



Successful Practices & Strategies

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Fairfield Bay Police Department

Fairfield Bay, Arkansas

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Community policing element

Community partnerships and problem solving

Problem/issue

Community trust

Problem description

Areas of our community struggling to make ends meet and a large drug and alcohol problem. Trust of police was nonexistent. Community members felt that the police were there solely to arrest and charge people, not to help them.

Community policing strategies implemented

In the spring of 2018, we will be starting one of our first community outreach programs, “Bicycles for kids,” to re-establish with the kids that the police are good people—not always there to arrest someone but also here to help. We want to build a good rapport with the children and their families so that they are not afraid to ask for our help. Our department has also put together a brochure to hand out with helpful numbers and addresses of where they can go, whether it’s for a meal, substance abuse, or just for someone to listen.

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

We started a Bicycles for Kids Safety Program as a way to reach out to the people in the struggling areas of our community. The idea was to show that we, the police, are there to make positive changes in people’s lives, not just “deal with them” at times of trouble.

We were able to speak to other residents and businesses and let them know the needs and problems that others face. This enlightened so many people who just did not realize that some of these issues existed in our community. The outpouring of support was incredible. We received donated bicycles and helmets for the kids and set up a training course to teach them bicycle safety. A lunch of hot dogs and chips was provided them through one of the local church groups, and each child that arrived received a new bicycle and helmet when they went through the one-hour safety class.

The results were far reaching. First, the community as a whole was brought together to face the problems and needs. Second, those who had trouble trusting the police saw a different side of law



enforcement, and much needed dialogue was opened between these residents and the police. It was the beginning that this community needed. Many of the groups that had formed to help people were able to pool resources and that enabled them to reach a greater amount of the needs.

The City leaders saw what was happening and stepped in. Improvements were made to some of the worst areas, brush cleared, and attention given to some of the concerns. This made the residents in these areas feel that they were part of the community, not just a problem.

We, the police, have spent additional time stopping just to talk to residents in these areas, all of whom mention the bicycle program. This has opened doors for all of us become a part of the community as a whole, not just separate pieces.

Lessons learned through program implementation

So many lessons were learned. One of the main lessons was that these simple steps and programs do not have to cost a fortune and can make an incredible difference. Groups and organizations already exist that want to help; they just need that spark and organizing to be brought together.

Our attitudes affect so much of our ability to speak and interact with others. If we stop looking at people as problems and instead try to help them, positive changes do happen. People want to be better than they are, and offering encouragement rather than disparagement made them feel that we truly do care. Communications have increased, resulting in a better trust of the police in areas that absolutely did not care for the police. The trust that people have for the police has increased to the point that we are being invited by residents to those areas to help start community watch programs and sometimes just to answer questions that they have.

Overall, this program has opened numerous doors for us, and our service to the community has improved drastically. The attitudes of the officers, once they realized what the programs sought to accomplish, have improved and now they feel that they can do the job they want to do, which is to make a difference.

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