

# Crime Prevention and Community Policing

**C**rime prevention is everyone's business. To be effective, crime prevention requires cooperation by all elements of the community. When neighbors work together, crime prevention can improve the quality of life for every community and its residents.

Communities of faith have a common interest with law enforcement and criminal justice agencies: to keep neighborhoods safe and free from violence and crime. Unfortunately law enforcement is often seen as "the enemy," and communities of faith are sometimes out of touch with the community surrounding their buildings. Partnerships require understanding, and sometimes they require learning about a different culture or religion; they require sensitivity to the concerns of other partners; and most of all they require patience and hard work. And when they are successful, when real partnerships are formed between law enforcement and faith-based communities, people work together to create safer and more caring communities.

## Town Hall Faith and Justice Meetings

**Leaders representing religious minority groups and local law enforcement hold town hall meetings to defuse community tensions.**

**PROBLEM** After September 11, 2001, many minority ethnic and religious groups reported being singled out by law enforcement and new government policies. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported that incidents of anti-Muslim violence, discrimination, and harassment increased 15 percent in the United States from 2002 to 2003.<sup>63</sup>

**PROGRAM** To educate Muslims in the region about their rights and to improve relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, the St. Louis, MO, chapter of

CAIR met with local FBI agents, police officers, and the U.S. Attorney's Office to organize a town hall-style meeting to discuss the USA PATRIOT Act, which gave the government new powers of surveillance after September 11, 2001.

The town hall meeting was held at a local mosque. Muslim leaders from CAIR moderated the discussion, which addressed anti-Muslim hate crime, surveillance of Muslim-Americans by law enforcement, and concerns about fair application of the PATRIOT Act. Representatives from the FBI, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the Joint Counterterrorism Task Force took questions from the audience and attempted to address apprehensions about the new laws. This meeting created a framework for discussing community problems and working toward solutions. It demonstrated the commitment of law enforcement executives and city leaders to deal with these sensitive issues. CAIR-St. Louis also hosted a town hall-style meeting on "Know Your Rights." Local Muslim leaders heard from representatives of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the American Civil Liberties Union on civil rights, discrimination, detainment, racial profiling, and the proposed Domestic Security Enhancement Act.

**ROLE OF FAITH** CAIR is funded primarily by donations from local mosques that are committed to social justice.

**POTENTIAL OBSTACLES** Many Americans do not understand a faith outside of the Christian mainstream. The events of September 11 has exacerbated suspicion and distrust between the Muslim community and law enforcement. Establishing trust is the first and most essential step for this strategy to work.

**SIGNS OF SUCCESS** Town hall-style meetings have been so successful at diffusing tensions between Muslims and law enforcement that they have been replicated by almost every chapter of CAIR in cities across the country. Through media campaigns, conferences and seminars, publications, and action alerts, CAIR has

## STUDY CIRCLES ADDRESS RACIAL PROFILING

The Buffalo, NY, Police Department partnered with United Neighborhoods, a local community action organization, to develop a cooperative project to reduce racial profiling. The project was funded by a grant from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. The partners decided to use the study circle, a gathering of a dozen people from different ethnic backgrounds and professions to discuss the problem with help from a facilitator. One of the circles brought together Muslim business owners with African American youth in the neighborhood. The business owners were concerned about youth loitering in front of corner stores, and leaders

in the African American community cited a long-standing problem with illegal activities that took place at some of the stores. After four sessions of the study circle, the participants agreed to work together to develop recommendations. One of the recommendations was that more police officers should take a training in Muslim culture that was offered by the Erie County Central Police Services Training Academy in conjunction with a local leader in the Muslim community. Follow-up surveys indicated that the study circles increased participants' understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of other groups and improved their ability to communicate with people of different beliefs.

promoted goodwill between law enforcement and Muslims living in the United States. In 2002 CAIR published *Law Enforcement Efficacies' Guide to the Muslim Community*, which provides basic information about Islamic beliefs.

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## Race and Reconciliation Summit

### **A community-wide event brings together leaders in law enforcement, business, faith, government agencies, and social service agencies to improve race relations.**

*“Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.”*

—Frederick Douglass

**PROBLEM** In King County, WA, there were nine police officer-involved shootings of people of color in as many years. When each shooting was ruled justified, minority leaders in the community raised questions of bias, institutional racism, and racial insensitivity within law enforcement.

**PROGRAM** County law enforcement and faith leaders worked together to address long-standing racial tensions through a community-wide summit. King County Sheriff Dave Reichert and Rev. Donovan Rivers of the Apostolic Clergy Advisory Council invited the National Crime Prevention Council to design a summit meeting that would produce specific actions to encourage reconciliation.

NCPC interviewed 180 people from civil rights groups, the faith community, the police officers' union, refugee and immigrant groups from the large Southeast Asian and African communities in King County, and local nonprofit and advocacy groups. Interviewers encouraged each group to discuss their concerns in dealing with law enforcement or with community-based organizations. The summit was designed to address these concerns.

At the summit, community members and law enforcement officers shared stories and strategies around four themes: reconciliation, trust, leadership and service, and justice. Participants developed a list of recommended strategies for the community. After the summit, participants ranked the recommendations according to importance and feasibility. NCPC staff returned to Seattle and convened a small working group to implement the solutions.

**ROLE OF FAITH** Rev. Donovan Rivers, pastor of the Mount Calvary of Faith Apostolic Church and founder of the Apostolic Clergy Advisory Council, was at the center of this effort. As a respected spiritual leader in the African American community, Rev. Rivers encouraged local congregations to participate.

## LESSONS FROM THE HOLOCAUST

Since 1999 the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) have been offering training models for recruit, in-service, and command-level law enforcement officers and federal judges. Developed in collaboration with the FBI, the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia, the Federal Judicial Center, and Prince George's County Police Department, these programs examine the history of the Holocaust and encourage law enforcement officials to reflect upon their personal and professional responsibilities in a pluralistic society. The programs have served more than 14,000 officers from nine local police agencies in the Washington, DC, region and have gained national recognition from the International

Association of Chiefs of Police and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Each training model includes three components:

- A guided tour of the museum's permanent exhibition, which traces the history of the Holocaust from the Nazi rise to power through the end of the Second World War and its aftermath
- An interactive discussion, led by museum historians and educators, on the abuse of power under the Nazis and the role of police within the Nazi state
- An interactive examination, led by ADL educators, of the difficult role of police in American society today

**POTENTIAL OBSTACLES** Many churches in urban neighborhoods have no positive contact with the police. It is necessary that faith leaders believe in this effort and encourage other faith-based groups and congregations to participate. Law enforcement officers may also feel defensive and unwilling to participate, so it is important that everyone understands that the goal of the summit is to work toward solutions rather than to place blame.

**SIGNS OF SUCCESS** The summit established dialog and working relationships, and the group began implementing the recommendations.

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## Community Crime Prevention Festival

### **Law enforcement agencies and a faith-based group cosponsor community safety events on Halloween.**

**PROBLEM** Child safety during Halloween is a national concern. As children go door-to-door trick-or-treating, they are potential targets for crimes of opportu-

nity. Homeowners may also be at risk when older teens or even adults put on costumes and use the opportunity for petty theft or vandalism.

**PROGRAM** In collaboration with the Alabama Crime Prevention Clearinghouse and the Montgomery (AL) Police Department (MPD), the Morningview Baptist Church hosts a citywide Halloween Safety Festival every year. Hundreds of church volunteers spend two days setting up numerous games and information booths, a preschool area, and a food court in a carnival atmosphere. Event organizers partner with local schools to notify students about the festival.

The annual festival was developed by the church as a community outreach project. It is financed by the church, receives no city money, and depends on volunteers from the church and the MPD. Church volunteers scour the community for donations and seek sponsors for special equipment and activities, such as a McGruff® vehicle, photo booth, or petting zoo.

The Alabama Crime Prevention Clearinghouse at Auburn University Montgomery, in conjunction with the MPD, operates a McGruff Crime Prevention Display with child safety information such as McGruff fingerprint kits, crime prevention coloring books, pencils, McGruff badges, and other materials. McGruff makes regular appearances and even had his own 20th birthday celebration at the festival in 2000. Children come dressed in their Halloween costumes and receive candy from each game and booth. They go home with crime prevention materials and information about the church as well as bags of candy.

**ROLE OF FAITH** The festival is part of the social ministry of this Southern Baptist congregation. The church members appreciate the opportunity to meet other community residents and to introduce them to the church. Some law enforcement officers are also members of the congregation. After the festival, the lay leaders make home visits to those who have left their names and contact information. They use the opportunity to connect families to social welfare services if appropriate.

**POTENTIAL OBSTACLES** This event requires an enormous commitment of time, resources, and planning. Four hundred people participate in festival planning, preparation, execution, and follow-up. Financial and in-kind support from throughout the community is important. The cooperation of local law enforcement is essential.

**SIGNS OF SUCCESS** More than 6,000 area families enjoy the safe Halloween activities at the festival. The annual event has created a sustainable partnership between the church and the police department, and it enables the church to extend its ministry to the community, which in turn respects the church for its outreach. Staff report an exponential rise in number of festival participants each year. With a large congregation as the event sponsor, the festival benefits from a huge pool of volunteers. The festival helps build a sense of community.

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## **Crisis Response Teams**

### **Congregations collaborate with law enforcement to plan and implement emergency preparedness and homeland security activities appropriate to the needs of ethnic and religious minorities.**

**PROBLEM** After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, cities and communities were called on to develop emergency preparedness and disaster response plans. Pine Bluff, AR, has the nation's largest stockpile of chemical weapons, which makes homeland security and emergency preparedness important concerns.

**PROGRAM** In 2003 a Pine Bluff religious leader and director of the Pine Bluff Weed and Seed (a federal program designed to "weed" crime and criminal activity from a community and "seed" human services in the neighborhood) convened a public meeting to develop a coordinated homeland security effort that was also sensitive to the needs of ethnic and religious minorities. Law enforcement officers, Neighborhood Watch organizations, fire department officials, faith groups, and the local emergency management organization participated. The team worked with the local emergency planning committee, distributed emergency preparedness information, and secured a commitment from ten churches to provide shelter, food, and clothing in an emergency. Training was provided to help local pastors organize their congregants to provide a variety of services during emergencies.

Using the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday as a backdrop, Pine Bluff Weed and Seed and a group called the Interested Citizens for Voter Registration brought together Jews, Christians, and Muslims to discuss culture, religion, and

homeland security concerns. They hosted the KingFest Celebration and encouraged faith leaders to help their congregations understand people of different backgrounds and religions.

**ROLE OF FAITH** This interfaith program involves spiritual leaders from diverse faiths who help initiate cross-cultural meetings and develop relationships with people of other ethnic and religious backgrounds.

**POTENTIAL OBSTACLES** In an area where there are many diverse ethnic and cultural groups, tension and suspicion may be difficult to overcome. An honest airing of disagreements and grievances is necessary to establish trust so that the different groups can work together to protect the community.

**SIGNS OF SUCCESS** The program reduced community fear by promoting emergency preparedness and providing faith-based victim assistance services. The collaboration built the community's capacity for crime prevention by bringing together faith leaders, criminal justice professionals, and emergency management officials in a coordinated response. The KingFest Celebration helped break down ethnic and racial barriers. The Local Emergency Planning Committee created a formal mechanism for partner groups to come together to coordinate efforts.

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## **Pastors on Patrol**

### **Clergy accompany police officers on patrol and provide support at crime scenes.**

**PROBLEM** Community residents are often uninformed about services provided by local law enforcement. This lack of information can lead to apathy and even hostility between residents and law enforcement.

**PROGRAM** The Fernandina Beach (FL) Police Department tapped the local Ministerial Alliance to recruit religious leaders for a ride-along program. Thirty pastors are matched with patrol officers each week. The clergy wear Pastors on Patrol uniforms and serve as mediators at crime scenes.

The Pastors on Patrol program was initiated by the chief of police in partnership with the law enforcement chaplain. The chaplain is affiliated with a local

Presbyterian church and serves the police department without pay. He is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and does frequent ride-alongs in uniform. He manages the ride-along program and recruits community faith leaders to participate. Both the police chief and the chaplain attend the Fernandina Beach Ministerial Alliance meetings to build support between the faith community and the police.

Currently all volunteers to the program are Christian, with representatives from both historically African American and white denominations. Pastors sign a waiver releasing the city from liability. They usually sign up for three of an officer's 12 shifts and ride about six hours per trip. Police and clergy make their own matches, and most develop a bond with their partners. Almost 30 churches participate. The Ministerial Alliance, which includes African American and white religious leaders in the community, provides donations for the Pastors on Patrol hats and uniforms. Many of the participating pastors get together for peer support and coffee once a week.

**ROLE OF FAITH** Seeing respected religious leaders patrolling the neighborhood with officers encourages positive behavior by residents and reduces fear. Confrontations are less volatile, and people are less likely to react with anger when a pastor is present. The strategy reduces tensions between the neighborhood and the police, especially if the program is multiethnic and multiracial. It also provides an opportunity for pastors to conduct a social ministry in the neighborhood.

**POTENTIAL OBSTACLES** It's important that members of all faiths feel welcomed to this project. The makeup of the Pastors on Patrol program reflects the demographics of the community. Officers may be reluctant to participate if they feel they will be monitored or judged. And civilians in patrol cars can be a safety and liability risk for the city if they aren't well prepared.

**SIGNS OF SUCCESS** The strategy has worked for the Fernandina Beach Police Department in part because of the leadership of Police Chaplain Don McFadyen who stresses the importance of working with schools, the faith community, and the government.

Fernandina Beach's Pastors on Patrol program was modeled after a successful initiative in Shreveport, LA, and there are similar programs across the country. The program has greatly increased trust between the community and the police department and has given the pastors a better understanding of police officers' responsibilities as well as a different view of their community. Pastors on Patrol was endorsed by the Fernandina Beach Anti-Crime Coalition.

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