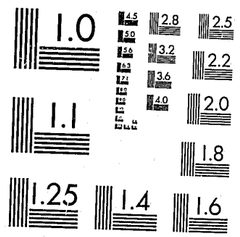

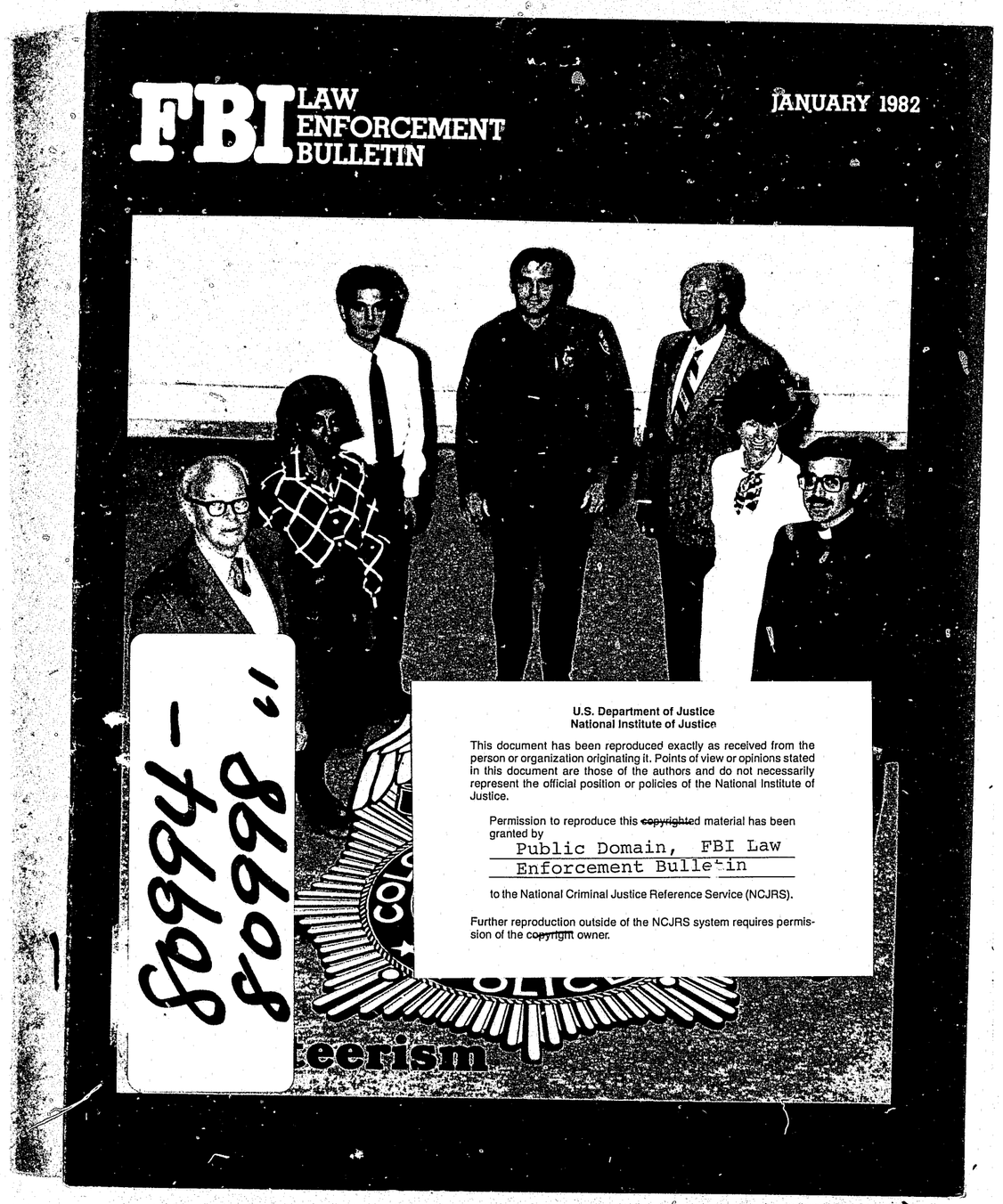

Volunteerism

A Police Department's Response to Changing Times

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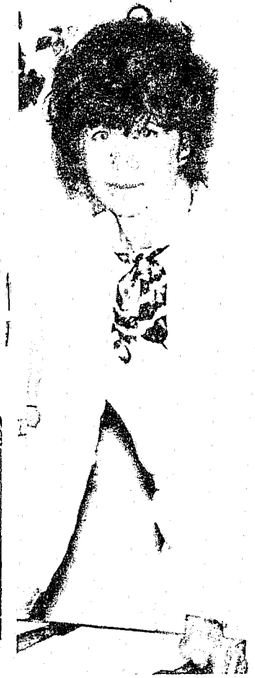

The decade of the 80's, the most scientific and educated in recorded history, also looms as the most violent. Crime threatens to become our greatest public concern.

This concern is also coupled with increasing public pressure for lower taxes and improved productivity. Recent Federal budget cuts eliminating needed programs and resources have complicated the situation even further by gradually reducing capital resources to law enforcement agencies. Clearly, it is time for those in law enforcement to examine alternative resources.

The Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) started developing an alternative to both its own and the surrounding community's frustration over climbing crime rates and decreasing dollars when, 8 years ago, the department's first volunteer program was introduced.

The motivation for using volunteers was not based on economic factors but on very human ones. Through exposure to daily police activity, the volunteer develops a realistic perspective of the law enforcement system and a resulting positive regard for the police agency and its personnel.

Photos: Don Macmurdo

Ms. Taylor

Chief John L. Tagert

Rather than internalizing all law enforcement problems, police agencies can share these problems with the community. The public relations impact and advocacy role developed through such citizen involvement is invaluable. The traditional communication gap between the police and the community begins to close.

The CSPD's volunteer program challenges other traditions. In the past, police volunteers throughout the Nation were usually reserve officers and posse members, emphasizing direct law enforcement assistance and field activity. The current law enforcement volunteer in Colorado Springs is of a new breed. The emerging portrait of this volunteer is that of a serious citizen advocate who provides the agency with a host of support services that extend and enrich the delivery system. It has been repeatedly shown in Colorado Springs that the volunteer is motivated out of genuine concern for and commitment to the law enforcement agency's purpose and function. As one volunteer succinctly explained, "We are all angry about crime, and this is one way we can positively channel our anger." In this decade of alarming crime rates, the realization is growing that law enforcement is no longer just the responsibility of the police officer but is a partnership between the public and private sectors.

This two-pronged realization that involvement fosters ownership and that personal contact increases awareness and understanding has given birth to what has become an expansive program in the CSPD, using a broad cross section of citizens in voluntary capacities. The 100 volunteers include all age, socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, religious and educational strata. Ages of volunteers range from 18 to 80, with the average age being 45. Fifty-one percent are male, 61 percent are employed, 25 percent are 55 or over, and some are handicapped and disabled.

In 1980 alone, volunteers donated over 12,000 hours—equal to about $100,000 in services and over five full-time positions. Volunteers can be found in all four major bureaus of the department. (See fig. 1.)

Overseeing the voluntary staffing of these units is a full-time paid volunteer services coordinator who serves as an advocate for both the law enforcement agency and the volunteer. He need not be employed in law enforcement but must be knowledgeable in human relations skills and volunteerism.

In managing these volunteers the coordinator/director uses the same fundamental skills and principles as personnel managers. Although unpaid, the volunteer is "hired," trained, integrated, evaluated, recognized, and even "fired" in a parallel process to paid department personnel. The result is the cultivation of professional volunteers in an established professional environment. Incorporation of an unpaid staff in this manner not only lends importance and significance to the volunteer's role but also, from the staff perspective, lends credence to volunteer work and creates acceptance.

Since staff resistance to volunteers is the primary problem facing volunteer programs today, professionalism of a program is a valued goal. In the CSPD, the term "professional volunteer" is not contradictory. A close look at a few of the volunteers is perhaps the most illustrative method of documenting this point.

—The 80-year-old retired civil servant who assists running the extra-duty office by scheduling 80 officers per month and keeping a statistical log that documents and supports the need and increasing priority for extra-duty personnel to help alleviate an on-duty manpower shortage.

—The priest who loaned his expertise on "aging" to help develop, teach, and be a consultant to the Senior Victim Assistance Program, which was selected by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) as an exemplary project.

Figure 1

Operations Bureau
Police Substation
Traffic Hit & Run
Robbery
Narcotics
Juvenile
Missing Persons
Fugitive
Check Fraud
Auto Theft
Special Task Force

Support Services Bureau
Youth Services
Victim Services
Crime Prevention
Volunteer Services
Chaplaincy Corps
Senior Victim Assistance Team
Range

Inspection Services
Intelligence
Organized Crime Strike Force
Legal Office

Staff Services Bureau
Business Office
Communications Center
Records and Identification
Crime Analysis Unit
Extra-Duty Office
Evidence

—The middle-aged housewife in transition from a confined domestic role provides needed clerical assistance to the department's business office, while developing valuable marketable skills.

—The nurse who deals with crime victims in distress and provides emotional and physical comfort, followup, and referral.

—The 36-year-old criminal justice student who, while exploring a career shift, edits the weekly warrant information newsletter, which updates personnel in the patrol and investigative divisions on current fugitive information.

—The disabled volunteer who works in public relations by manning the substation police desk for case reporting and making public presentations on the subject of the police department to community organizations.

—The volunteer who, in her third career, manages the office of the Organized Crime Strike Force, goes undercover to type confidential reports, and receives and records information from informants.

—The volunteer crime analyst who reviews approximately 250 criminal mischief cases per month and provides statistical data reflecting crime patterns, areas of concentrated activity, and M.O.'s. The information alerts the police officer to the possible relationship between criminal mischief crime patterns and other crime patterns in his sector.

This variety of examples indicates that volunteers, when well-matched with their personal goals, needs, and interests, can perform a voluntary job with professional quality. These examples also challenge the frequently encountered myth that "if the volunteer were competent, he/she would acquire a paying job." The success of the volunteer program in the Colorado Springs Police Department demonstrates that the primary motivator for work is the intrinsic value of work itself. Remuneration for the volunteer comes from the performance of challenging work, the satisfaction of achievement, increased responsibility, recognition for accomplishment, and personal growth and development through use of skills, talents, and creativity. For these reasons, volunteers are self-motivated and possess a personal commitment to the task at hand.

Job Design

The process of matching CSPD volunteers and duties begins with the development of a written job description that states the reason and specifications of recruitment. Frequently, organizations, in a frenzied attempt to supplement manpower shortages, will enlist volunteers with little or no knowledge of where or how they will be used. In *The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs,* Marlene Wilson points out that recruiting before designing jobs is rather like trying to dance before music begins. The possibility of ending up out of step is very good.[1]

A well-developed job description should include the title and objective of the position, major responsibilities, qualifications, time required, length of commitment, training provided, the supervisor or to whom the volunteer is accountable, and benefits (optional). The job description is drafted either by the requesting unit supervisor or jointly with the director of volunteers. The initial impression the potential volunteer develops about the agency is based primarily on the job description. When carefully and imaginatively written, a job description invites participation; when concretely and specifically developed, the description indicates the value of the position in context with the overall agency goals and objectives. It is the cornerstone of a well-managed volunteer program—the fundamental tool on which to recruit, motivate, and eventually evaluate.

Recruitment

Recruitment naturally follows job design. It is a "selling" job and requires careful thought in targeting the audience and marketing the product—the job. This selective recruitment is preferable to general and widespread solicitation. A common mistake in recruiting is "looking in the wrong place for the right people."[2]

The key to effective recruitment is *marketing.* It not only is necessary to sell the job to the volunteer but also provide and promote benefits—it is an exchange or barter system. Since the potential volunteer will not receive fi-

nancial compensation, an effective marketing approach must be used to meet psychological needs and personal goals. Volunteers themselves can play a large part in the recruitment process. Satisfied volunteers sharing their experiences by word-of-mouth are a program's richest asset. Volunteers with specific professional skills can also provide technical savvy for recruitment activities. Presently, the CSPD draws from the expertise of a retired advertising executive, a commercial artist, and a graphics company. Clever and attractive publicity to establish the program's visibility and credibility in the community furnishes a sound base on which to begin recruiting.

An additional aspect that must not be overlooked is that recruitment is a highly individualized task, and therefore, needs to be tailored to the situation. There are many variables, such as the number of positions being filled, the type of job(s), the number of people needed for the job(s), and the types of skills required. An agency needs to be adequately equipped for a host of recruitment situations by maintaining a large "tool box" with a variety of "tools." According to the situation, a different tool may be selected and used, alone or in combination with other tools, to accomplish the task. Since recruitment strategies vary widely, pinpointing a successful formula is virtually impossible. The best recruitment tools, however, are a good sound volunteer program and meaningful jobs.

Screening, Interviewing, and Placing

With the foundation laid in job design and recruitment, the screening, interviewing, and placement process becomes the next crucial step in volunteer program management. This selection process provides a built-in mechanism to determine appropriateness and suitability of the potential volunteer and to ensure quality control. For law enforcement agencies, most particularly, this is of paramount concern.

"The motivation for using volunteers was not based on economic factors but on very human ones."

Ivan Scheier, Ph.D., noted consultant in the field of criminal justice volunteerism, states that we must "screen out those candidates clearly unsuited for certain jobs and redirect them to appropriate placements whenever possible." This is essential for several reasons:

1) The agency must be protected. It must be helped, not hindered, by volunteer involvement;
2) The agency's reputation is greatly affected by its volunteers;
3) Morale of paid staff and other volunteers declines when inappropriate or poor volunteer placements occur; and
4) The volunteer himself suffers when misplaced.[3]

As important as screening out these "high risk" volunteers is the screening *in* of "high potential" candidates. Each potential volunteer has something to contribute—the volunteer director's task is to *discover* what that contribution is and put it to work effectively on behalf of the agency. This takes time and an ability to listen, probe, and "try on for size." If the interview process accomplishes its purpose, the candidate and agency will be able to make a fairly accurate assessment of mutual needs, expectations, and goals.

It follows, then, that the bottom line of the volunteer director's job is *human resource development.* One of the saddest mistakes made by volunteer administrators is not efficiently using a person's talents and abilities. Marlene Wilson points out that there are three concerns repeatedly expressed by volunteers:

1) Their volunteer work will be a waste of time;
2) Their skills and talents will not be used; and
3) They may be placed in jobs for which they are not suited.[4]

Effective interviewing and placing speaks to all these concerns, while ensuring that careful and deliberate steps have been taken to provide the most qualified person for the job.

The interview process should not end in the volunteer director's office but should proceed to the requesting unit supervisor and appropriate staff for final determination. To further ensure a successful placement, the selection process should include as many of the volunteer's potential coworkers as possible.

Training

Training is a concept with which law enforcement personnel are very familiar. It has received increased emphasis and has enhanced the officers' and community's respect for law enforcement.

Training experiences for the volunteer also need to be provided. The volunteer appreciates and derives satisfaction from training programs that are relevant and provide skills and personal growth. Good training, therefore, is a primary motivator of volunteers, as well as a way to share information. It is a valuable tool to use in retaining volunteers and furnishing incentives.

Training is also believed to be a primary factor in limiting the number of on-the-job injuries. Since the inception of the CSPD volunteer program, there have been no job-related injuries; however, all persons involved in the program are covered by the city's medical insurance company.

Manpower and funding shortages have brought patrol functions to dangerously low levels, thus increasing the importance of the volunteer's role. Properly trained, a volunteer can release an officer to do what he/she is trained to do in handling high-priority calls for service and demanding, detailed investigative tasks.

Volunteer training, when effectively implemented, is conducted in three stages:

1) Orientation—familiarizing the volunteer with the agency, its philosophy, functions, policies, organizational structure, and goals. This may include a tour, a briefing session (formal or informal), and arranged observation opportunities in areas of interest.
2) Preservice training could include formal classroom instruction, required courses, suggested sessions of the police training academy, and/or informal on-the-job training by unit supervisor or appointee.
3) Inservice training—volunteers need and want ongoing training and continuing educational opportunities. The more knowledgeable and informed they are, the more proficient they become in absorbing the routine work burdens generated by increasing population and criminal activity.

The value of training is best illustrated by the CSPD senior victim assistance team and the CSPD chaplaincy corps. The senior victim assistance team, a 15-member team that works with elderly victims of crime, undergoes a 3-month preservice training program in crisis intervention, communication skills, and familiarization with referral resources. Monthly meetings are held for case information exchange and discussion, in conjunction with specialized inservice training.

The chaplaincy corps, composed of 30 local clergy, accompany patrol officers on a rotating basis during peak evening hours 7 days a week. They are also on call 24 hours a day through a paging unit for counseling, consultation, and crisis work in the community and within the department itself. Their monthly training deals with topics ranging from police crisis intervention, department policies and procedures, legal matters, safety, psychological profiles on suicidals, battered women and substance abusers to pastoral skills development.

As well as receiving training, chaplains also train. In keeping with the chaplaincy program's purpose of professional sharing, chaplains provide training at the police academy to rookies on job-related and material problems and community referral resources.

"Through exposure to daily police activity, the volunteer develops a realistic perspective of the law enforcement system and a resulting positive regard for the police agency and its personnel."

A second dimension to training is *staff* training, a critical but often neglected element of a successful volunteer program. Considerable work needs to be done to develop a positive agency attitude that reflects the support of volunteers and enthusiasm for the program. Therefore, careful attention and continuous work is required to foster effective relationships between paid and volunteer staff.

Staff training also prevents potential problems by addressing topics such as resistance to volunteers; myths about volunteers; the philosophy of volunteer management, emphasizing a professional approach; supervision; evaluation and recognition of volunteers; and termination of volunteers. Failure to resolve barriers or to deal with issues, biases, and concerns can lead to poor and ineffective program implementation, negative public relations as a result of a volunteer's unpleasant experiences, and eventual program rejection.

Evaluation

Evaluation of both the volunteer's performance and the appropriateness of the placement assignment needs to be performed periodically. This review may be conducted formally at a prearranged time, working from the written job description, or informally and spontaneously according to the volunteer's needs and the coordinator's individual approach. Volunteers need to know on a regular basis how they are doing. Conversely, they need to communicate beliefs and suggestions that may contribute to the overall improvement of the program.

Likewise, the staff needs the feedback and support generated from the evaluation interview in order to respond appropriately. The volunteer services coordinator as a volunteer/agency liaison person should, with diplomacy and insight, furnish information and ideas that will enhance the volunteer's job satisfaction while increasing effectiveness and productivity for the agency.

Volunteers Are Not Free

The development of a volunteer program is too often viewed as a panacea to an agency's budgetary problems. Implementing a volunteer program, however, is not cost-free. While it is both cost-effective and cost-beneficial, there are built-in expenses, such as the coordinator/director's salary, office equipment and supplies, staff time spent in training and supervision, and volunteer recognition. These expenses are eventually counteracted by the program's final product. As with many human services, quantitative measurement and documented results of a volunteer program are difficult to pinpoint. Cost-saving elements in donated manhours, teamed with the number of officers freed for priority calls, provide some numerical clues. However, the breadth of the public relations dimension, the impact of citizen participation as a deterrent to crime, and the trust gained from a team relationship between police and citizens are benefits that cannot be purchased through any budgetary process. Clearly, the volunteer is a positive and revitalizing response to the increasing demands of law enforcement today. It is a resource that must be explored. **FBI**

Footnotes

[1] Wilson, Marlene, *Effective Management of Volunteer Programs*, Volunteer Associates, 1978, p. 52.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Scheier, Ivan H., "Using Volunteers in Court Settings." U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, J. D. Publications, No. 477, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 46.
[4] Wilson, Marlene, p. 132.