
The Belleville Beat

Belleville Police Department
Belleville, IL 62220

June 2005
Volume 11, Number 6

From the Desk of Sgt. Don Sax

The City of Belleville has many new neighborhood watches. This month, June 2005, *The Belleville Beat*, again provides an overview of Community Oriented Policing (COP).

What Is Community Oriented Policing or COP?

It's bringing police and citizens together to prevent crime -- and solve neighborhood problems. In community oriented policing, the emphasis is on stopping crime before it happens. Community oriented policing gives citizens more control over the quality of life in their community.

Community Oriented Policing means Police become part of the neighborhood. This helps police get a better sense of residents' needs and helps residents feel more trust in the police. Also, residents "join" the police force. Residents and police work together to achieve a common goal of a safer neighborhood.

Why Learn About Community Policing?

Because it can't work without your help! Community oriented policing calls for teamwork between citizens and police. Preventing crime is a big job. The police are more effective when they can depend on residents for help. Commitment from both citizens and police is needed to improving your neighborhood. Community oriented police officers look to residents to help in solving community problems.

Community Oriented Policing Starts With The Community.

Residents in any neighborhood share many of the same concerns and fears. These may be issues of:

- ❖ Safety. For example, many residents are concerned about drug dealing and drug use, vandalism, robberies, violent crime and their children's safety both in and out of school.
- ❖ Noise. Unwanted noise can include loud music, automobile engines, and people raising their voices.
- ❖ Neighborhood appearance. Problems include graffiti, abandoned autos, rundown buildings or property, litter, overgrown vacant lots.

- ❖ Traffic and parking problems. Some neighborhoods have so much traffic that travel is slow going and parking is next to impossible.

Many Neighborhoods Are Caught In A Downward Cycle.

Conditions often go from bad to worse, but community oriented policing can help break the cycle!

- ❖ Fear keeps residents off the streets. Residents become isolated from each other and forget the power they have as a group. In effect, they give up control of their neighborhood.
- ❖ Neighborhood conditions worsen. When residents close their doors on neighborhood problems, they also close their doors on solutions. Crime rates may rise.
- ❖ Fear and isolation increase. And so the cycle goes. Residents may start to lose hope that things can ever change.

Putting COP Back "On The Beat" is the cornerstone of community oriented policing. Putting cops back on the "beat" makes for a safer street. Within his or her area (beat), a community oriented police officer works to:

- ❖ Get to know people. The community oriented police officer forms relationships with both residents and merchants. He or she learns about people's concerns and helps build trust between citizens and police. Community oriented policing gets officers out of their patrol cars and onto the street.
- ❖ Helps solve neighborhood problems. Community oriented police do more than respond to crime. They also look for ways to prevent crime and to improve the quality of life.
- ❖ Put people in touch with social service agencies. These may include agencies that can help with problems such as abuse of alcohol or other drug use, violence in the home, child abuse.

Community Oriented Police Have An Expanded Role.

Community oriented police officers are teachers, as well as law enforcers. In addition to their regular duties, officers may also

- ❖ Work with community groups. This is a more formal way to get to know -- and resolve -- residents' concerns and learn more about community problems.
- ❖ Teach residents how to prevent crime. For example, police can talk about ways to safeguard homes and businesses, spot danger, respond to an emergency, become a less likely target of crime.
- ❖ Work with young people. Community oriented police officers may visit schools and talk about the dangers of alcohol and other drug use. They may also help set up and run recreational programs.

Community Oriented Policing Benefits Everyone.

Community oriented policing makes citizens and police partners against crime. Here are just a few advantages:

- ❖ Better communication with police. Community oriented policing is based on the idea that police and community members are on the same side. Citizens have more opportunity to voice concerns and police are dedicated to listening.
- ❖ More say in setting police priorities. Residents assist police in deciding what the top goals should be. Residents also have a say in deciding how law enforcement resources should be spent.
- ❖ Less fear. Community oriented policing breaks the cycle of deterioration and fear allowing residents to "take back the streets."
- ❖ An improved quality of life. Working with police and with each other helps residents feel a sense of neighborhood pride.
- ❖ A better understanding of what police do. Residents get a clearer idea of the pressures and problems police deal with every day. This can help improve relations between residents and police.

How Can I Help Make Community Oriented Policing Work?

Don't wait for someone else to take the lead. Everyone in the community shares the responsibility for making community oriented policing work! There's a lot you can do. For example:

- ❖ Get to know your neighbors. Community oriented policing works better when the community is united. One way to start is to knock on neighbors' doors and introduce yourself.
- ❖ Hold community meetings. Get the word out on when and where meetings will take place. Encourage your neighbors to attend. Meetings can be a great opportunity to air concerns and agree on solutions.
- ❖ Join a neighborhood watch group. It's your neighborhood, keep an eye on it. If there's no group in your neighborhood, ask the police how to start one.
- ❖ Talk to your community oriented police officer. Report any suspicious activities. Pass along any information that could help the police prevent or solve a crime. Talk about your concerns, but don't forget to show your support.

New Neighborhood Watches

Please make sure your Beyond Neighborhood Watch Getting Started information is sent to the

Sanitation Department
300 Environmental Drive
Belleville, Illinois 62220

for record keeping purposes.