



Provide safety through community policing

By Matt Bostrom

Values

- Provide safety through community policing
- Practice fiscal responsibility
- Collaborate with local law enforcement
- Encourage diversity
- Connect with youth
- Improve service through technology

Citizens frequently ask law enforcement agencies to deliver services through community policing. Because the term *community policing* is used quite often, it may be helpful for me to describe how I have arrived at my philosophy of community policing.

There are primarily two models for police administration: the *bureaucratic model* and the *community-oriented policing (COP) model*. The bureaucratic model of policing emerged during the turn of the century in America to reduce the amount of political influence found in policing. The model stressed a hierarchical structure for police

organizations with a centralized authority responsible for creating organizational policies and procedures. It was assumed that if scientific principles of organizational theory were applied to police organizations, efficiency would improve. As policing became formalized, an emphasis was placed on professionalism. In the bureaucratic model, the primary function of the police was crime control and the enforcement of the law.

The COP model reflects a change in thinking regarding the effective delivery of law enforcement services. The organizational structure is decentralized with an emphasis placed on achieving community goals. Instead of promoting high degrees of specialization within the organization, skills and work assignments are generalized with task achievement of community goals as the primary objective. Some examples of COP initiatives include foot patrols, storefront offices, community communication through social networking, and problem-oriented policing strategies.

In general, I believe in a philosophy of community policing that promotes and supports organizational

strategies, addresses the root causes of crime, increases a sense of safety, and improves quality of life through problem-solving and partnerships between law enforcement and the community. Community policing requires police officers and citizens to take a balanced approach to addressing crime and quality of life issues. Specifically, police officers, deputies, and citizens must become partners and seek ways to identify and effectively address the root causes of crime.

The way to ensure community involvement in the preparation of a public safety agenda is through strong and trusting relationships with the community. This means that each officer and deputy must embrace the community policing concept and do their part in improving relationships with every citizen. Regular and open neighborhood meetings should be scheduled, so that citizens have the opportunity to give feedback on police department initiatives. In an effort to accommodate those individuals who do not feel comfortable speaking at

public meetings, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office (RCSO) should provide opportunities for citizens to give constructive feedback via telephone or the internet. In turn, the RCSO should frequently communicate with the public regarding their attempts to resolve citizen concerns and

implement their recommendations.

Over my career, I have been involved in several initiatives designed to develop positive community relations in the City of Saint Paul. I was fortunate to participate in a very important project that the Saint Paul Police Department used to re-examine its hiring practices. Along with a focus on experience and education, we added a character-based evaluation.

Community members helped the department identify 14 essential character traits in police officers. The community recommended that officers have good judgment and that they be creative, self-motivated, understanding, self-confident,



independent, courageous, tenacious, respectful, compassionate, honest, loyal, interactive, and responsible.

This study has confirmed the importance of hiring exceptional people first, and then training them to be highly-effective law enforcement officers, as opposed to finding people who have the educational resume to test for examination without emphasizing vital character traits. Simply stated, the Saint Paul Police Department is focusing on the selection of diverse individuals based on character, and then training them to the highest level of competence and proficiency. The result of this type of hiring is that the citizens of Saint Paul hold our officers in high esteem.

Another example of developing positive community relations occurred when I was a district supervisor. I was able to work closely with local business associations and build strong police and community ties through a new police storefront. This storefront was located within one block of the most densely populated and ethnically diverse neighborhood in the metropolitan area. A bond of trust was established with the community. It was exciting to see the officer take more ownership of the neighborhood and for the community to take more ownership of the officer.

I am convinced that the improvement of community relations requires a multi-faceted approach. Among these approaches are character-based law enforcement, educational opportunities, human services access, organized recreation, and healthy places of worship. I am committed to doing my part in each of these areas.

Community policing can only be successful when there is a bond of trust between the community and the officers who serve in it. Law enforcement should never be viewed by a community as group of uniformed strangers. From the officer and deputy on patrol to the sheriff, I am committed to community policing, both on and off duty. ■