

THE BILL BLACKWOOD
LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

The Effective Utilization of Volunteers
In a Small Agency

A Policy Research Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Professional Designation
Graduate, Management Institute

By
Carmella T. Jones

Armstrong County Sheriffs Office
Claude, Texas
April 1997

ABSTRACT

Is community involvement the answer to the problems of manpower shortages for a small rural agency? Can unpaid volunteers be of service to a department and in what way can they be of service? Journal articles, books and data from other agencies provide information for small agency administrators to make informed decisions. Surveys from large agencies who have used volunteers in several capacities outline the advantages and disadvantages of volunteer programs. Brief descriptions of a few volunteer programs are discussed. Volunteers were found to be reliable, motivated, adaptable and productive. Small agencies should systematically analyze their needs and implement volunteer programs. Using a volunteer coordinator, preferably a sworn ranking officer, helped by a citizen volunteer, increases the possibility of program success. Volunteers are the best answer for small agencies right now. At a time when all law enforcement agencies need to improve their image, volunteers are the finest way to effectively add manpower, change public opinion and stay within budgetary confines.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	1
Historical and Legal Context	2
Review of Literature or Practice	4
Discussion of Relevant Issues	7
Conclusion/Recommendations	8
Bibliography	11

Introduction

Law enforcement officers need support, cooperation, and information from community members to perform effectively.(Neely, 164) The public wants greater safety and fair police treatment and can be very critical if those services are not provided. Small agencies are severely effected by lack of funds and lack of sufficient manpower to provide these services. Community involvement in the form of voluntary assistance to the Sheriff's Department could be an important link between law enforcement and the public.

The use of volunteers for crime prevention activities in a small law enforcement agency provides a solution to some of the problems facing small law enforcement agencies today. Volunteers could be used to provide assistance and relief from manpower shortages and financial shortfalls. In addition, citizens would have the opportunity to share in the policing process, become more knowledgeable of the law and the extra rules which govern police performance.

This report provides information for small agency administrators to make informed decisions. Researching the utilization of volunteers through journals, books and data from other agencies provides a variety of advantages and disadvantages. Evaluation of this information accumulated mostly from larger departments assists in determining the feasibility of initiating such a program in a very small department with a large jurisdiction. An informed decision based on this assessment removes some of the risk or lack of knowledge of the risks involved in beginning a volunteer program.

It is surprising the number of law enforcement agencies using unpaid labor. The tasks performed by these volunteers is limited only by the agency itself Costs of such programs vary according to the project. Problems encountered can be prevented with proper planning and establishment of rules and procedures. Working systematically beginning with the agency need to be addressed facilitates the determination of the type of volunteer program to implement. Volunteers can satisfy some of the needs and obligations required of small departments

Historical and Legal Context

Volunteerism is an American tradition.(WaUace,20) Volunteers are used in all types of public service. Fire fighters, ambulance technicians, teacher's aides, hospital Candy Stripers, and crossing guard officers are just a few familiar examples of the volunteer and unpaid workers who provide valuable assistance to locations without these services or to augment over extended and under funded organizations.

In law enforcement, volunteerism originated with the unpaid night watchman in Colonial America.(Burden 25) Volunteerism went even further in the settling of the old west. Everyone is familiar with the Sheriffs Posse comprised of local individuals who chased and captured the desperados, bank robbers and bad guys. However, this ideal picture is tainted by alarm due to lack of control in some cases. History records numerous instances when the law enforcement officer, either Marshall, Deputy or Sheriff who was unable to control such groups of citizen lawmen. These volunteers chose to take the law into their own hands, administering justice as they saw fit. In severe situations, they became roving bands of uncontrollable vigilantes. (Bushey 8)

Further trepidation of using volunteers in police work include horror stories concerning reserve officers and Posse Comitatus. (McGuire 10) Reserve programs have failed due to the failure of agencies to provide their personnel with the minimum training necessary to perform basic police duties or in effect, expecting part-time unpaid officers to perform at the level of a full time fully trained experienced officer. (Bushey 11) Requiring a part-time volunteer reserve officer to perform at the level of a thoroughly trained officer is unreasonable and destined for failure. History has proven that a fragmented, uncoordinated and untrained voluntary system of policing will fail because of tensions generated. It also unjustly places the burden of peacekeeping entirely upon the people. (Neely 22) This method of policing may have been effective in tribal times. Tribal members who failed to live up to the expectations of the band were punished by the group or family.(Neely 13) Law enforcement today is clearly out of the tribal stage.

Legal issues concerning the use of volunteers consist of no monetary compensation, which directly affects workers compensation for possible injury and possible liability constraints stemming from failure to train properly.(Wallace 23) The first concern prevents volunteers from coming forward and the second concern prevents agencies from using those who are willing to volunteer. Volunteers are not new to law enforcement. What is new is the increasing use of volunteers in support jobs, ranging from crime analysis, clerical work and crime prevention to victim assistance and communication.

Thousands of ordinary men and women are volunteering their extra time to help patrol their communities.(Neely 164) Guardian Angels, an urban vigilante type organization, get more publicity, but their numbers pale beside the ranks of those who work anonymously, volunteering an evening a week or more to patrol their communities as the "eyes and ears" of the regular police department.(Neely 166) These volunteers are used in basic crime prevention programs, Neighborhood Watch, Citizens On Patrol, and other smaller less known groups such as Handicap Parking Enforcement Specialists and Triad.(Maxwell 28, Mastrofski 66, Schmitt 24)

The first Citizen Academy was developed in 1977 in England. It was called the Police Night School and was formed to familiarize private citizens with the nature of police work and the organization of the police system in England. In 1985, the Orlando, Florida Police Department adopted the concept with the ultimate goal of reducing crime through a stronger citizen commitment to the police department and the community. Since 1985, many agencies have created Citizen Police Academies. The academy opens the lines of communication between the community and the police department. Citizens have the opportunity to look at what rules, regulations and policies the police follow which alleviates some misunderstanding and preconceptions citizens have about law enforcement. (Hilson May 1994)

Volunteer programs in large departments nationwide have started as an alternative to the frustration of both the police department and the surrounding communities over

increasing crime rates and decreasing resources for law enforcement agencies. Some have been in effect for as long as fifteen to twenty years. (Givens 3)

Review of Literature or Practice

The American Association of Retired Persons, more commonly known as AARP conducted a nationwide survey of volunteers in 1988. The results determined there are over 600,000 volunteers in law enforcement nationwide and growing steadily. (Burden 25) This estimate of volunteers involved in law enforcement consist of 240,000 auxiliary and reserve officers and 40,000 Explorers. This figure also includes neighborhood watch leaders and volunteers in support jobs within police agencies. This research found that half of the volunteers nationwide are over the age of 55 and one third are over the age of 64. AARP predicts an 85% increase in the use of volunteers in the future. Two thirds of those surveyed expect the need for training and special skills necessary in managing volunteer programs. Approximately 93% said volunteers were reliable and 80% found them to be productive, motivated, and adaptable. (Burden 29)

At least one out of every five Texas adults has participated in neighborhood watch programs.(Lin, v.) This figure is due to the short amount of training time, lack of liability factors, and low start-up and maintenance cost for the program. This program is very proactive and preventative. It's limitations are eventual lack of interest and difficulty evaluating the effect.(Sundeen 50)

Fort Worth, Texas has developed an effective program called Code Blue. "The combined effort of the Police and the Citizens of Ft. Worth has helped to reduce the crime rate and the perception of crime." Recruitment for the program is conducted by word of mouth. Training involves eight hours of identifying, recognizing and preventing burglary, plus eight hours of ride-along training. Funds for the program come from asset forfeitures. Equipment includes a badge, T-shirt, hat, jacket, radio, and magnetic signs for the vehicles. Participants are requested to sign release forms releasing all liability to the department. Evaluation of the program revealed a 24% reduction in crime. Other benefits were the

lessening in fear of crime by the citizens and a substantial decrease in complaints about the department in general.(Hilson July 1994)

Citizen Police Academies have become an up-and-coming favorite for larger agencies.(Sundeen 49) TELEMASP conducted a survey with 30 responding agencies. The agencies ranged in jurisdiction population sizes from 7,000 to 1,725,421. Twenty-two agencies stated the purpose of the academy was the education of the citizens concerning the operations, policies and procedures of the police department. Other reasons cited were the promotion of communications between the citizens and members of the police agency in an effort to improve relations, dispelling myths and preconceptions that the public may have concerning the police function, enlisting the aid of the citizens in the prevention of crime and promoting support of the police department and the city. Basic curriculum consists of detective investigations, patrol procedures, communications, drug enforcement, traffic, and crime scene investigations. Instructors include, sergeants, detectives, patrol supervisors from the hosting department. Costs are mainly comprised of compensation. time and overtime for the facilitators and can vary from zero to \$6,000. (Hilson May 94) Again surveys showed the primary and most effective form of recruitment was word of mouth. (Manson 31, Wallace 22, Burden 27)

A verbal survey conducted in the Texas Panhandle revealed many departments of all sizes utilize volunteers. The larger departments such as Amarillo Police Department have the most extensive volunteer programs, basically comprised of computer, office and clerical personnel. The department has a volunteer coordinator who is also an unpaid worker who oversees the program. This coordinator reports to a ranking officer in charge of all crime prevention programs. Amarillo PD implemented a new program approximately one year ago called Handicap Parking Patrol. Trained volunteers armed with citation books and Polaroid cameras driving older model fleet vehicles. These volunteers patrol the parking areas in the city and write parking citations to violators parking in handicap restricted areas. The program has been very effective and gained support from the public.

Officers are free to attend to more pressing calls and volunteers feel they are providing a well-needed service to the people. It is estimated that the use of volunteers has saved the department over \$100,000.00 in 1996 alone. (Gilbert)

Pampa Police Department began conducting Citizen Police Academies over five years ago. The Chief of Police stated the Citizens Academy had done more to promote the department than any other single action. It has provided citizen support for department expansion, funding, daily workings of police duties, general knowledge of the law and brought residents from all walks of life together in a better understanding of the problems facing law enforcement. One former vocal critic of the department has become the strongest most vocal supporter after attending the academy. This graduate formed an CPA alumni group which has spearheaded public support for department needs. (Morris)

As part of the research process, several volunteer programs, Citizens Academy, Neighborhood Watch, Citizens on Patrol, City Employee Police Academy (Oliver 6) and Code Blue, were reviewed for implementation in Armstrong County. The purpose was prevention of crime, increased citizen involvement and improvement of public opinion. The program began in January 1997. The county had been plagued during the months of November, December, and ill the middle of January, with petty burglaries from vehicles and residences. Since the night of implementation of the volunteer program, no burglaries, thefts or acts of criminal mischief have occurred. Ten weeks prior to the Armstrong County Citizens Posse Patrol, from November 1, 1996 to January 15, 1997, there were 56 such crimes reported. Ten weeks after the ACCPP program began, from January 16, 1997 to March 31, 1997, no burglary, no theft, no criminal mischief (Jones)

These crime statistic results may be inconclusive based on the short period of implementation. The true results are the improvement in the relationship between the citizens and the Sheriff's Department. Those not involved in the program have expressed a feeling of security knowing there are more persons patrolling and watching the area. Direct input from county residents prove a very positive reaction about the program. (Jones)

Discussion of Relevant Issues

The key issues involved in a volunteer program are justification, recruiting, selection, training, utilization, retention and liability. (Bushey 15) Justification or the need for such a program must be established in the beginning. It should be well thought out and clearly communicated to everyone involved. What are the specific needs and in what way could they be met or assisted by volunteers. (Bushey 16) Recruitment should be the same as used to attract other department employees. (Mason 31, Todd 16) People who have a stake in the quality of life of the community, a local resident, and someone who wants to make a contribution to the community will be more committed to the program. (Bushey 17) The selection of volunteers should be as near as possible to requirements for regular personnel. (Mason 31, Todd 16, Shanks 58) Training should be commensurate with the duties to be performed. (Bushey 21, Todd 16, Gilbert, Wallace 22) Utilization of volunteers can be for specific needs or flexible according to skills of the volunteer. Retention is a vital issue to any volunteer program. The program needs to include factors designed to maintain motivation and enthusiasm. (Bushey 21) Volunteers must be treated fairly and with dignity. (Cordner 81) The liability issue stems from lack of training and supervision. (Bushey 25) Proper planning and forecasting potential problems can diminish this point.

Disadvantages of a volunteer program can be the limitations on the number of citizens involved. In some cases programs tend to overplay public relations and overlook the determined main focus of the program. A volunteer program can detract from the time and resources for routine police work. Liability issues can limit high interest activities like firearms training and ride-along programs. Instruction of volunteers can be costly to a department. Too much time can be spent maintaining interest in volunteer programs. The last and most dreaded disadvantage from an administrator's view is the fear that an over zealous vigilante type patrol may occur. (Greenberg 12) According to the AARP survey, the administrator's primary concerns of volunteer programs are liability and confidentiality.

(Burden 29) Both are overcome by ample training, establishing rules and guidelines for volunteers, thorough background checks, and strict control of access to information.

(Burden 30) Arrest Authority of volunteers must be made clear. An officer who makes an arrest is protected from liability for false arrest if his actions are reasonable; a private citizen is protected only if the citizen is, in fact, correct. (Neely 114)

Advantages of a volunteer program can be very positive for a small department. Citizens are more willing to report crime. They realize the need to testify as a witness. (Greenberg 13) Volunteers are trained to understand police procedures which reduces complaints about the department. (Wallach 103) Volunteer programs can benefit a department in ten specific ways. Increased professionalism, better protection, peace and stability preservation, provides accountability and positive police performance, greater sense of job satisfaction, provides feedback from citizens, used to attach social causes of criminal behavior, supplies support for the police. (Neely 165) Half of those surveyed by AARP stated volunteer programs cost nothing. Others listed hidden costs and expenses including supervisor pay, space and equipment costs, and training. (Burden 25) Volunteer programs can save a departments as much as \$200,000 a year. (Weinblatt 15)

It is curious that research did not actually put a name on the primary problem in dealing with volunteers, which is lack of control. Addressing the main issue of control at the beginning planning stages of a volunteer program, of any type, will eliminate any obstacle which may sabotage the program. Control of the program consists of the same requirements for control of any project or administration of an effective police department. Rules, regulations, guidelines, procedures, and expectations are determined and communicated to participants at the onset. Disciplinary measures consist of removal from the program.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Volunteers are an important part of the American heritage. The use of volunteers in a small agency can be effective and helpful with proper planning, awareness, and goals.

The problems facing law enforcement today can be partially overcome by using volunteers to assist small departments. Small agencies want to provide the same quality and quantity of law enforcement that large agencies supply. Unpaid workers can be utilized for support type services thereby freeing the officer for actual police work. If budget funds are not used for support type services, it is available for increasing manpower and equipment or at the very least, better utilization of manpower and equipment. Involving citizens supplies comprehension to the public sector in both knowledge of the problems and awareness of the law.

Volunteer programs aid in eliminating the "domino or ripple effect" facing law enforcement agency problems today. There are manpower shortages due to lack of budget and department funding, which is due to criticism of departments, which is due to lack of public support, which is due to lack of knowledge of the needs and problems facing departments, which is due to the confidentiality of the job and the mind set of the police society, which is due to the primary dilemma with any volunteer program, especially one involving law enforcement which is lack of control.

Command, authority, discipline, direction, enforcement, and regulation are key issues in police work. Proper utilization of volunteers must include these vital areas in the initial planning in order to be effective. Administration and supervision of the volunteers, preferably by the agency administrator or second in command officer, increases the possibility of program success and direct access to potential problems. The answer is clear. It is a good deal. It takes proper planning, cultivating, constant care and monitoring.

Volunteers are the best answer for small agencies right now. At a time when all law enforcement agencies need to improve their image, volunteers are the finest way to effectively add manpower, change public opinion and stay within budgetary confines. Using volunteers in a small agency takes some time and effort, but the benefits are worth it - for the participants, the agency, and most of all the area served.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Burden, O.P. "Volunteers: The Wave of the Future?" Police Chief. V55, N7, July 1988, P 25-28.
- Bushey, Keith D. (1976) Thesis, "Innovative Utilization of Police Reserves".
- Cordner, G. W., "Getting Serious About Community Involvement," American Journal of Police, V12, N3, P 79-88.
- Gilbert, Lt. C., Amarillo Police Department Crime Prevention, verbal interview, November 16, 1996.
- Givens, G. "A concept to Involve Citizens In the Provision of Police Services," American Journal of Police, V12, N3, P 1-9.
- Greenberg, Martin A., "Citizen Police Academies", FBI Bulletin. V 90, N8, Aug. 91, P 10-13.
- Hildreth, R., "Modem Posse", Law and Order. V38, N6, June 1990, p30-33.
- Hilson, Janice, "Citizen Police Academies", TELEMASP Bulletin, VI, N2, May 1994, P 1-7.
- Hilson, Janice, "Fort Worth's Citizens on Patrol Program", TELEMASP Bulletin, VI, N4, July 1994, p 1-11.
- Jones, Carmella, Armstrong County Sheriff, documentation of results of volunteer program implemented, April 1, 1997.
- Mason, D. Roger, "Increasing Services In Spite of Shrinking Revenues", Law and Order, June 1988, p31.
- Mastrofski, S.D., "Varieties of Community Policing," American Journal of Police. V12, N3, P 65-77.
- Maxwell, Jack E., "Using Handicapped Volunteers to Enforce Parking Regulations", Police Chief, July 1988, P 28.
- McGuire, P.C., "Posse Comitatus", National Sheriff, V35, N5, Oct/Nov. 1983, p 10 16,18-20.
- Morris, Charles, Chief of Police, Pampa Police Department, Pampa, TX, verbal interview, November 22, 1996.

- Neely, Richard, Take Back Your Neighborhood: a case for modern day "vigilantism", General Publishing Co., Canada, 1990.
- Oliver, Jerry, "City Employees Get Trained in Police Services," Community Policing Exchange, Mar/Apr. 96, p 6.
- Schmitt, Sheila, "Triads Work Together to Assist the Elderly", Law and Order. V44, N5, May 1996, p 24-27.
- Shanks, Larry, "Preparatory Police Academies", Law and Order, September 1996, p 58-60.
- Shidel, T.J.; Komara, D.F., "Orientation and Training Programs for Auxiliary Police," Police Chief. V41, N11, November 1974, p 55-59.
- Sundeen, R.A.; Siegel~ "Uses of Volunteers by Police," Journal of Police Science Administration. V14, N1, March 1986, P 49-61.
- Taylor, M.B., "Volunteerism - a Police Department's Response to Changing Times," FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, V51,N1, January 1982, p 16-21.
- Todd, James C. & Smith, Ronald, "Auxiliary Volunteers Stretch Personnel Resources", The National Sheriff, September 1983, p 6.
- Wallace, H. & Peter, A.P., "Police Reserves: Rights and Liabilities", FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, V63, N5, May 1994, p 20-23.
- Wallach, Steve, "Citizen Police Academy Associations", Law and Order. September 1996. p 103.
- Weinblatt, Richard B., "Reserve Duties Vary in the Bay State", Law and Order. September 1996, p 15-16.
- Windham, T.R. & Ely, R.P., "Code Blue: Citizens on Patrol," The Police Chief, V61, May 1994, P 52-54.