

Fresno Police



Problem Oriented Policing

Junior Officer Notice Book

Presented by:

Specialist E. Eide / Officer D. Gross



JUNIOR OFFICER NOTICE BOOK

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Introduction

The City of Fresno consists of approximately 405,000 ethnically diverse people, contained in more than 100 square miles of mostly urban residential area. In 1995 the department responded to 393,560 calls for service. This figure, in contrast to the 242,077 calls for service responded to in 1985, shows a marked increase in the call load. Juvenile related incidents have also skyrocketed. Fresno has one of the nation's highest incidences of arson (1,327) and auto theft, (12,418 in 1995). Experts estimate that juveniles commit more than 70% of all auto theft, but Fresno was only able to arrest 988 juveniles last year for auto theft. These figures show dramatically the need for new ideas.

Providing an alternative to the destructive influence of juvenile delinquency, the Junior Officer Notice Book Program was envisioned as a long term strategy to help combat the increase of juvenile criminal activity in targeted POP project areas.

Scanning

The Effie/Saginaw POP project is a densely populated, transient, low income apartment dominated population. A three block area was responsible for just under 4000 calls for service in a single year. That number represented fully 10% of the calls for service in the Northeast geographical policing area, severely impacting the departments ability to deliver necessary services. The calls for service included a substantial amount of juvenile related crime, person and property crimes, as well as juvenile disturbances, gangs and graffiti. The deteriorating physical conditions of the apartment complexes helped contribute to an accelerated breakdown of family values and acceptable standards.

Other than the neighborhood elementary school, children had few instances of reinforcement for any of the positive behavior they demonstrated. With a lack of juvenile clubs, groups and other organizations for these juveniles to join, there was enormous peer pressure to conform to the surrounding negative standards. This resulted in juveniles linking up with gangs, committing crimes or exhibiting other dysfunctional behaviors.

P.O.P. Officers identified the problem through the use of the Crime Analysis Unit (a statistical information unit), personal observations of juveniles and their consequences, interviews with residents, and interviews with the staff at a nearby elementary school. We found that by focusing on a child's basic need to belong, we would be able to steer the child down the path of social responsibility by the use of this program rather than continue to suffer the consequences of their criminal actions by our own inaction.

From these interviews, our observations and the now obvious necessity of earlier intervention we chose to focus on children at an elementary school age. We selected this age group as they have not yet internalized negative gang or criminal behavior. We chose a nearby neighborhood elementary school as it provided a controlled environment that would allow us to address the juvenile needs for positive reinforcement that encompassed the Effie/Saginaw POP project. If successful, the project could be expanded to other P.O.P. projects and areas of the city.

Analysis

Juvenile crime and its related problems have long been a concern to society. With the ever increasing number of juvenile offenders and their escalating violent behavior it's apparent our current efforts are not effective.

Discussions were held with the law enforcement community consisting of juvenile tactical officers assigned to our secondary schools, officers with the community services bureau, patrol officers, juvenile parole and probation officers. We also held discussions with various juveniles and their families, and local apartment complex managers in the P.O.P. area to better define the issues.

While there was no agreement of who is responsible for our juvenile delinquency problem, we agreed on two issues.

- 1) The need for effective earlier intervention
- 2) The need to hold individuals accountable for unacceptable behavior.

From our investigation, existing programs dealing with drugs and gangs, like D.A.R.E. and P.A.L. were not reaching kids early enough nor were they effectively dealing with negative behaviors and consequences. The current D.A.R.E. program targets only fifth and sixth grade students and doesn't fully emphasize the negative consequences of gang membership. In our project it was not uncommon to find children young as eight with a working knowledge of gangs and illicit drugs.

The Police Activities League (P.A.L.) currently being used in the Effie/Saginaw project does not require the juveniles to monitor and be accountable for their behavior on a long term basis. We quickly discovered there is a need for positive peer pressure to "do the right thing" as well as positive reinforcement for proper behavior. When these needs were not met, juvenile gang leadership flourished. Juveniles not actively involved in gangs tended to follow whatever leadership that was available. We also found a need for these juveniles to belong to a positive group or club in order to achieve the desired attention from their peers. Along with this there was a need for a defined set of goals and behaviors to "live up to" as well as identification with positive role models. The school environment appeared to be the common positive thread with the kids we contacted. The Emie Pyle Elementary School is the school for the majority of the kids living in the Effie/ Saginaw P.O.P. project. We then met with teachers, the school administration, and D.A.R.E. Officers to better illicit information to shape this early intervention program designed to hold juvenile accountable.

Response

While the Fresno Police Department has attempted to address juvenile crime issues with various programs, it had not yet dealt specifically with the concept of early and sustained juvenile intervention. In analyzing the lack of available resources we discovered that there were no programs that dealt with

children specifically policing their own behavior and holding themselves accountable.

Law enforcement has focused on traditional measures such as the use of school tactical officers, juvenile parole and probation officers. It is now obvious that the criminal justice system is being overwhelmed-by the sheer number of juvenile offenders.

Our response was to devise a program that focused on children monitoring their own behavior, and holding each other accountable with out involving substantial usage of police resources or social services. The Junior Officer Notice Book program was created to accomplish this goal in the school and carry that accountability over to the targeted P.O.P. project.

The concept is that each student is a "Junior Officer." As a result each student has a higher set of standards and conduct to live up to, just as "real" police officers do. Junior Officers should not be involved in unacceptable behavior but should act as examples for others to follow. The mechanics of the program are that each student receive a Junior Officer Notice Book and is then entrusted to monitor not only his/ her own behavior but that of their peers as well. If all of the students are motivated to monitor themselves, then the positive peer pressure created by the program will override the negative peer pressure asserted by gangs.

The Junior Officer Notice Book is designed to look like an officer's citation book. It consists of a cover sheet of F.P.D. colored paper that has a Fresno Police Department badge, the school's name in bold type and the "junior officers" name on the front cover. (See attached examples.) The inside cover of the same sheet contains an anti-gang oath and a school approved list of reasons to issue a notice,

along with an adhesive "Junior Officer" badge. These notices printed on yellow paper, and stapled to the inside of the cover, resemble traffic citations. The citations list behaviors that school and police have determined to be precursors to juvenile delinquent behavior.

Traditionally, when children are confronted by an aggressive act on the playground they could respond in kind, tell the teacher, or ignore it. By participating in the Junior Officer Program the children were offered an appealing alternative. This mechanism allows the students to hold themselves and their classmates accountable for their behavior without resorting to undesirable options.

For example, if a child is called a racist name on the playground, the child asks the offender's permission to issue him/her a citation for the name calling. If the offender agrees to stop calling the child names (signs the citation) and changes his inappropriate behavior, the "victim" and "suspect" student are both entered into the Junior Officer reward system. The issued citation is then given to the teacher who can use the citation for a writing exercise or a good citizenship discussion. The teacher then forwards the citations to the vice principle for further evaluation and entering into the drawing. If the child who called the name does not want to sign the citation he is not entered into the heavily promoted and highly desired drawing. The "victim" child and teacher can then address the behavior as before.

The students were motivated to participate in the Junior Officer Notice Book program because of their desire to earn special attention previously lacking. The fundamental difference in this program is that everyone, not a select few, were allowed to participate.

Each month the winning " Junior Officers" were allowed an "up close and personal" view of a promoted event, while the rest of the school watched from a distance. Photographs taken during the event were prominently displayed until the next event took place.

The first month was a "code 3" (lights and siren) ride and a photo session of the " Junior Officer" with a Fresno Police Officer. Each successive month a different and increasingly interesting event was held. They included a K-9 exhibition, police traffic motorcycle squad demonstration and finished with a showing of our S.W.A.T. Command Van and some of its equipment.

The resources we chose were police related but anything that generates student interest such as fire fighting equipment, search and rescue vehicles, ambulances, military equipment; anything that the officer has access to would work. In recognition of the chronic shortage of available funding and manpower, the Junior Officer Program was created to be a low cost, computer generated, easily modified format. The entire cost for approximately 500 citation booklets was \$35 dollars. This minimally labor intensive program can also be modified to serve a variety of other departmental needs, such as D.A.R.E., P.O.P., Traffic, etc.. For example, the traffic officer could use a citation booklet targeted toward traffic or pedestrian safety at school zones or a seat belt check point in the course of his duties. The D.A.R.E. officers can modify the format to target school specific problems that they want to address.

Assessment

Our intention with the Junior Officer Notice Book, was to create a positive peer pressure among children at risk in our targeted neighborhoods to avoid the lure of gangs and its poor decision making choices and juvenile delinquency in general. Student's accountability on the school campus transferred over to the home environment. This resulted from the fact that the kids in the P.O.P. neighborhood all attend the same school and were involved in the same program. By exhibiting proper behavior at school and home the " Junior Officer" is less likely to be involved in criminal behavior requiring police or social services.

In order to assess our program a questionnaire was made and sent to the administrators and staff of the school. The questions were:

- 1) Did the program reduce incidents of violence at your school?
- 2) Was the form easy enough to use?
- 3) What things would you change for easier usage?
- 4) Was the program worth your time?
- 5) Did the kids gain anything from this?
- 6) What did you like about this program?
- 7) What didn't you like, and how would you fix it?

The administration did not notice any specific decrease in serious violence at the school, but did note a change in the attitude of the students in general towards accepting accountability for their actions.

This included a greater respect for others, both at home and in the school environment. The teachers agreed that the student's behavior was better and they were looking forward to a full year with the P.O.P. team!

There was an initial reluctance of all involved to take part in a project that could increase their own prospective workload or increase liability or be cost prohibitive. The fears proved to be unfounded as minimal time was spent by teachers and involved officers, approximately two hrs per officer per week, cost was minimal, and no additional liability was incurred. The managers and parents in the P.O.P. neighborhoods all report less juvenile delinquency in the apartments and surrounding areas.

The program was given an interesting "real life" test towards the end of the school year. A day shift officer was in pursuit of a felony theft suspect who crashed his car by Pyle elementary school while school was letting out. The suspect had gained a considerable lead on the officer and ran by several groups of students. The suspect was a gang member who was used to being accorded a certain amount of respect and ordered some kids to hide him. When they refused, the suspect ran and hid in the rear of a nearby residential yard. When the officer caught up to the suspect's last known location, students all pointed out the yard with the crook. The officer heard the suspect run through some additional yards and went to the next street to cut him off. On this street there were other students who again directed the officer to the proper yard. This time the officer found the suspect being detained by a retired F.P.D. officer who turned the now exasperated crook over for arrest!

Saturday while working the Effie/Saginaw POP project we heard about the incident when it was brought up by some kids in the neighborhood. The kids asked if we were aware of the big chase by the

school. After listening to their accounts, we asked the students why they got involved with the police - department. The kids said they did not appreciate that type of activity by their school, and that they like cops not gangsters. We contacted the school officials and asked for verification of the events. The school confirmed the account. The surprising fact was that the kids identified by the principal were some of the school's "tougher kids."

Because this type of active participation is unusual and highly desired, some type of formal recognition was needed. These "Awards of Merit" were made for the six junior officers identified by the school and were presented by the Chief of Police at a school assembly. The event was well covered by local T.V. and radio networks.

Based on the real life example, our observations and interviews with those involved it appears our goals of impacting juvenile crime via early intervention and holding those who don't accountable are being realized. The school district is interested in having the project expanded to other schools and our department has had inquiries from other school systems. The program has been given to other members of the Police Department to use.

Philosophy

This problem was addressed by the P.O.P. officers assigned to the Effie/Saginaw P.O.P. project. Both officers have received training in problem solving techniques and are receiving a 5% pay incentive.

Oath:

I Promise,

not to join a gang

not to take drugs

and I Promise,

to respect my friends

to respect my family

to respect myself,

and I Promise,

to help make Fresno

a better place to live.

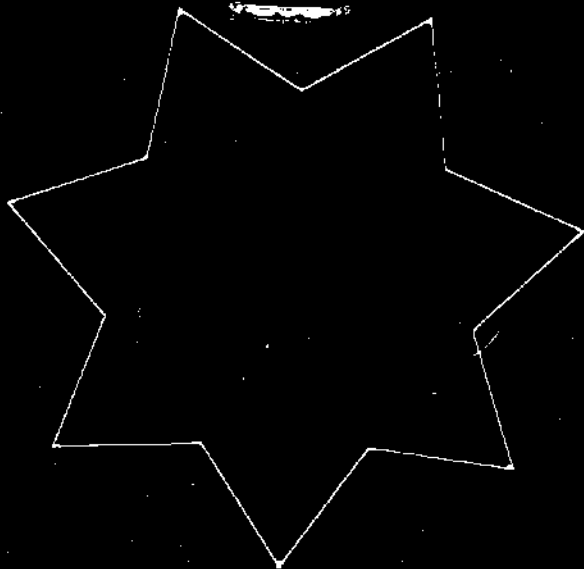
PYLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Problem Oriented Policing

Junior Officer
Notice Book

Issued to Junior Officer:



PYLE ELEMENTARY

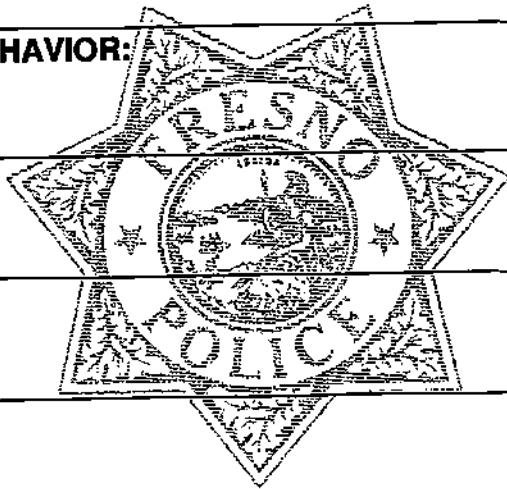
NOTICE TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

DATE TIME DAY

NAME (DAD,MOM,FAMILY,FRIEND)

ROOM NUMBER (OR ADDRESS)

BEHAVIOR:



JUNIOR OFFICER GRADE

WITHOUT ADMITTING GUILT, I PROMISE TO
CHANGE MY BEHAVIOR.

X _____
SIGNATURE

PYLE ELEMENTARY

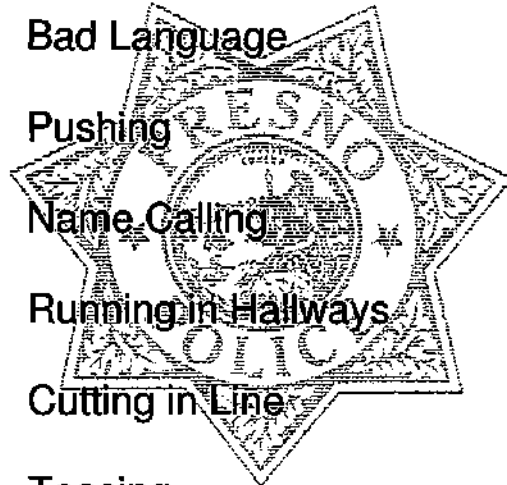
NOTICE TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

NAME (DAD,MOM,FAMILY,FRIEND)

ROOM NUMBER (OR ADDRESS)

BEHAVIOR:

1. Bad Language
2. Pushing
3. Name Calling
4. Running in Hallways
5. Cutting in Line
6. Teasing



JUNIOR OFFICER GRADE

WITHOUT ADMITTING GUILT, I PROMISE TO
CHANGE MY BEHAVIOR.

X _____
SIGNATURE

PYLE ELEMENTARY

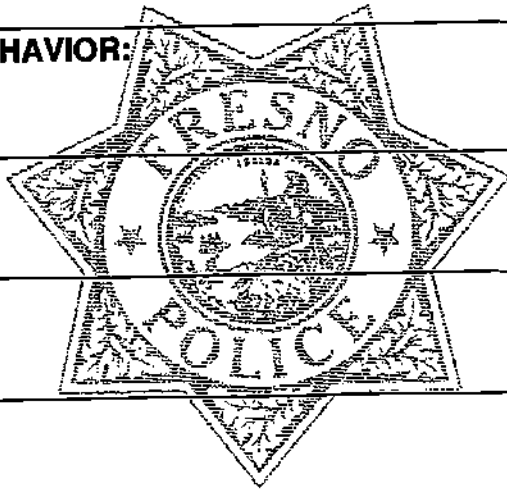
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DATE TIME DAY

NAME (DAD,MOM,FAMILY,FRIEND)

ROOM NUMBER (OR ADDRESS)

BEHAVIOR:



JUNIOR OFFICER

GRADE

WITHOUT ADMITTING GUILT, I PROMISE TO
CHANGE MY BEHAVIOR.

X _____
SIGNATURE

PYLE ELEMENTARY

NOTICE TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

NAME (DAD,MOM,FAMILY,FRIEND)

ROOM NUMBER (OR ADDRESS)

BEHAVIOR:

1. Bad Language
2. Pushing
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GRADE

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SIGNATURE