

FEBRUARY, 1994

VOLUME 3, No.1

Key Drug Dealing, Prostitution

In early November 1993 Police Officer Mark Darby, recently assigned to the First District, began looking for the worst problems on his beat in the Dutchtown neighborhood. He asked fellow officers about high call locations and the intersection of California and Keokuk was frequently mentioned. Mark's personal observation of that intersection and surrounding neighborhood indicated a prostitution trade. Mark suspected that in all likelihood there would be a related drug trade.

By talking with long time residents he learned that the neighborhood was in transition, largely for the worse in recent years. Mark spent a good deal of time walking the alleys and gangways to learn the beat and look for signs of problems.

He found tiny zip-lock plastic bags and torn portions of larger plastic bags on the ground. He recognized these as signs of crack cocaine sales. The size of the bag remnants told him something about the quantities being sold. Used butane lighters and numerous open basement doors also indicated that the drugs were being consumed in the neighborhood.

For several weeks, Mark interviewed many persons in the

neighborhood, including suspected criminals. He identified as many of the neighborhood regulars as he could through informal means as well as through record checks. On several occasions, Mark visited the neighborhood in plain clothes to see what occurred when the police were not visible.

Through this extensive research on the neighborhood, Mark identified several families that seemed to be at the center of a lot of police calls and criminal activity.

One of the families consisted of three brothers and a sister. The sister was a prostitute and her brothers provided her protection, steered cocaine customers to dealers, and did a little fencing of stolen property.

Mark studied the routines and habits of regular prostitution customers. The locations where sex acts took place varied depending on the customer and the type of act.

A series of two-family flats on Keokuk were owned by the same landlord. In one of them lived a man in his late sixties, his invalid wife, and nephew who was a known heroin user. The nephew regularly invited other heroin users and prostitutes into the home. Even when the nephew moved out, the users and prostitutes stayed and effectively took over the home. The elderly

tenant, himself an alcoholic, was unable to regain control of his home. By plying him with alcohol and occasionally sex, the users and prostitutes kept him under their control. Fights among the squatters sometimes led to calls for the police.

The drug dealers had become so comfortable doing business at this home that one dealer actually tried to sell drugs to Officer Darby at the house one day. Mark disguised himself merely by putting an old jacket over his uniform. The dealer was promptly arrested.

The brothers from the family mentioned above also steered prostitution customers to this house on Keokuk. A known cocaine dealer resided next door and another prostitute upstairs from him.

A third problem location was identified in the 22-unit apartment building on the corner. Mark suspected that members of another family that lived in two of the apartments were dealing drugs. Customers used a gangway off California to gain access. Crack users appeared to be using a common basement as a crack den.

One day Mark saw one of the men in this family carrying a gun. Mark chased him, recovered the gun and a piece of clothing, but lost the suspect, see Drug Dealing, p.2

Drug Dealing, from p.1 Mark returned to the apartment and got the man's mother to identify her son as the owner of the gun. Ten days later the man was arrested and warrants were issued. Mark was now convinced that eviction of this family would be in the neighborhood's interest.

Mark worked with Paul Sims, a city building inspector, and the cooperative landlord to inspect and condemn for occupancy part of the 22-unit apartment building. There was raw sewage being dumped into the basement. While the condemnation did not affect the half of the building where the sister of the family lived, she too decided to move out. The entire family left the building within twenty-five days. Judging by the time between trips during the move, Mark figures they probably moved to an address in the Third District no more than fifteen minutes away.

Mark then turned his attention back to the address on Keokuk. He told the elderly tenant that he would continue to visit his home until the problem was resolved. Mark began to hear on the street that dealers were reluctant to send buyers to this house because of the police officer.

Mark ran into the landlord of the building one day and identified him. Mark suspected he had been aware of the problem, but to be sure, he put the landlord on notice as to the known criminal activity of his tenants and suggested that he evict them.

Records checks revealed that the man and a woman next door

whom Mark suspected were dealing drugs, had outstanding warrants. Mark arrested them for the warrants and illegal possession of guns.

Yet one more house on California was identified by Mark as a crack and prostitution house. Neighbors told Mark that the tenants seemed to know the officer's schedule because the drug and prostitution activity always began just after he got off duty.

The bank had recently foreclosed on the mortgage to this house and, with the bank's cooperation, Mark and Inspector Sims inspected the building and found an extensive water leak problem. The water and electricity had to be shut off. The bank representative asked Mark to help him advise the tenants to vacate the property, which they did.

Mark continues to monitor the situation and watch for signs of illegal activity at a couple of other potential trouble properties. Since Mark got involved, neighbors have begun coming out of their homes to thank him for his efforts and the noticeable improvement in the peace of the neighborhood.

Having regained some control of the neighborhood, Mark's next step will be to solicit more involvement and assistance from the residents improving and maintaining other problem properties.

Post-script: Mark had the Division of Aging work with the alcoholic man and his ill wife to move her permanently into a retirement home and help him find a new apartment. Barb Potts of Operation Safestreet is working with them and the land-

lord to terminate the lease. Mark then had the home boarded up and posted for trespassing.

The 22-unit building has been purchased, by a new owner who seems willing to work with the City and the police to prevent future problems.

Motor Vehicle Accidents

Fourth District Officer Felicia Korte is assigned to the Downtown Neighborhood. While driving through her area one day, she noticed that the stop signs at the intersection of 20th and Madison were no longer visible to approaching traffic. Overgrown branches from nearby trees covered the stop sign, making them impossible to see by approaching motorists. Working in the same area last year, Felicia recalled handling several accidents at this intersection. She wondered if this same condition existed then and contributed to the cause of those accidents.

She contacted Fourth District Officers Jim Rudden and Rock Nilhas for assistance and the officers made a cursory inspection of the district looking for similar conditions at other intersections. Several locations were identified, including Maryland Ave. and N. Taylor in the Ninth District, a relatively busy intersection.

The officers contacted the City Forestry Division and asked for assistance. The Forestry Division trimmed the foliage that caused the problems at each of the locations identified by the officers.

Several months later the officers checked the calls for service to the intersections.

They found that during the prior four month period, only one accident was reported at any of the intersections. Officer Ruden explained, "The trimming of the trees was a helpful safety precaution. Whether this prevented any accidents, is unknown. However, for now we will take credit for the reduced number of accidents at these locations as compared to the last couple of years."

Mental Illness, False 911 Calls

Last October **Seventh District Officers Fran Krupp and Laure Lamczyk** received a call to 5876 Kennedy in the **Wells-Goodfellow Neighborhood** for burglars in the building. They met the caller, Mrs. R., who is in her late eighties and legally blind. Mrs. R. complained that someone had broken into her basement and that she could hear them talking while they did their laundry.

The officers found no signs of intruders. Mrs. R., however, was convinced that someone had entered her basement, but for the time being was satisfied with the officers' inspection.

Fran later recalled hearing several other assignments to that same address in the past. She checked the C.A.D. system and found records of 188 police calls to 5876 Kennerly. This address was listed as the tenth highest call location in the Seventh District. Over the past three years, police were dispatched to this address nearly 300 times for either "burglars in the building" or "disturbances." Fran also discovered that no

police reports had ever been completed on these calls - they had all been coded.

Talking with other officers who handled calls at this location, Fran heard the same story over and over - an elderly female calls the police because she hears noises coming from her basement. In all cases, the call was unfounded and coded.

The police department had already spent an estimated 240 staff hours handling the previous calls and it was obvious that if something wasn't done, these calls for service would continue.

As an interim step, the supervisors agreed that every time a call was dispatched to this location, the precinct sergeant would call the complainant to determine if the police were really needed. If not, the sergeant would code the call and call off the responding officers.


Later, it was learned that Mrs. R. lived with her nephew. Fran contacted him and described the problem. He was aware that his grandmother occasionally called the police, but was shocked when he saw the actual numbers. With his cooperation, a meeting between the family and the officers was arranged. On October 18, 1993 Fran, Laure, and Sergeant **Greg Wurm** met with the family. During the thirty minute meeting the family agreed that something had to be done. They assured the officers that they would work with Mrs. R. to eliminate the unnecessary calls for police service.


During their follow-up several weeks later, Fran noticed that no calls had been dispatched to 5876 Kennerly. Concerned for

Mrs. R.'s well being, Fran and Laure went to Mrs. R.'s house to make sure she was alright. When they arrived, Mrs. R. greeted them at the door and told the officers that her family had forbidden her from calling the police without first checking with them. To this date only one call has been dispatched to 5876 Kennerly.

NEW RESOURCES

*3> **Police Officer Rick Dudley** of the **Sixth District** had **REJIS** provide him with a listing of names and descriptions of all persons with outstanding warrants whose last known addresses included Walnut Park zip codes. He and other officers can use this information to actively seek out known offenders.

 A Management Assistance Program for landlords with troublesome properties serves the **Tower Grove East, Fox Park, and Benton Park West** neighborhoods. The phone number is 771-5454. Along with the **Landlord's Crime Prevention Handbook**, available through **Operation Safestreet**, these resources can help landlords who want to maintain crime-free properties, but aren't sure how.

 Although the system has been in operation for some time, few officers are aware that they can get crime and call for service maps for any location they identify through the **Landtrak** crime mapping system. The contact in **Planning & Development** is **Doug Iliff** at 444-5650.

DOWN THE ROAD

What is the status of some department-wide policies that were recommended by police officers? The pilot program to grant limited summons release authority to private security that was proposed by **Police Officer Gary Hurst** is still going on in the Blumeyer and Vaughn Housing Complexes. The experiment has been extended through March before a report is due to the Police Board. The proposal to handle gasoline drive-offs and some petty larcenies by mail-in forms that was proposed by **Police Officer Gary Phelps** has been approved for city-wide implementation after proving successful in Area I.

What is going on in the Seventh District? The leadership of the Seventh District - the sergeants, lieutenants, and captain - have begun to change the way that calls for service are managed. More authority is being delegated to field supervisors to assess, screen, prioritize, and refer citizens* calls for service. For example, sergeants routinely ask complaint evaluators and dispatchers to explain the nature of disturbance calls so that the officers and sergeants can better assess the urgency of the call and provide the best response. They realized that the incomplete information coming out on these

calls was resulting in either too many calls being dispatched, too high a priority being assigned, or failures to resolve the problem underlying the call. Sergeants and officers use greater flexibility in responding to calls when they have sufficient information. The captain has been supporting the officers and supervisors in this initiative and the chief, deputy chiefs, and area major have in turn been supporting the captain. This approach to call management is consistent with the community-oriented problem solving philosophy. Employees interested in learning more are encouraged to talk to Seventh District personnel for more details.

What is a C.A.D. flag? You may have heard dispatchers telling responding officers about prior calls, on-going projects, or officer safety alerts at certain addresses. This system, now in place, is being used more and more to give officers the information they need to keep safe and be more effective solving recurring crime and safety problems. Any police officer can enter important information into the system to keep their fellow officers alert. Officers interested in learning more about the system can call **Communications** or the **C.O.P.S. Coordinator's Office**.

Keys to the City is a regular publication of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department designed to share examples of good police-community problem solving in the City of St. Louis. Project descriptions should be sent to the COPS Coordinator's Office in Room 607 of Headquarters by departmental or electronic mail. Inquiries can also be directed to 444-5681.

**Metropolitan Police Dept, 1200 Clark Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63103**

Address correction requested

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit No. 649
