



Community Policing *Problem Solving*

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Darrel W. Stephens, Chief of Police

Noise and Parking

by Officer Mark Blacfcwood

Problem: A popular restaurant expands and its success leads to numerous complaints of noise and parking violations by several apartment complexes next door.

Solution: This P.O.P. Project is in reference to an on-going problem between a restaurant/night club by the name of "Biff-Burger" and three neighboring apartment complexes. In short, the restaurant has been expanding over the years to include an outside bar and classic car-shows of up to three (3) nights a week. On a typical Friday night, the restaurant will draw several hundred people. The scheduled events are for the most part family oriented with dance contests, hula-hoop contests, etc. But there has also been a noticeable increase in "Bikers" frequenting the bar.

Complaints to the police are usually noise and parking related, with an occasional call of disorderly intoxication, fighting, and unsupervised teenagers, which wander into the apartment complexes where they "don't belong."

Each of the three apartment complex owners say that the restaurant/bar is adversely affecting their income as it is hard for them to keep tenants in those apartments which face Biff-

Burger. The complex owners got together, found out that I was their community police officer and approached me in hopes that together something could be worked out.

The owner of Biff-Burger says that his family's restaurant was there first, that he runs a clean business, complies with all city codes and beverage laws and is situated in a commercial district. He advised that he would be willing to cooperate with finding a solution to the problem.

From September to December of 1993, we held bi-monthly meetings at Biff-Burger with the restaurant owner, the apartment complex owners, myself, my Sergeant and the Major in charge of District III, Patrol. From January to March 1994, the meetings were dropped to once a month.

Many ideas were brought up but listed below were the ones which all seemed to agree on trying.

To address the problem of disorderly and unaccompanied juveniles, it was decided that the business owners would go in four (4) ways on the hiring of an off-duty officer on Friday nights. The restaurant owner preferred that the officer patrol the apartment complexes and not be so visible at the bar as it might drive customers away. This decision was fine with the apartment owners as they wanted the officer in their complexes anyway. The contract for an off-duty officer lasted for approximately one month. In addition, the restaurant owner

developed a "child policy" in which the juvenile's hand was stamped only after verifying that he was in the company of an adult. If no verification was made, then the juvenile was escorted off to the property by staff members.

For the parking problems, I was successful in having Traffic/Engineering install "No Parking" signs along 39th and 40th Avenues. This cut down on the "grid-lock" effect when people parked on both sides of the street leaving no room for two cars to pass each other in the middle.

For the noise nuisance problem, the restaurant owner agreed to turn all exterior speakers in towards the bar and facing 49th Street which is a heavily travelled and normally noisy roadway. He begins winding things down before 11:00 p.m. and closes the restaurant at or before midnight. For a long term solution, it was agreed that the business owners would go in on purchasing "oleander" trees which when full grown, act as a natural sound and sight barrier (such as seen along interstates and beaches). These trees would then be planted along a 6' block wall which separates the restaurant from the apartments. Although the owner of the Biff-Burger has accepted the money for the trees, he has yet to follow through with getting them planted. It has been at least 6 weeks now and he keeps extending the planting date.

This P.O.P. project is still considered active although many of the problems have been addressed. •

Alcohol/Repeat Calls

by Officer Mike Wright

Problem: After responding to several calls at a residence within CPA 92 an officer begins to realize that there was an alcohol related problem with the owner of the residence, John, a 37 year old white male. In researching the

address the officer found that there were 47 calls for police service at the residence from 5/13/90 to 12/1/93. After getting to know John he found that the problems were not only alcohol related, but there were also domestic problems with his separated wife and narcotics dependency.

Solution: Upon the first occasion of meeting John he was very intoxicated and hostile toward the police. I learned that there were "caution notes" for his address where he has threatened officers in the past and claims of firearms in the house. On this first meeting John was very difficult to deal with and I was unable to do much for him.

The next time I met John was when he called the police to report a burglary to his house. Having the first impression of John from the earlier incident I decided to call his house to talk with him prior to responding. I found that John was sober and was actually a pretty nice guy. I drove to his house and upon meeting him again, I realized he did not remember dealing with me in the past. It ended up that his wife came to the house while he was away for the weekend and took some of their joint belongings. She was later charged by the state attorney's office with trespassing.

Dealing with John in this second incident I realized that he is much like a "Jeckle & Hyde" when he is drinking and when he is not. Also dealing with his wife I learned that the reason she left him and moved in with another man was because John was an alcoholic and often beat her when he was drunk. I realized that John needed help, however I had no idea how to go about offering the help to him.

In December 1993, I attended a Community Policing Class being offered as part of our training at SPPD. During the class I was grouped with other students in the class. We were asked to come up with a sample project idea. I told the group of the problem I was

faced with in working with John. The group agreed on using John as a sample class project. In doing so we came up with a plan to help John in dealing with his alcoholism, his separation from his wife, and in his unemployment. After the class was over I began to implement the plans that were developed by the group in the class.

I began by feeling out how receptive John would be to receiving help. I found that he was wanting help from me to become sober. I also found out that he was also an opiate user via syringe.

I contacted several detoxification programs within Pinellas County. I learned that John had been to one of the centers five times, without completing the program once. He even had a trespass warning to the center for threatening the director of nursing. I asked John about this incident and he said he was drunk when he returned home the last time he was at the center and he called up saying things to the director of nursing.

I talked with the new director of nursing and was able to get John scheduled to enter the program again. He did not go to the first appointment I had set for him. I was able to get John to call himself and he set up his own appointment. This time I offered to drive him to the center. I drove him there and stayed with him as he was admitted. I was able to call and check on his status as John signed a release for me to call. He stayed the seven days and completed the program.

A few weeks after completing the program John called in to the police department intoxicated. Officer Al Gross worked with John and was able to get him into the detox program again. John was released after two days and he has stayed sober for six weeks since then.

I have been working with John in helping him get a divorce from his wife. He has met with an

attorney and they are working on a divorce agreement. I still talk to John a couple times a week and he seems to be doing much better. Also calls for service at his residence have dropped substantially, which is what community policing problem solving is all about. •

Vehicles, Loitering and Drugs

By Officer Holly Hadrika

Problem: A Community Police Officer observes an increase in loitering, foot and vehicle traffic in a neighborhood that is trying to revitalize itself from an increase in drug activity.

Solution: I'm the Community Police Officer for the area of 4th Street to 16th Street South from 22nd Avenue to 30th Avenue South. In the month of January 1994, there was an increase of loitering, foot and vehicle traffic coming from the area of the 600 block of 26th Avenue South. This area is known as the Harbordale area and provided me an excellent POP project.

Through my observations of the heavy foot, vehicle and loitering problems in the area of the 600 block of 26th Avenue South, I realized that there possibly might be a narcotics problem in the area due to the fact of the M/O.

The first step I took was to investigate the problem by talking with my zone partners, neighbors in the surrounding area and members of the Harbordale Neighborhood Association about the increased activity.

The second step I took to try and resolve the problem was to gather a couple Community and Zone Officers and conduct surveillance in the area. We used unmarked vehicles from our Vice/Narcotics Unit and also used an unmarked vehicle from the Sheriff's Department. From the

observations conducted through surveillance, I determined that the activity was coming from 620 and 635 26th Avenue South.

Numerous vehicles pulled in front of both 620 and 635 26th Avenue South and the subjects loitering, known drug dealers that I've arrested in the past, approached the vehicle. The vehicle would then drive off after the exchange. Through surveillance the M/O was that if the subjects approached the residence they would knock and enter the residence. The subject(s) would be out the front door within a minute and back into their vehicle driving off. The same M/O applies to the subject(s) that walk up. This type of activity is consistent with drug activity, making drug deals inside of the residence or deals within the vehicles. I also found out that the tenant who lives in 635 26th Avenue South is a known drug dealer that I've arrested in the past for crack cocaine, it seems wherever this known drug dealer loiters, several other "small time" dealers loiter with him. The other tenant in 620 26th Avenue South was a female who allowed her boyfriend and friends to loiter on the property. Both 620 and 635 26th Avenue South were operating together as outlets for drug sales. All of this activity was documented.

The next step I took to resolve the problem was to find out who the owners were of both 620 and 635 26th Avenue South. Most of the activity was coming from 635 26th Avenue South. I found out who owns 635 and 620 26th Avenue South and informed them of the activity. Both owners were unaware of the activity and they did inform me that they would ask their tenants to move out. I informed Vice & Narcotics of this activity and I conducted numerous FIR's. I also conducted a lot of high profile in the area by parking right in front of the residences and stay for hours or until the dealers would leave the area. There were vehicles, buyers, backing up and circulating the block when they observed my presence.

I found out that the tenant was unwilling to

move out of 635 26th Avenue South. The owners had to go through legal eviction to have the tenant removed. The tenant at 620 26th Avenue South was willing to move out.

I requested "Operation Care" to work the area of the 600 block of 26th Avenue South and we made numerous arrests and was very effective.

Due to the high profile of an officer, surveillance, arrests in the area and the cooperation of the owners, the tenant did move out of 635 26th Avenue South. Also, the tenant moved out of 620 26th Avenue South. Today, there is a new tenant living at 635 and all is quiet. The residence at 620 is still vacant. •

EDITORIAL NOTES

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Problems and Solutions are encouraged for publication from all bureaus and may be submitted to the Public Information Office through District Majors, Section Commanders or Unit Supervisors.

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