

COPS Office 30th Anniversary Event Directors' Video Transcript

Joseph Brann, Former COPS Office Director 1994–1999

(00:05):

My name is Joe Brann. I was the founding director of the COPS Office and served there from 1994 to 1999. Some of the things that, that really, stick with me as a result of the time there was the energy, the enthusiasm that people in that organization, the people that we brought into that organization brought to it, brought to the, the work itself, the fact that it was such a dedicated group of people. Highly energetic, unbelievable hours put in by people in the early days of this. Some of the, the things that I feel that were most significant in terms of our early accomplishments, in addition to the obvious grant funding that we did, obviously adding 100,000 officers was what was most well-known, but I think what was not necessarily understood by the general public initially was this, was really about taking a concept that had evolved at the local level, the notion of community policing, and taking this to another level vis-a-vis federal funding to help support the hiring of additional police officers and redeployment of staff across the country.

Some of the most significant accomplishments in my view were the grant hiring is what's most well-known, but I think things that really stick with that, that were important to me, was the creation of the National Network of the Regional Community Policing Institutes. There were 30 of those originally around the country that we established, and I think they did a lot to support what was, was being done at the local level.

But I think the thing that sticks with me most of all was the staff. People who were just absolutely dedicated, highly professional, dedicated, responsive. The notion of customer service was paramount, especially in those early days of the program. And what I can say is now, even 30 years later, I still hear from our colleagues out there in the law enforcement community who acknowledge the work, the benefits that they derive from the COPS funding and the interaction they had with staff. They oftentimes remark on what a unique cast of characters that we had there, people who were really responsive to their needs and how much they'd enjoyed and appreciated responsiveness, the quick turnarounds that the staff were able to provide, and not only with respect to the funding, but assisting them with their training and technical assistance needs.

And I think that frankly, we realized that early on, that that was going to be the future of the COPS Office. It was really a matter of, the hiring was important, but ultimately, this was, it was a matter of what could be done to support local law enforcement in an ongoing fashion in the training and technical assistance needs and kinds of additional programs that have evolved over time are really reflective of the culture of the, the office when it was originally established. It's the recognition that there's been an ongoing evolution in policing and federal agencies, particularly grant funding agencies, need to be in a position to support that and recognize and anticipate what's happening out there in the communities and how these federal agencies can be best positioned to, to support that.

I can never express adequately the sense of, of gratitude and appreciation I have for those that I worked with there. And in closing, I just want to say congratulations to the COPS Office on 30 years of tremendous success and having a profound impact on the state of policing across the United States of America. And to those of you at the COPS Office, congratulations. You have done a phenomenal job. Your, your accomplishments have just been tremendous across the country, and it's greatly appreciated.

Thomas Frazier, Former COPS Office Director 1999–2001

(03:49):

(Photos only)

Carl Peed, Former COPS Office Director 2001–2009

(04:05):

My name is Carl Peed. I was director of the COPS Office from 2001 to 2009. I still carry my identification. It says retired on it. I think my best memories are twofold. I had an incredible group of employees to work with here. The other thing that was good about my tenure here was I had the continuity of leadership with great deputies that stayed my entire tenure. They were very important in providing any successes that I might take credit for.

Unfortunately, the COPS Office, we were here at a time when we had some challenging law enforcement things occurred throughout the country, starting with 9/11. I came aboard September the fourth, and that event on September the 11th kind of helped guide some of the COPS Office directions over the next eight years that I had a chance to serve here. Immediately following that, we had this beltway sniper event, and following that, we had the Virginia Tech shooting. We had Hurricane Katrina. And the COPS Office, because of our ability to award grants and bring people together to solve issues, we were able to bring people together to try to solve those problems throughout the country.

Bernard Melekian, Former COPS Office Director 2009–2013

(05:18):

I'm Barney Melekian. I had the privilege of being the director of the COPS Office from 2009 to 2013. I wanted to say congratulations to all the COPS staff and people watching this on the 30th anniversary of what I regard as one of the agencies making the greatest contribution to American law enforcement.

I came to the COPS Office in 2009, really at the beginning of the Great Recession, which would last for two to three years. One of the challenges at that time with the office was the fact that nobody, I think, really understood that this recession was going to last for as long as it did. We spent a lot of time, I had the privilege of spending a lot of time, traveling around the country meeting with chiefs of police and sheriffs and trying to help their agencies deal with the budget issues and staffing challenges that were resultant from that.

A couple things I'm the proudest of, we worked very hard, in addition to the hiring grants, the community policing project grants, which were focused really on making community policing a philosophy rather than a program. As a part of this, we emphasized, strongly emphasized, the

importance of academic partnerships. And a number of agencies were able to, to put their projects together in conjunction with local colleges and universities.

We continually reemphasize the three principles of community policing: building relationships, solving problems, and bringing about cultural change. And I'm honored to have been part of it, and I'm honored to have been, to have the opportunity to work with the dedicated staff of the COPS Office. It was my honor to spend nearly four years working with the dedicated men and women of the COPS Office and the Department of Justice as a whole. It was my privilege to be there, and I wish you all the best of luck going forward, and again, congratulations on 30 years.

Ronald L. Davis, Former COPS Office Director 2013–2018

(07:09):

Greetings. My name is Ron Davis. I'm currently the director of the United States Marshals Service. I also had the honor of being director of the COPS Office between 2013 and 2017. I remember working in the COPS Office, the first thing that stood out to me during my time there was just their tremendous capacity, professionalism, creativity, of the men and women that make up the office. They took every challenge that we gave them, and they basically came up with creative solutions to help the field advance community policing. During this period of time, there were some very, very high profile incidents that brought people to question law enforcement, to question our integrity as a field.

During that time, President Obama created the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and tasked the COPS Office to facilitate that work. And in very short order, they were able to conduct public hearings, testimonies, put a report together that still serves as a pinnacle of law enforcement as a seminal document for the field. So I want to thank them for that. That's just one of thousands of things that they do every year to really help advance the field, so it was truly a great honor to work with everybody there.

The impact for 30 years is immeasurable. It is outstanding, and I look forward to you to continue to keep up the outstanding work and to help this field keep achieving higher and higher levels of community policing, community engagement, and professional law enforcement, so thank you for that and thank you ahead of time for what you're going to do for the next 30 years. Keep up the great work, guys.

Phil Keith, Former COPS Office Director 2018–2021

(07:09):

I'm Phil Keith. I was the sixth director of the Department of Justice COPS Office from 2018 to 2021. I served as a police chief for 17 years in Knoxville, Tennessee and have a total of 55 years of law enforcement. The one thing that's common among all the law, the directors of the COPS Office is they're all law enforcement professionals and they may do business a little different, but they understand the mission, and that's to help the state and local and tribal law enforcement agencies. The accomplishments that we achieved in the COPS Office is certainly a continuation of great practices, on doing research and working with the field, that we funded more than 13,000 law enforcement agencies.

And when you think about that, 13 out of 18,000, that's a high percentage of agencies that we have helped over the years.

Some of the highlights I think during my tenure were, school safety certainly is right there at the top. We were, we experienced some very tragic incidents of school violence and we quickly assembled a group of professionals, subject matter experts, if you will, to develop a guide on best practices for school safety, and we also accompanied that with funding. The COPS Office was noted for its publications from the very beginning, and I'm very familiar with the beginning of the COPS Office because I actually worked on the legislation with the then-deputy attorney general, Eric Holder, to create the COPS Office. So it was a full cycle for me, helping create it through legislation and then actually working in the office, seeing the needs of the state and local, tribal law enforcement agencies, which are terrific. The needs and demands on law enforcement continue to increase and the resources just don't keep up with the needs of those agencies.

Probably one of the key ingredients for the COPS Office is how we do business, and that relies heavily on the staff. When I came into the COPS Office, I talked about being customer-friendly and really putting meaning to that, defining what that means, reducing the burden on the state, local, tribal agencies that receive grant funds and be a helper and not a burden. It's been a great ride, great 30 years, and COPS Office has done so much to change the face of law enforcement in this country, and it'll continue to do so.

Hugh T. Clements, Jr., COPS Office Director

(11:03):

Hugh T. Clements, Jr. I started in January of 2023 after 38 years in the field in the city of Providence, as a police officer, and my last 12 years as the chief of that agency. The important, integral word is trust, building that trust and foundation with partnership and relationships in the community all in the efforts of solving problems in our communities. There are problems, like problems in communities all across the country and there're nuances in each community, throughout this country. But is it, it is up to the local police departments and police officers to solve problems for the people they serve.

So for 30 years, 30 strong years, the COPS Office has been dedicated to advancing community policing to state, local, territorial, and tribal organizations throughout the county. But it will always be interactions between the human element. It will always be about relationships, interactions, partnerships, in solving problems in our communities and building those relationships and trust. Trust will continue to be the key word and the key portion of the work done by policing in our communities, and building those strong foundations to get the work done. And it's important work. It's an important mission that police officers play in their communities.

COPS Office Staff and Former Directors

(12:30):

Congratulations.

TRT: 12:46