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Crime Stoppers Designed for a College Campus

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## ABSTRACT

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## INTRODUCTION

The devastating events of Columbine as well as other school shootings have parents very concerned about the safety of their children in the educational setting. Educational institutions, committed to making schools safe, have embraced different types of programs that would assist with deterring crime and provide an environment conducive to learning. One of these programs is Crime Stoppers, a highly visible program, with impressive results. The ability to identify, arrest and reduce crime may enhance college safety by providing an alternative means of reporting crime and still remain anonymous.

The success of the program is two fold; initially it pays cash money and also gives the caller anonymity. A community college campus by nature is a commuter environment making crime stoppers an excellent program in this setting. Students may not have the time to file a police report, or not want to become visibly involved for a number of reasons. This program is also useful for staff members to report a crime that they may otherwise not report for various reasons.

The problem that any institution of higher learning encounters when thinking of setting up a crime stoppers program in their campus is the lack of models to learn from. The Texas Crime Stoppers Council will refer the interested party to the campus program section of its manual. This section is specifically designed for high schools. The Texas Crime Stoppers Council does not provide anything to the colleges or universities trying to implement this program.

In this paper you will find out how to set up a Crime Stoppers Program for a college or university. Educational institutions of higher learning seeking to deter crime may benefit from using Crime Stoppers as a safety measure. This paper will show the structural and operational

differences in the municipality and high school programs in comparison to that of a college or university. The information used in this research was provided by the Texas Crime Stoppers manual, and a working college Crime Stoppers Program, and other sources. The out come will show the differences between the model and may demonstrate how a working program can be set up.

Law enforcement will benefit by having a model especially designed for a college to draw from, reducing the time and man-hours necessary for setting up such a program. Campus police agencies wanting to add another crime prevention tool to their arsenal of police services may find this program to be of value and practical use.

## **HISTORY**

In 1976 Greg MacAleese, a frustrated detective in Albuquerque, New Mexico had no idea that he was about to create what we now know as Crime Stoppers. Greg MacAleese who was a journalist before becoming a Policeman, was trying to solve a crime that involved two criminals who shot Michael Carmen at his place of business in July of 1976. At the time the two criminals did not realize that their crime would serve as the catalyst for Detective MacAleese in the creation of Crime Stoppers. Without leads and evidence the case of the murder was no closer to being solved then it was the night of the murder. Out of desperation Detective MacAleese approached Max Sklower, then General Manager of KOAT-TV in Albuquerque, and asked him if he would air the reenactment of the crime on one of his newscasts.

The reasoning for the reenactment was simple. If there was an eye witness to the crime in the community the media would facilitate the way to reach any potential witness. On September 8, 1976 the first reenactment was aired on KOAT-TV's 10 o'clock news. The next morning a tip

from a young man was received, who stated that he had watched the reenactment on television. He stated that while walking home from a party on the night Michael Carmen was killed he had heard a loud bang, similar to that noise of a large firecracker. Shortly after the loud bag, the young man noticed a car heading west from the gas station at a high rate of speed. The caller saw two men inside the car, but he did not recognize them. However, he believed that he thought he had seen the car before and that it belonged to a resident in a nearby apartment complex. This information was the missing link needed at the time to solve Michael Carmen's murder.

The formation of Crime Stoppers helped to overcome two barriers. First, there is anonymity for those who are afraid of retaliation. Second, there is a cash reward for the person who is apathetic. Detective MacAleese received authorization from the late Chester Gould to use the name Crime Stoppers that was derived from the Dick Tracy comic strip. (MacAleese, 1988)

In 1983 Officer Larry Wieda from the Boulder Colorado Police Department took the concept of Crime Stoppers to Fairview High School. This resulted in the establishment of the first scholastic program in the nation. (Crime Stoppers International, 2002) In 1991 the Rockwall Texas, Police Department was one of the first agencies to form a scholastic Crime Stoppers program in high schools and middle schools within its jurisdiction. The scholastic Crime Stoppers has provided students a vehicle by which to provide tips about crimes on campus to school administration. It alleviates fear of retaliation and students can remain anonymous similar to the adult program. (Crime Stoppers International, 2002)

## **COLLEGE CRIMES**

Traditionally college and university campuses do not have their own Crime Stoppers Program. They work with the local established Crime Stoppers in their community. Most college

and university administrators and Chiefs of Police agree that the local Crime Stoppers are able to provide assistance when they have a major crime at their campus. Most colleges and universities do not have the resources to investigate major crimes and therefore, they are turned over to the local police and the local Crime Stoppers. Usually if a crime occurs at a campus of an institution of higher learning the campus police receive the report and begin the investigation. The case is assigned to the investigator or detective, who follows up on all available leads. When the investigator or detective run out of leads the case is filed as inactive until more leads develop. When a criminal case is not solved within a reasonable length of time, leads diminish and the trail gets cold, evidence will be unobtainable. Therefore the crime becomes increasingly difficult to solve. (Texas Crime Stoppers Manual, 2002)

Crimes committed on colleges and universities are not always of a major type. If you look at most college or university crimes, you can see that the majority are thefts, burglary, assaults and other crimes of a similar type. If your college or university is under the local Crime Stoppers, these crimes may go unsolved because the local Crime Stoppers is too involved with their High School Crime Stoppers. For example, the size of the city or county and the number of high schools in the city or county will determine the amount of attention that is devoted to college campus crimes. In addition most Crime Stoppers will only work or pay rewards for felonies, few programs offer, rewards for misdemeanor crimes. College or university felony crimes include book thefts, and equipment thefts that do not merit the attention of the local Crime Stoppers. How is a college or university prepared to address their crimes that do not meet the standard for the local Crime Stoppers for an offer of a reward or to be publicized in the media?

## **PROGRAM ANALYSIS**

There are several ways of tailoring or packaging crime prevention programs to a particular campus community. Communication between the campus police and the campus administration is crucial in promoting and establishing a variety of crime prevention programs. (Mitchell and Dantzker 2002) A good working Crime Stoppers program is no exception. The successful implementation of the program depends on the commitment of the campus police and college administration.

In 1975 we began to look at establishing a Crime Stoppers program at El Paso Community College. With little knowledge about the program we sought the advice of the Coordinators for Crime Stoppers of El Paso. The Coordinators for Crime Stoppers of El Paso explained that there are two ways that a Crime Stoppers program can be set up in Texas. The easiest method and approach that is most widely used, is to establish an umbrella program. This defines the program as uncertified and would function under the by laws and supervision of Crime Stoppers of El Paso. The other option and the most laborious, which were shared with us, were for us to certify our own program by going through the process of becoming incorporated. All the certified Crime Stoppers within the state are incorporated as 501-C3 organizations. We decided to proceed with the certified program, because we felt that this would give us full use of Crime Stoppers at our campuses.

That same year we attended the Annual Campus Crime Stoppers Conference presented by the Texas Crime Stoppers Council. We had been told that this conference would address the campus program that we were trying to set up. We discovered that this campus conference addressed high schools and middle schools, but was not designed for institutions of higher education. We reviewed the Texas Crime Stoppers Advisory Council Manual for Crime Stoppers



in Texas. The program that we were trying to establish was somewhere between the high school program and the adult program. The next conference that we attended was the Annual Adult Crime Stoppers Conference. After attending both conferences and thoroughly reviewing the manual, we designed our plan, which combines both the high school campus and the adult programs to implement a working college Crime Stoppers program. As outlined in the Crime Stoppers Manual we began working to establish our program. Our first task was to designate a coordinator followed by appointing an interim board of directors. The board of directors for our program consists of faculty, staff, students and community members.

Our interim board of directors includes the college assistant comptroller, public relations spokes person, some students from student government, some highly motivated faculty on campus, and some community members. Our board began to file the following documents as outlined in the Texas Crime Stoppers Manual. Sample of the following documents can be found at [www.crimestoppers.swt.edu](http://www.crimestoppers.swt.edu)

1. Basic Documentation

These are the three basic instruments which create a crime stoppers organization and makes it legal.

- a. Articles of Incorporation
- b. State of Texas Charter

(These two basic documents create a non-profit organization. Only after the articles of incorporation are filed with the Texas Secretary of State and a state charter is issued does a crime stoppers program receive the recognition and protection of Texas law. A filing fee is required.)

- c. Bylaws

(The legal document by which all operations are governed must be completed before your operation begins, because it defines the total operation of your crime stoppers program.)

2. Federal Tax Exempt Documentation:

a. 501(C) (3) Determination Letter

The document by which a crime stoppers program becomes exempt from paying federal taxes and which permits donors to make tax-deductible contributions.

b. 509(A) Determination Letter

An additional letter from the Internal Revenue Service which each crime stoppers program must have. It certifies that the program is not a private foundation under the law.

c. Federal Employer Identification Number

The number by which your non-profit organization is known to the federal government.

d. IRS Form 990

An information form which must be filed annually with the IRS to determine federal tax-exempt status. Appropriate forms are mailed annually to every tax-exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service.

3. State of Texas Tax Exempt Documentation

After federal tax exempt status is established, a program must submit a written request to the office of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts to receive state exempt status. Such status exempts the program from franchise tax, state, and local sales tax for items and services purchased for the operation of the program.

#### 4. Operational Documents

- a. Bylaws-This is a basic document by which all of your crime stoppers operations are managed. Include the following sections:

1. Organization's Purpose
2. Directors
3. Meetings
4. Officers
5. Committees
6. Nominations and elections
7. Contributions and depositories
8. Fiscal year
9. Parliamentary authority
10. Amendments

- b. Budget-You must establish a budget to give board members a way to evaluate and control income and expenditures. Without a budget there is no way to know where you are. Budgets can take many forms but usually contain two sections.

1. Rewards
2. Operational expenses.

- c. Minutes-One signed copies of the minutes for each official board meeting are kept in a permanent book as the official record of your crime stoppers program. Usually this book is kept by the board's secretary or other officer as designated by the board.

- d. Standing rules and operational procedures-These are the rules and procedures which cover areas not addressed in your by-laws, such as:
  - 1. Reward assessment and payment procedures
  - 2. Personnel policies
  - 3. Accounting and cash management
- e. Cooperative agreements with law enforcement agencies
- f. Cooperative agreements with media
- g. Operational plan-This should be written and regularly updated. Any organization must know its goals and objectives and how it plans to reach them. This is the purpose of an operational plan. It should include:
  - 1. Short term and long term goals which set the general direction for the organization. These goals should be realistic and ambitious at the same time.
  - 2. Specific Objectives-These are stated in such a way that when reviewed from six months to a year, it is easily seen what has or has not been accomplished.
  - 3. Strategies-These are specific activities by which the board will accomplish board goals and specific objectives.
- h. Inventory of fixed assets- It is very important the board monitor closely the accumulated physical assets. This inventory should include:
  - 1. Description
  - 2. Date acquired
  - 3. Donated or purchased

#### 4. Value

- i. Schedule of insurance coverage (if applicable)
  - 5. State Certification by the Texas Crime Stoppers Advisory Council- When Senate Bill 85 and Senate Bill 149, 71<sup>st</sup> Legislators Regular Session, were signed into law in 1989 the Advisory Council was charged with certifying all local Texas crime stoppers programs that plan to receive and expend court generated fees. A local crime stoppers program must not accept any court-generated fees, under the provisions of Article 42.12, Sec. 11. Sub-sec. (h), Code of Criminal Procedures and Article 37.027, Code of Criminal Procedures, until that local program becomes certified.
- A program is certified by the Texas Crime Stoppers Advisory Council if the program meets all the requirements as listed in the application for certification.
- 6. Other Documentation (as required) (Texas Crime Stoppers Manual, 2002)

### **COLLEGE CRIME STOPPERS MODEL**

El Paso Community College Crime Stoppers was certified in May of 1996. We had our first fund raiser from the lost and found items that had accumulated at that time. The funds went into our reward fund and into the design of our Logo. Our office is provided by the college and is not in the police department as is customary, it is in one of the class room buildings along with those of the faculty. This puts us right where our customers are, for easy access and to be constantly visible to all the students. Our tip line is also provided by the college and is set up in the Coordinator's office. The tip line is transferred to the coordinator's cell phone which is provided by Crime Stoppers. After certification we became eligible and applied for a Crime

Stoppers Assistance Grant. This grant was utilized to purchase some of the office equipment for the initial set-up of our program.

Being certified also allows us to share in the probation fee fund with Crime Stoppers of El Paso. These funds can only be used for payment of rewards, and must be kept in a separate account. We participated in the sharing of funds with Crime Stoppers of El Paso for two years, at which point we decided that we did not need the probation fees. Our fundraising provides us with the money used for rewards and program operation. Campus fundraising allows our members who are faculty, staff and students to interact in the process of raising money. We sell hotdogs, chips, cokes, and nachos, which range from 50 cents to \$2.00. This fundraiser is done on a weekly base during the Spring and Fall semester. A unique feature of our program is that it pays for the recovery of property. This property can be a student's as well as institutional, and prosecution does not have to take place.

## **PUBLICIZING CRIME STOPPERS PROGRAM**

Campus radio and television are used to advertise the program as well as to air the campus crimes for which a reward is being offered. The college web page can be utilized for advertising the program as well as letting future students and parents of those student know that you care and are concerned about campus crime and that Crime Stoppers is one of the tools that is utilized in deterring crime. District e-mail can be used to advertise your crimes and offer a reward. This is especially good when the crime is committed against the institution and may fall under pilferage. Utilizing your district e-mail to send out bulletins or making your employees aware of the crimes that have been committed on campus is another positive use of our Crime Stoppers Program.

When a crime is committed and the investigator runs out of leads, having your own program is very advantageous and time saving. Once your investigator needs a crime to be publicized, he simply contacts the Crime Stoppers Coordinator and together they prepare a flyer that can be distributed throughout any of the campuses. This is something that you could not do or would have a difficult time in trying to accomplish if the program is under the local Crime Stoppers. Campus signs and posters is an excellent way to advertise your program. Maintaining control of your own in-house program lends itself for you to approach your faculty during the faculty development week and promote your program. This also applies to new student orientation.

Having your own program gives you the liberty of scheduling presentations throughout the semester in different classes. This is an excellent way to reach the student population and make them aware of your program and how it works.

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Your certified program is the best tool that you can have for positive community involvement as is in our case. We work with the Foster Parents Association of El Paso County to provide foster children with an annual Easter Egg Hunt. This Easter Egg Hunt takes place at the main campus. The foster parents along with community businesses through donations provide Easter baskets, eggs, food, drinks, music, and other forms of entertainment. We also work with a local radio station in raising funds for another community project that also involves the Foster Parents Association. AM 600 Talk Radio assist in collecting money so that every foster child in El Paso County and in neighboring Las Cruces, New Mexico has a winter coat. This is our winter 'Coats for Kids' Project.

Another positive aspect of having your own certified program is that you can raise money through fundraising and to offer scholarships to students enrolled at your institution. In 1998 we reached out to the following school districts outside the city limits within the County of El Paso. They included Socorro High School, San Elizario ISD, Fabens ISD. These districts were under our umbrella program for their initial Campus Crime Stoppers. During that year we offered scholarships to the Senior classes of each district to assist in bringing four students into El Paso Community College. This was another example of what is possible with your own certified Crime Stoppers Program versus being under the local Crime Stoppers, who in turn, governs what is and not allowed in your program.

## **CONCLUSION**

The problem that any institution of higher learning encounters when preparing to establish a Crime Stoppers program on their campus is the lack of a model that demonstrates how a working program can be set up. El Paso Community College Crime Stoppers is a working model that any college or university can implement. The benefit of having your own program is that you can tailor it to address your campus crime. This allows your campus law enforcement agency to become involved in your campus and the community. Establishing and promoting crime stoppers also provides for your college administration and campus police to collaborate in providing a safe learning environment. A Campus Crime Stoppers program can help in promoting a safer learning environment, in reducing crime and recovering property. Campus law enforcement can benefit from this model by reducing the time and man hours necessary for setting up a campus Crime Stoppers program at their institution. Crime Stoppers can be a very useful crime prevention tool, and excellent for public relations.



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