



Successful Practices & Strategies

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St. Cloud Police Department

St. Cloud, Florida

<http://www.stcloud.org/index.aspx?nid=7>

Community policing element

Problem solving

Problem/issue

Drugs and public safety concerns

Problem description

During the fall of 2015, a small neighborhood in Osceola County known as the River Road area was annexed into the City limits of St. Cloud, Florida. River Road is a very low-income socioeconomic area consisting of predominately minority residents. Soon after annexation, several minority community leaders informed the St. Cloud Police Department (SCPD) of open-air drug activity as well as various issues such as unsafe and deteriorating homes, vacant foreclosures, vandalized and absent street lighting, and poor landscaping in the neighborhood in addition to water drainage concerns. Some of these issues were of long standing and violated city code.

Community policing strategies implemented

The SCPD immediately took action to mitigate the issues, clean up the neighborhood, and enhance the overall services provided by the City of St. Cloud. In this effort, the department engaged the residents and led a police/citizen cooperative with the community's leaders, pastor groups, and local businesses such as The Home Depot and Hungry Howie's Pizza. Several city departments also joined in the restoration of this neighborhood, including Public Services, which addressed the water drainage and sidewalk concerns; SCPD Code Enforcement Unit, which demolished an unsafe foreclosure home; the Community Outreach Unit, which increased communication and developed programs and services for the community; and the Parks and Recreational Department, which assisted in the playground restoration and community cleanup.

The SCPD coordinated several activities in the community: clean up days, a job fair, and neighborhood barbecues. Improvements were made to the Hopkins Park community house and playground adjacent to the community. In addition, the LOCK IT UP safety campaign was launched by the police department, and we assisted in establishing a neighborhood crime watch program. Cooperative police-citizen efforts to eradicate open-air drug activity in the River Road neighborhood led to Operation "Rollin' on the River" targeting illegal narcotic activity. This operation was a six-month investigation and a collaborative effort with the U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration, Osceola County Sheriff's



Office, Osceola County Corrections Department, Kissimmee Police Department, and Office of the State Attorney's Ninth Judicial Circuit.

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

The successful execution of the raid resulted in the seizure of vast amounts of illegal drugs, including 423.6 grams of cocaine, 63.8 grams of heroin, seven grams of methamphetamine, 5,157.8 grams of cannabis, 453 illegal pills, two guns, three vehicles, and \$15,676.02 in cash. In addition to 29 arrests, evidence of a dog fighting ring was discovered resulting in removal of 19 dogs along with dog training equipment and performance enhancing drugs. Through the joint cooperation of the community and ongoing involvement of the SCPD, the neighborhood and park continues to improve, becoming a safer environment for families and children. The impact of this operation will have resounding effects throughout the community and Osceola County. As SCPD Chief Pete Gauntlett stated, "This investigation is an example of what creative and cooperative law enforcement partnership efforts can achieve and yield results. I think we'll have a quieter level of streets now. That's how we aim to keep it."

Lessons learned through program implementation

Through the cooperative efforts of the neighborhood residents and police, monitoring crime trends and patterns, tracking prolific offenders through the Intelligence-Led Policing Program, and maintaining relationships with community leaders, the SCPD can remain cognizant of the River Road community and its residents.

Key lessons learned include (1) quickly identify crime trends and patterns, (2) identify quality-of-life issues and listen to citizen's concerns, (3) communication is imperative, and (4) collaborate with neighborhood organizations and city departments to develop and provide programs to meet the needs of the community.

The SCPD is dedicated to working within the community to preserve an outstanding quality of life through education, partnerships, and enforcement. We are committed to professional excellence through efficient use of our resources and by developing innovative programs for the community in which we live, work, and play.

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