Successful Practices & Strategies

Buncombe County Sheriff's Office

Asheville, North Carolina
http://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/depts/sheriff/

Community policing element

Community partnerships and problem solving

Problem/issue

Building and sustaining relationships with the community

Problem description

The Buncombe County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) implemented a very successful COPS (community oriented problem solving) team program that has been hugely successful about two years ago.

Community policing strategies implemented

Our COPS teams consist of five members, a facilitator, and a supervisor from different divisions within our organization. They are given an ill structured community problem and are given 30 days to work full time on the assigned issue. The first day, the COPS team members attend an intensive training on problem based learning and our community policing philosophies. We provide a meeting area for team members on the administrative floor of the sheriff's office. They are given computer and phone access and any other necessary tools. Team members then spend a day or two researching their assigned problem, including scheduling a community meeting with residents and stakeholders in the affected area of the county. The sheriff, COPS team members, and command staff attend each community meeting. Talking directly to the community members about the problem and listening to their concerns reinforces the fact to our citizenry that we care, are engaged, and are accessible to them. These meetings also provide valuable feedback to the COPS team, which helps better define the problem they have been assigned. The team spends approximately the next three weeks working with outside community partners like the Department of Social Services, the U.S. Department of Transportation, educators, treatment providers, and other law enforcement agencies and community organizations to address the problem. In the last step, the COPS team puts together a presentation for the BCSO command staff and any community partners or stakeholders involved to outline the problem, review the results of their work, and make recommendations for future improvements.

The COPS team program has been of tremendous benefit to our agency and the community we serve in providing intensive attention to a wide array of community problems resulting in measurable improvement in the quality of life in our community and lasting goodwill. Internally, the COPS team

program provides our employees hands on training in problem based learning and community policing. The employees in every case leave with a greater understanding of the overall operation of the sheriff's office and become energized ambassadors of the practice of community policing. We recently completed COPS team 17, our 17th COPS team since implementing the program.

Change and/or impact as a result of these community policing efforts

BCTV films most of our COPS team presentations. The video is uploaded to YouTube. Several of the links are below:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yx6irfAjXdM

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DenikmqoI54

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9aQFudch_8

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvx2iRv4sX4

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22Em3Q3F4tw

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbydaeCqkrE

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XGMDCDfOY0

** If the link is not active, please cut and paste in your internet browser to view.

Lessons learned through program implementation

Every COPS team concludes their presentation with a summary of lessons learned and recommendations for moving forward so that we are not facing the same problem several months down the road. Please see the video links posted above for a synopsis of lessons learned by each team.