

# 1996 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM SOLVING AWARD

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## AKEPO LANE

(Team Award)

### PROJECT SUMMERY

#### I. SCANNING

The problems on Akepo Lane began very insidiously. The residents first noticed the problem three years ago when some untended trees blocked out a few streetlights and darkened the area. Slowly, litter on the lane began to pile up, graffiti started to appear, street traffic increased, and residents began to see more strangers in the area. One day, someone noticed a street drug transaction, and before anyone realized it, drug users from all parts of the island would come to this little lane to buy drugs.

Our goal is to eliminate the drug dealing, curb the displacement of drug dealers, and improve the quality of life for the residents of Akepo Lane.

#### II. ANALYSIS

Akepo Lane is a small one way lane that runs north to south. It connects two busy streets (King Street and Dillingham Boulevard) in the Kalihi district within the city of Honolulu, Hawaii. Kalihi is within the jurisdiction of the Honolulu Police Department, District 5 (Kalihi).

Two low-income apartment complexes, the 286 unit male only Akepo Arms and the 104 unit Madonna Apartments dominate the east border of Akepo Lane. The west side of the lane consists mainly of two multi-family attached rental units, one small apartment complex and several small businesses.

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

Four distinct social groups divide the community, the apartment dwellers, long term residents, the business group, and drug dealers/users.

Apartment dwellers:

The "Apartment Dwellers" are residents of Akepo Arms and Madonna Apartments. Most of these residents are single, retired, or on a fixed income, and have no children living with them.

Long term residents:

The "long term residents" lived in Akepo Lane most of their lives. This group lives in the multi-family attached rental units. The demographic of this group mainly consists of low income/welfare resident, of part-Hawaiian or Filipino ancestry.

The business group:

The business group consist of the ten commercial shops including all employees, customers, and suppliers. No one in this group lives in the neighborhood.

Drug dealers and users:

Most of the drug dealers do not live in the neighborhood. Their presence is contingent on the amount of "business" and "customers" in the area. Drug users come into the neighborhood only because of the abundant supply of narcotics.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community meeting was held to introduce the District 5 Community Policing Team (CPT) to the residents, listen to their problems and begin the process of forming positive relationships with residents and the police.

We conducted a survey at this meeting to assess the residents' perception of their neighborhood problems and obtain a baseline for future comparisons. Part of the significant finding of the survey is listed below:

- 96% surveyed said drug users are a problem in their neighborhood.
- 96% surveyed said drug dealers are a problem in their neighborhood.
- 96% surveyed said crime has gone up in the past year,
- 90% surveyed said the neighborhood has become worse in the past year.
- 82% surveyed said they feared someone may harm them in the coming year.
- 42% surveyed said they have been a crime victim in the past year.

The survey and interviews with residents helped us narrow the problem to three areas-crime, fear and community decay. We took the information back to the residents for additional ideas before we formulated a strategy to solve the problem.

### III. RESPONSE

Our plans are simple, eliminate the drug dealing and revitalize the area. The other crimes the residents have identified are directly associated with the drug dealing at Akepo Lane. A reduction in drug dealing will lead to a reduction in other crimes in the neighborhood such as theft, graffiti, property damage, public drinking, etc. The second part of the plan will bring in different government agencies to revitalize this community.

#### STREET DRUG DEALING:

Officers from the Narcotics Division, Criminal Reduction Units, Patrol and Community Policing Officers formed an 80-person task force to address the street drug dealing directly. The task force conducted two "buy-bust" operations.

##### Buy- Bust:

Akepo Lane is made "safe" by arresting all the active street drug dealers. Undercover police officers posing as street drug dealers then take their places. We then arrest drug buyers after they make purchases from the undercover police officers. The first operation resulted in sixteen arrests, the second, fourteen arrests.

The Narcotics Division and the Prosecutor's Office worked to charge all the arrestee for criminal offenses and have their personal items, (money, jewelry, cars) subjected to criminal forfeiture.

We contacted the news media during these operations. They filmed and broadcasted the buy-bust on the nightly news. This advertised our intentions that Akepo Lane is not the place to buy drugs, and if you do, we will arrest you.

The community formed a Neighborhood Security Watch to learn about home/personal security, networking, and look out for one and other.

## COMMUNITY FACELIFT

The Kalihi CPT has a solid network of government and business contacts. Most of these contacts come from Inter-Agency meetings. These are meetings conducted by the District 5 CPT to promote cooperation between different government agencies/departments. The vast majority of government workers want to do a good job but are hampered by a lack a resources and jurisdictional conflicts. We aim Inter-Agency meetings at pooling resources and fostering cooperation from different agencies.

### City participation:

The Department of Transportation Services installed additional street lights, cut back the trees and added "no parking" signs. The Department of Public Works provided bulk pick-up and cleaned up the streets. The Building Department inspected all the multi-family home.

Honorable mayor Jeremy Harris and City Council member Jon Yoshimura were apprised early in the project to overcome any unforeseen roadblock from a government agency.

### State participation:

The Department of Public Safety (Corrections Division) provided a work crew of then prisoners to clean up a vacant lot and finish any work that the city crew missed.

### Community participation:

The residents and business owners provided food for all the workers. The residents also painted out graffiti and established a community cleanup committee.

#### IV. EVALUATION

The most visible barometer of our success, is the elimination of drug dealing on the street. The surrounding streets were also monitors for additional drug activities. The peripheral activities (graffiti, public drinking, theft, property damage) associated with drug activities dramatically decreased also.

By trusting the police and themselves, the residents' fear of crime is reduced as evidenced by large turnouts at community meeting and citizen patrols.

The residents of Akepo Lane measure their quality of life in very simple terms-is the community safe for their families? Do they have a stake in the future of their community.

Is the community safe?

The dramatic reduction in crime has made this community a much safer place to live. The fear of crime that had driven residents into their homes has given way to block parties and community cleanups. Residents are no longer afraid of their own neighborhood. Children are playing on sidewalks that were once the private domain of drug dealers. Neighbors are getting to know each other again and looking out for each other.

A say in their future:

The residents feel that forming citizen patrols can directly influence the future of their community. There are two citizen patrols, one consisting of residents and the other the business community. The residents, with 10-15 persons per shift, walk twice a night, six times a week. The businesses walk twice daily, three times a week, with eight to ten members.

The citizen patrols provide a visible community presence that deters crime and brings the community together by fostering the common goal to keep Akepo Lane crime free. Patrol members know their community intimately, and provide an invaluable resource to our patrol officers.

## V. PHILOSOPHY AND ORGANIZATION

From experience, we realize that the most important person for long term maintenance and success of this project is the beat officer. At the onset of this project, we made it a point to include the beat officer and supervisors in helping us formulate the plan. They were also at all the community meetings to meet the residents.

Often times, the beat officer only sees and deals with the negatives in a community. They never have a chance to meet the good people in the community who are willing to help them make their jobs easier. This positive interaction gives the patrol officer a stake in the outcome of the project and the welfare of that community.

Residents in this neighborhood did not know any of the officers on the beat. Consequently, the beat officer is a faceless entity that carries with it all the ineffectiveness of the current criminal justice system. The residents see drug dealers arrested one day then back on the street the next. It is this revolving door that adds to the hopelessness of the residents.

We increase the optimum in the community by empowering the residents with a say in what the police should focus on in helping them to solve problems in their community. At community meeting within the neighborhood, the residents of Akepo Lane met our officers to exchange ideas, offer solution to problems, or just to vent their frustrations.