrived, the crowd would turn on the police and throw rocks and bottles at officers. Troublemakers hid between houses along 11th Street and continued throwing objects. This resulted in the police department calling for assistance from the Crisp County Sheriffs Department and the Georgia State Patrol. The problems would continue into the early morning hours of 2:00 - 3:00 a.m.

By 2003, the crowd spread into Reid Park, an area 10 blocks northwest of the affected area of Joe Wright Drive. Neighbors complained of loud music from large speakers on a flatbed trailer with a DJ. Persons were openly drinking, fighting, and shots were fired in the area.

It was obvious the affected area was too large and had too many areas of concealment for the police department to properly contain. When persons massed in the street, the crowd

was too large for a tactical response. With only 30 officers, the department did not have sufficient staff and resources to remedy the situation. Frankly, the entire event left officers feeling helpless and crippled the department's morale.

Analysis

In an effort to resolve problems surrounding the Easter Bash, command staff reviewed notes and records of previous years¹ activity. Officers were interviewed about the behavior witnessed and suggestions of how to resolve the issue.

Officers estimated 60 to 80 percent of the persons walking were from Cordele. However, there was mixture of persons in the crowd. Most of the 'trouble-makers' were in their late teens to mid-twenties. At the same time, officers saw there were many younger persons who were just bystanders. Their presence increased the likelihood an innocent by-stander may be injured by the crowd or by police intervention techniques.

A survey of vehicle registrations indicated that approximately two-thirds of the cars were from neighboring counties or others states including Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina.

Officers' interviews of persons in the area revealed most persons congregated along the sidewalks to watch the cars and their occupants' 'outlandish' behavior. At the same time, persons in the cars gathered to 'show off' for persons on the sidewalk. Persons also claimed they did not have anything else to do on Easter Sunday. Officers learned many

of the children were staying later than expected because the Easter weekend was the beginning of Spring break for area schools.

Officers also reported increasing numbers of persons from neighboring counties riding along 11th Street on Sunday afternoons in the weeks before Easter.

Command personnel met several times with representatives from the Georgia State Patrol and other state law enforcement officials who had been involved with similar incidents across the State. In addition, the Chief had the opportunity to talk with a Chief from Mississippi regarding a similar problem in his community. During these meetings, agencies reported an overwhelming police presence and diverting persons from the affected area were the most effective ways to deter activity. They also recommended the department build support from within the community to address the issue.

From the analysis it was determined:

- The vehicle traffic was at the center of the problem in Cordele.
- There had to be some structure provided to the event, but no individuals or groups had stepped up to assume responsibility of leading the event.
- Police could not use an aggressive approach and force a resolution to the problem.
- Police had to increase their presence and build relationships with the community throughout the year in order to successfully address the issues on Easter.
- An overwhelming law enforcement presence was required to address issues before they got out of control.

- A variety of techniques were needed to divert entry into the affected area and make it difficult for potential troublemakers to cause problems.

Response, Assessment; Response, Assessment; Response, Assessment....

Easter 2004

Working with officials from the Crisp County Sheriffs Department and the Georgia State Patrol a two-phase 'law enforcement only' response involving 65 officers from the three departments was developed. During the first phase, deputies and troopers conducted safety and sobriety checkpoints at three locations outside the City Limits of Cordele. Cordele police officers conducted concentrated patrols in the affected area. The goal was to demonstrate a strong law enforcement presence to reduce the violence and disruption within the neighborhood.

When the number of persons and congestion exceeded a reasonable level, officers from the police and sheriffs department's blocked intersections for the entire southwest section of town (an area of 64 city blocks). As cars exited the area, they were not allowed to reenter. Only persons with identification indicating they lived in the neighborhood were allowed to enter.

In addition, Cordele police officers were placed on foot in the affected area to deal with individuals. As the crowd dispersed, troopers commenced strict traffic enforcement efforts on moving vehicles.

An assessment revealed:

- The crowd was estimated at 5000 persons.
- When the perimeter was established it worked well.
- Children were out late into the evening.
- The increased presence and continued 'hands off' approach did not resolve the problems.
- Street vendors, persons with stereos on the sidewalk, and parked cars exacerbated the problem with pedestrians.
- Activities continued until after 2:00 a.m.
- There needed to be more community support and involvement.

Easter 2005

Two months before Easter, command staff from city, county, and state law enforcement agencies held formal planning meetings to review previous activities and develop a plan for the event. This plan resulted in a more comprehensive 'law enforcement/community approach'. The goal was to minimize the violence and disorder associated with the evening.

The Crisp County Centennial Committee was coordinating the county's 100-year anniversary celebration by planning events throughout the year. The Centennial Committee decided to sponsor a chaperoned dance for young persons on Easter Sunday to divert them from the negative environment along 11th Street. Law enforcement

personnel met this effort with mixed emotions. First, command staff were concerned the activities would institutionalize the event and it would never cease. In addition, staff had to coordinate security for the event that had the potential of dividing the staff and minimizing their impact along Joe Wright Drive. Planning by law enforcement and the Centennial Committee occurred in both joint and separate sessions.

Law enforcement command staff from five departments coordinated an elaborate four-phase plan involving 135 officers. Six officers, (two each from Cordele Police, Crisp Sheriff, and GSP) were assigned at every intersection along Joe Wright Drive between 17th Avenue and 24th Avenue.

Department leaders coordinated with school officials in 2004 to ensure, the 2005 Easter weekend was the end of the spring break.

To prevent issues from escalating in the weeks before Easter, patrol officers were directed to provide concentrated mobile and foot patrols in the neighborhood. During the week before Easter, sheriffs deputies and state troopers would begin to patrol in the area, making their presence known.

Early Easter Sunday, cars along Joe Wright Drive were moved or towed to prevent persons from being forced to walk in the traffic lanes. Municipal ordinances were used to move street vendors and persons with speakers and prevent persons from loitering and blocking the sidewalk.

Officers blocked off empty parking lots and enforced a city ordinance prohibiting persons from loitering on the parking lot of a closed business. Staff wanted to block vehicle traffic on Joe Wright entirely, but it was felt that with the crowd so large, the removal of the cars would just open the streets for persons to gather.

Four two-person covert intelligence teams supported by two ID teams worked within the crowd to communicate information regarding individuals causing trouble. This information proved invaluable to making uniformed officers' response more effective.

A GSP helicopter was to provide aerial surveillance, but high winds prevented its use.

At 12:00 midnight the Centennial Committee sponsored dance at the fairgrounds was closed. All pedestrian traffic was directed north along 7th Street to residential areas. To prevent persons from becoming involved in activities along 11th Street, marked units followed the crowd as persons returned home. For safety reasons, all vehicle traffic was directed south. Persons wishing to return to the affected area would have to travel at least four miles into the county before they could turn around and return.

Officers also established the 64-block perimeter to prevent vehicles from entering the area after 12:00 a.m.

The plan also provided for a mobile field force to be alerted and clear the streets. This contingency was never activated.

An assessment revealed:

- Estimated at 3,000 - 4,000 persons, the crowd was 20 - 40% smaller than 2004.
- There was a 76% reduction in the calls from citizens in the area.
- There was a 39% increase in citations/arrests (N=64). These were predominantly traffic violations.
- There were no incidents of violence.
- Despite law enforcement concerns the community involvement had proved effective.
- Heavy thunderstorms early in the day flooded areas in the surrounding counties limiting access for many persons. Because of the rain and cooler temperatures, incident commanders could not attribute all of the improvements to their planning.

Easter 2006

Officials could not develop interest from area residents and community groups to assist with the event. Again the goal was to minimize disorder in the area and provide a safe environment.

Local and state agencies developed a three-phase 'law enforcement' plan involving 148 officers from 12 local and state law enforcement agencies to respond to the Easter event.

The first phase included law enforcement officials being placed on static and roving positions along Joe Wright Drive. Officers were directed to be more assertive enforcing traffic violations and other offenses. The second phase was initiated at 12:00 and required officers to set up a 64-block perimeter. The final phase, which was never initiated, provided for a tactical response from a mobile field force.

Local law enforcement officials enjoyed good relations with the local newspaper and television representatives. They were invited to most planning meetings and allowed complete access to the command center. It was recognized there may have been some issues had an incident arose, but the transparency with the media gave greater credibility to the departments' efforts to resolve the issues.

Law enforcement personnel coordinated with school officials earlier in the year, to ensure school was in session the day after Easter.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation provided two, two-person covert intelligence teams that were supported by two ID teams.

The Georgia State Patrol aviation unit provided aerial surveillance and communications to the Command Center. This unit was instrumental in tracking primary offenders and supporting officers. There were several complaints from residents regarding the presence and noise from the helicopter. However, the command team felt the benefit from the aviation support outweighed the public inconvenience.

Probation and parole officers directed their clients to avoid the area and officers were stationed at fixed positions with uniformed officers along Joe Wright to identify persons under their supervision who may be attending the event.

During a formal debriefing, several observations were made:

- The Cordele City Commission and police department received many positive comments about the event.
- There was limited community involvement. To successfully stop the event, a grassroots effort had to be initiated to build consensus that the event reflects poorly on the community and is a danger to the public safety.
- Improved transparency with the media provided better credibility with the public.
- The security perimeter was too large and impacted neighbors unnecessarily.
- Officers working positions along Joe Wright needed to walk along the street more to keep persons from gathering.
- Officials noted the number of young people started to decrease around 9:00 p.m. The thought was that many of the young people went home to prepare for school.
- Police received only 15 calls from residents in the area for service. This was a modest increase from the previous year.
- The 1,500 persons estimated to be at the event was 50-66 % fewer than in 2004.
- There were a total of 198 citations (209% increase from 2005) and 154 written warnings by officers working the detail.
- Increased police presence of 142 officers discouraged misconduct.

- The police department and sheriffs department spent \$14,433 for overtime and meals. The state agencies provided their staff compensatory time for working the event.
- Officers still had to work until 2:00 a.m. before streets were cleared.

Easter 2007

In January, officials met with members of the Crisp County Interdenominational Ministerial Association, West Side Leadership Coalition, and Crisp County Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and voiced a desire for them to participate in resolving problems on Easter.

After several meetings, a two-part, multi-phase approach was developed. One part involved representatives from the three community groups. The second part was a traditional law enforcement approach.

In the weeks before Easter, police and sheriff command staffs attended meetings at several churches to discuss their plans with members. During these discussions they emphasized the Easter Bash was a community problem and could not be resolved without community involvement and support.

Local law enforcement along with ministerial association and West Side Leadership representatives were interviewed together on the local noonday television program. During this program, community leaders discussed how the churches were playing a

major part in the event and were planning structured activities. Law enforcement described how vehicles were not allowed into the area and strict enforcement would be exercised. The station broadcasted this interview several times a day during the week preceding Easter.

Community representatives formed groups of two to three volunteers who walked along Joe Wright Drive and asked persons to move on if they were gathered up in one location. They also acted as a positive influence for preventing disruptive behavior. In the event they observed a problem requiring a law enforcement response, each team had a portable radio to communicate with a representative assigned to the command center.

Choirs from area churches coordinated a gospel concert in the parking lot of "The Clubb" at the intersection of 18th Avenue and 11th Street. This nightclub was closed on Sunday in accordance with state law. Many of the persons who would normally be disruptive would not frequent this area. In addition, it offered an opportunity for community members to become involved in the Easter event in a supportive manner and help stop the negative behavior.

Churches also provided a carnival about three blocks outside the affected area with snacks and organized activities for children and young teenagers. An estimated 250 children attended these activities.

The law enforcement plan utilized a reduced security perimeter to one block east and west of Joe Wright Drive (24-block area). This minimized the impact on residents in the neighborhood as well as the number of officers required to staff positions. Police patrolled outside the affected area until community representatives called for their response. At that time, officers established the perimeter and staffed static positions on Joe Wright.

Officers were required to walk one half of their block in both directions. Two Department of Natural Resource Rangers were stationed at every intersection with their 4-wheeler all terrain vehicles (ATV's). Probation and parole officers were stationed at busy intersections.

During the debriefing of 2006, it was determined large trees between 21st and 22nd Avenue blocked the streetlights allowing persons to gather and hide. Officers placed a mobile generator with a telescoping light in the area to dissuade persons from gathering.

A privately sponsored car show attracted approximately 2000 persons to the fairgrounds. Most of the persons attending the show were from out of town. Because of the absence of outside lighting, the car show was closed by 8:00 p.m. While they provided their own security, officers were called to the location several times for fights and loud music complaints. When the show ended, the attendees realized they could not travel down 11th Street and left.

A GSP aviation unit provided real time video and communications to the Command Center that allowed better decisions and coordinated responses.

An assessment revealed:

- Citizen involvement proved to be the connection needed to remedy the problem.
- The use of the DNR Rangers and their 4 wheelers were more effective than officers on foot.
- The weather was unseasonably cool and may have contributed to some of the individuals returning home early.
- The police department received only five calls for service in the area.
- It was estimated there were fewer than 200 persons in the area. This was an 86.7% reduction from the 1500 in 2006 and 96% fewer than 5000 attendees in 2004.
- There were no arrests/citations compared with 64 in 2005 and 209 in 2006.
- The plan required 121 officers, 22 (14.8%) less than in 2006.
- Cordele and Crisp County costs for overtime and food of \$ 11,287.00 were 21.8% less than the previous year.
- All personnel were released at 11:00 p.m.

Easter 2008

Law enforcement personnel continued to build a true working partnership with representatives from the ministerial association, NAACP, and West Side Leadership Committee.

During the planning session, community leaders proposed officers begin clearing the street before 10:00.

Police and sheriffs representatives along with ministerial association and West Side Leadership representatives again participated in joint television interviews outlining the activities planned. Community leaders discussed how the churches were taking more control of the event and announced it was being closed at 10:00 p.m. The station broadcasted this interview several times a day for the week preceding Easter.

Similar newspaper articles were published in the local newspaper. Again the emphasis was placed on the community associations leading the program and law enforcement agencies were supporting their efforts.

The police chief provided briefings during the Cordele City Commission meetings in the month before Easter. Television and newspaper reporters cover these meetings, so additional exposure of the plans was provided. At the same time, the pastors announced their efforts in all of the community churches and gathered volunteers.

Law enforcement agencies reserved the fairgrounds for a staging area several months before Easter. This provided several benefits. First, facilities were available for a group briefing and food service. Second, officers were strategically located closer to Joe Wright

Drive for breaks. Third, reserving the location prevented other groups from using the facility and displacing officers over a larger venue.

Because of unplanned events that occurred in public parks in previous years, officials worked with the recreation department to ensure no park facilities were rented for a large group.

When officers were released from the initial briefing, sheriffs deputies immediately established the 24-block perimeter surrounding Joe Wright Drive. Fewer law enforcement, two police officers and two DNR rangers, were stationed at every intersection and provided closer interaction with persons. Parole and probation officers directed clients to remain out of the area. The probation and parole officers continued being stationed at busier intersections.

In addition, fewer troopers were used. Those present were placed on concentrated patrols outside the perimeter. This effort also allowed them to stage more easily in the event the mobile field force was activated.

Collectively, there were 32 volunteers from the three groups assisting with the event. A children's carnival was provided outside the Joe Wright Drive area from 3:30 to 7:30. Fourteen gospel groups provided musical entertainment from 4:30 to 7:30 in The Clubb parking lot on Joe Wright Drive.

Volunteer representatives were again used to walk along Joe Wright Drive with communication links to the command center. Teams of volunteers also picked up litter along 11th Street after the event.

At the close of the 2008 event, all of the citizen and law enforcement participants felt the event was an amazing success. The unorganized, disruptive mob had been transformed into an organized peaceful event.

- Police received only three calls from residents and there was only one arrest the entire evening.
- Planners continued to refine the number of personnel needed with only 108 being used. This was 13 (10.7%) fewer than 2007 and 34 (23.9%) less than in 2006. It is anticipated that police presence on Joe Wright could be reduced in 2009 and assistance from outside law enforcement will be not be needed.
- Even though the number of persons attending increased, it was estimated there were still less than 1000 in attendance and most of these were teenagers and parents with small children.
- Total cost for overtime and food dropped another 8.5% to \$10,332. This was a 28% reduction from 2006.
- By 9:30 p.m. officers were clearing the street and all officers were released by 10:00 p.m.

Agency Information

As a small, rural law enforcement agency, the Cordele Police Department did not have the same level of resources as many larger communities. Every member of the organization was involved with the execution of the problem-solving program. Most of the planning was done by command staff in conjunction with the Crisp County Sheriffs Department, Crisp County Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, the Crisp County Chapter of the NAACP, and the West Side Leadership Committee and other state law enforcement agencies.

Officers had been successfully using the SARA model on a smaller scale for a number of years. Training of officers within the police department occurred formally and informally. In addition to attending an advanced training, two in-service courses were also taught. When developing the in-service training, Problem Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News, by the Police Executive Research Forum and Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems, by the U. S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services were used as reference and training exercises. During the analysis, response and assessment phases of the project, POP Guide, Cruising was referred to as a source.

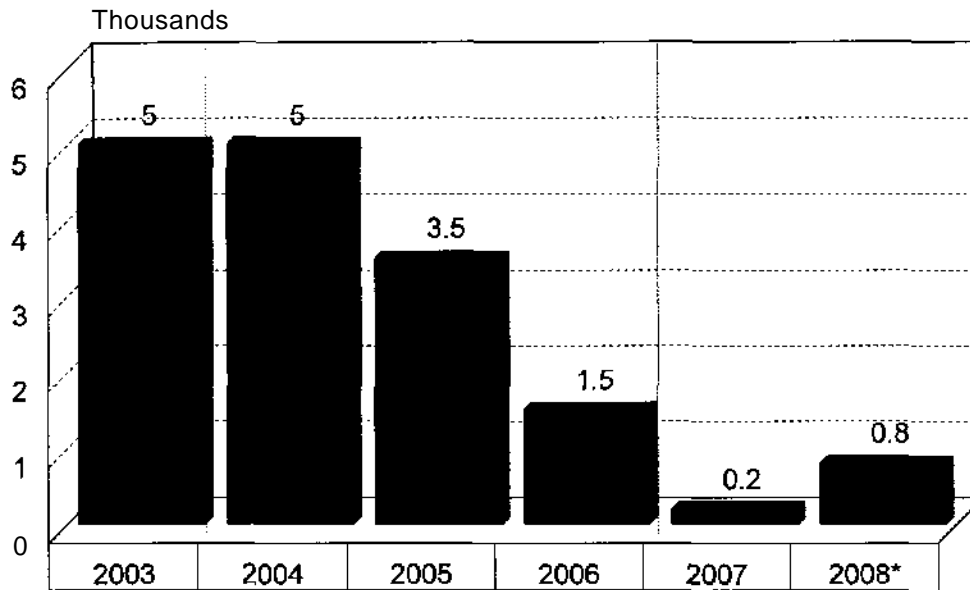
Agency Contact;

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Appendices

Easter Bash

Estimated Attendance



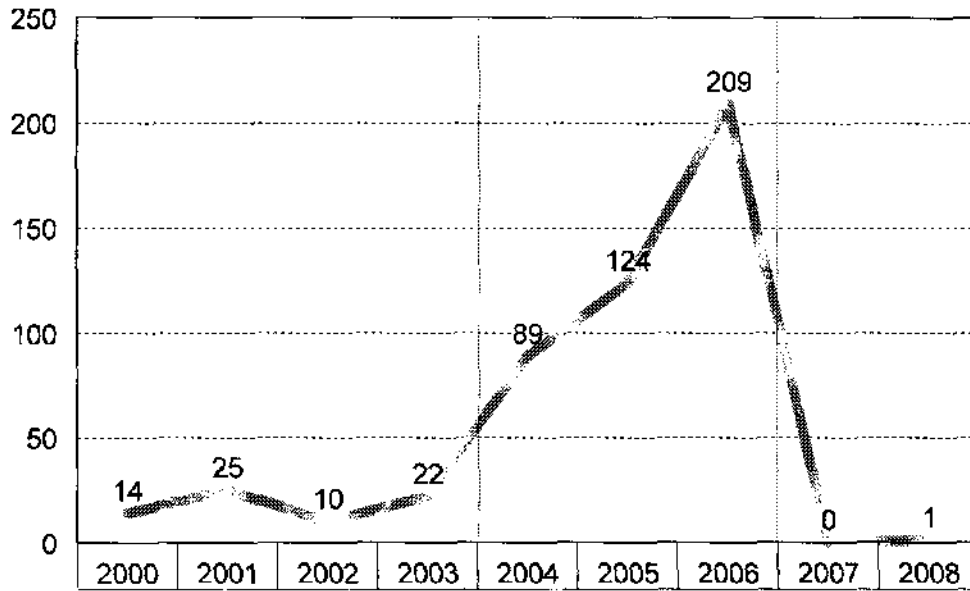
* Mostly teenagers and parents with young children

----- Indicates when joint law enforcement efforts began

----- Indicates when law enforcement/community group efforts began

Easter Bash

Arrests / Citations

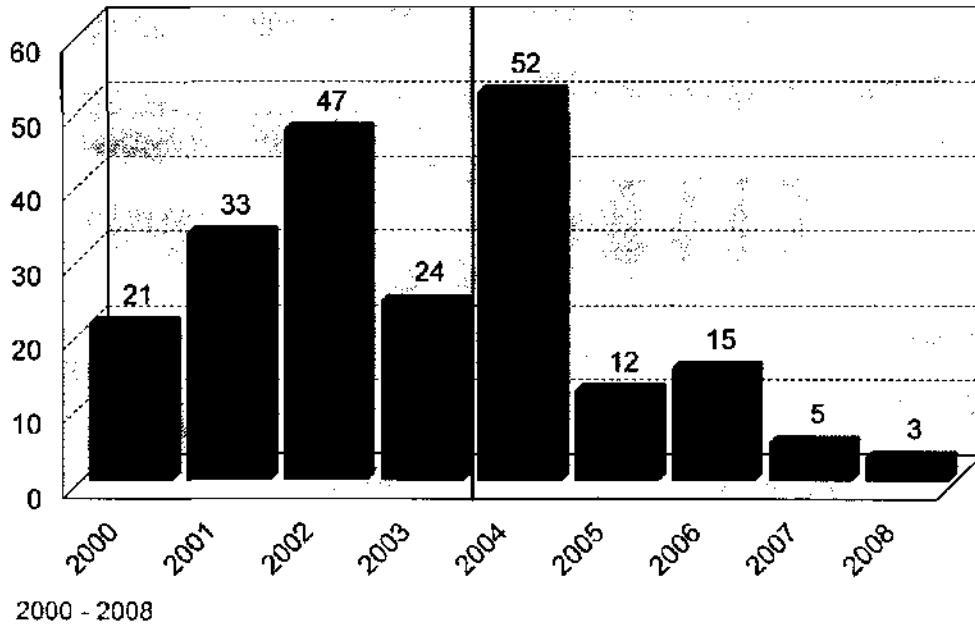


----- Indicates when joint law enforcement efforts began

----- Indicates when law enforcement/community group efforts began

Easter Bash

Incidents / Citizen Calls for Service



----- Indicates when joint law enforcement efforts began

Cordele / Crisp County
Overtime / Food Costs
2006-2008

2006	2007	2008
\$14,433	\$11,287	\$10,332

Not adjusted for inflation.

Did not account costs for planning time, on-duty staff, salaried personnel, and compensation time provided to state law enforcement officers.