

<b>CITY OF ANAHEIM PAROLEE FREE PARKS</b>
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On June 12, 1997, the Anaheim Community Policing Detail proposed a program to the California State Parole Agency regarding the criminal activity of parolees in three of Anaheim's parks.

La Palma Park, Twila Reid Park and Pearson Park have had a long history of criminal activity and have become a haven for parolees, transients and gang members. These parks have been the focus of countless enforcement actions involving many of our specialized units such as the Street Narcotics Unit, Gang Detail, and the Community Policing Team. Although numerous arrests have been made, they only provided temporary solutions to an old and ongoing problem. In an effort to address this activity, the Community Policing Detail used the SARA model to generate a more effective method of dealing with this problem.

The nature of the problem consisted of criminal activity committed by individuals on parole in these parks. This activity was identified as a result of numerous contacts and arrests made by the above details and years of observation.

Our Analysis included calls for service, information gathered from other details within the Department, complaints from City employees who work in these parks and complaints generated from the surrounding residents and business owners.

This information supported the presence of criminal activity and the direct relationship of those on parole.

In an effort to deter this activity we proposed a program to the California State Parole Agency which was called, the "Parole Free Zone". In effect, no person on active parole would be allowed in the above parks. With the cooperation of the State Parole Agency, the "Parole Free Zone" was implemented in La Palma Park, Pearson Park and Twila Reid Park on December 16, 1997. A person on active parole for any narcotic offense who was found to be in any of these three parks would be subject to arrest for a parole violation.

This program has proven to be an excellent deterrent to criminal activity. Calls for service have dropped, as have complaints from park and city employees and residents. Arrests have declined compared to the number of arrests made prior to the program. This fact leads us to the conclusion that our program effectively deters criminal activity. We believe parks were built for the enjoyment of the Community and their families not for criminals and illegal activity. These parks are now safer and can be enjoyed as originally intended.

## **SCANNING**

The City of Anaheim has experienced a long history of criminal activity at La Palma Park, Pearson Park and Twila Reid Park. This activity ranges from, but is not limited to, indecent exposure, narcotic sales, serious assaults and robbery. This activity was identified and verified by several methods, which include numerous arrests made by such details as our Street Narcotics Unit, Gang Enforcement Unit, Community Policing Team and the State Parole Agency. Other factors and indicators include calls for service, complaints from parents whose children are involved in after school events as well as complaints from city employees who work at the parks on a day to day basis.

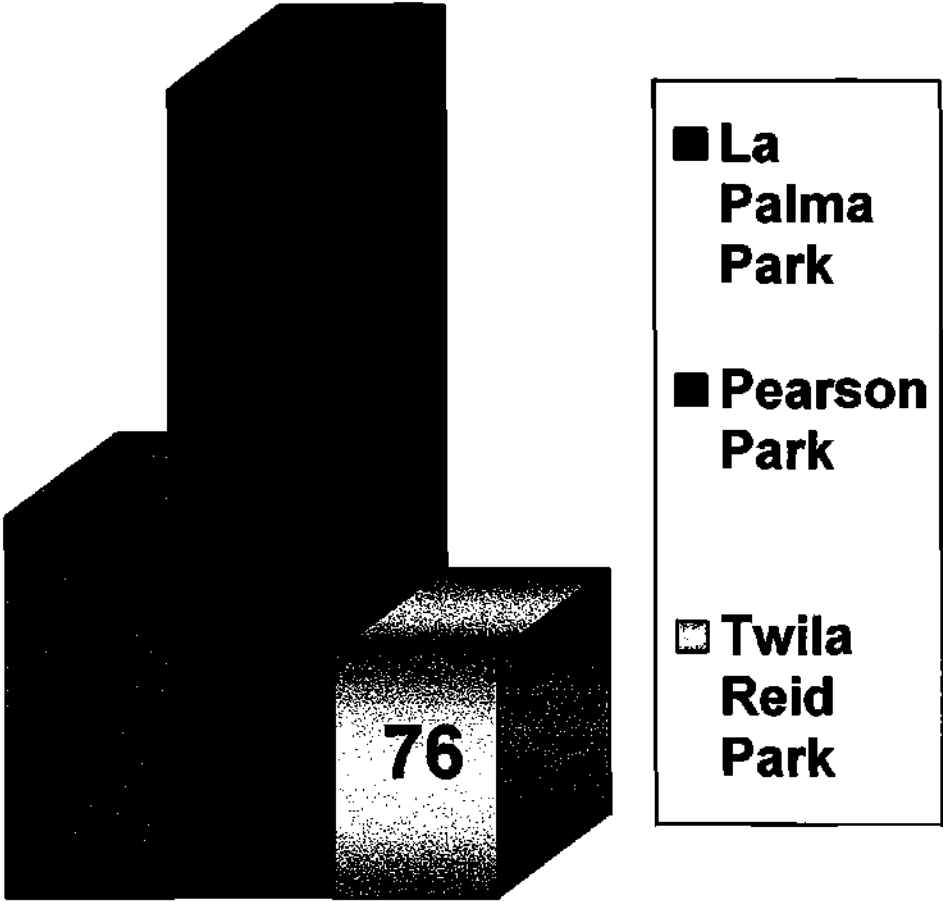
In an effort to deter this activity, the Community Policing Detail began looking for ways, through problem solving techniques, to confront and deal with this problem.

## **ANALYSIS**

The criminal activity in these parks was not new to these and the surrounding communities. Throughout the years, several of our specialized details have made these parks the focus of countless tactical and covert plans in an effort to identify, arrest, and deter further illegal activity. Although these plans were generally successful, it was obvious they fell short of deterring criminal activity for any lengthy period of time.

In addition to evaluating the results of the above listed details, we gathered and considered other information from within and outside of our department. We examined the calls for service in all three parks from May 1, 1996 to May 19, 1997. As we reviewed this data, we discovered the majority of illegal activity was being committed by persons on active **parole**, the most serious of criminal offenders. The **parole** system and those on parole soon became the focus of our attention.

# **Calls for Service May 1996 to May 1997**



We continued our analysis and spoke to other sources. We contacted supervisors and employees who work in the parks. They expressed considerable concern regarding criminal activity and described it as blatant and deliberate.

We also spoke to many of the residents in the areas who expressed concern and displayed an attitude of fear. Many said they did not feel safe walking through the parks, or, for that matter, taking their children to them.

Business owners in the area said they were also affected by the criminal element and activity and felt their respective businesses suffered as a result of persons loitering in and around their businesses.

These parks and surrounding areas had, in effect, been "taken over" by individuals who had been sent to prison for serious felony crimes. Their presence produced an environment of fear and intimidation within the parks and the surrounding communities. Those who frequented the parks also expressed fear and concern for their safety. The presence of parolees also provided a catalyst for narcotic activity and public disorder.

As a result of our analysis we concluded that countless hours of traditional enforcement only provided temporary solutions in regards to displacing, deterring, or preventing the ongoing criminal activity.

## RESPONSE

As we began to consider ways to address this problem, our research led us to two local agencies who had adopted what they called, "Parole Free Zones". These agencies implemented a plan, which designated a particular area in their city to be "Parole Free". This simply meant, as a condition of one's parole, any person on Parole was not allowed to be in that particular area of the city. If a person on parole was in fact contacted in this designated area he would be subject to arrest for a parole violation.

We requested all the data regarding the "Parole Free Zone" from one of these agencies and spoke to the officers involved in developing and implementing this program.

As we reviewed this information, we began to tailor and customize the Parole Free concept to address our particular problem as it related to the parks. As far as we know the idea to make a public park "Parole Free" was, and still is original.

We spoke to several parole officers who work in Anaheim with our officers. We solicited their input, thoughts and suggestions regarding the "Parole Free Zone". We contacted the supervisors of the local parole agencies requesting their participation and input regarding this matter.

The implementation of this plan required the cooperation of the State Parole board as well as the approval of our City Attorney and the Chief of Police. There was much discussion among these entities in regards to the rights of an individual to be in a public place. This and other related issues were discussed at length.

When we completed our analysis we prepared a proposal of our own "Parole Free Zone" as a response to the problem. It was sent to the Parole Unit Supervisor from our Community Policing Bureau Commander. Included in the proposal were maps of the three parks which highlighted the areas we desired to be restricted to parolees. Also included were copies of the calls for service for each of the three parks during a one year period from May 1,1996 to May 19, 1997. These statistics showed the total amount of calls and the type of activity taking place in the parks.



In this proposal we requested and recommended that **ALL** persons on parole be restricted from these parks. This recommendation was proposed to achieve the following goals:

- **To reduce criminal activity**
- **To assist in the rehabilitation of those on parole by restricting them from areas where illegal activity is present and prevalent**
- **To provide a safer environment for the public and the families who enjoy the parks**

Soon afterwards, our Community Policing Sergeant met with a Supervisor from State Parole to discuss in detail the process and procedures needed to implement this program.

One of State Parole concerns was how this program would directly affect their work load. We assured them our goal was not to make multiple arrests but to **deter** crime and the potential for it. We believed that once informed, an individual on parole would be foolish to risk violation and the certainty of being sent back to prison for simply being in a park. We articulated the fact that Anaheim has forty parks within the city limits and this initiative would only prevent them from being in three of them. The fact that one of our goals was to assist in the rehabilitation of those on parole was also a key issue in the success of presenting and initiating the Parole Free Zone program. During the assessment phase our theory of deterrent proved to be true and effective.

As a result of our discussions with Parole, they requested that we choose ONE particular type of crime classification in order to narrow down the field of our attention. In other words, we were asked to narrow our request down to a particular offense as it related to an individual on parole. We chose Narcotic offenses because we felt this would apply to the majority of persons involved in illegal activity in these parks. We made this decision based on the review of the types of calls for service we were receiving and also from the observations and information we received from other units within our department who had worked extensively in these parks.

The program was reviewed by all of the involved agencies and after some slight modifications, it was approved.

The State Parole Agency implemented this plan by sending out letters to each individual who lived in Anaheim and was on parole for a Narcotic related offense. They were informed a new condition of their parole now restricted them from being in these parks or the surrounding areas. These areas were now designated "Parole Free". A violation of this condition would result in immediate arrest and incarceration. Also, any person placed on parole for similar offenses after the implementation date would be notified during their indoctrination to parole of the restriction of being in these parks.

The Community Policing Detail generated a memorandum which was distributed throughout the Police Department explaining the "Parole Free Zone" program. As expected, the response from the officers was extremely positive.

We contacted the media and requested their assistance in communicating the Parole Free Zone program. One of our primary goals was to deter crime and we felt it extremely important to publicize this initiative to inform and educate not only the public, but also those individuals on parole. This proved to be an excellent and effective tool in communicating our intentions and goals.

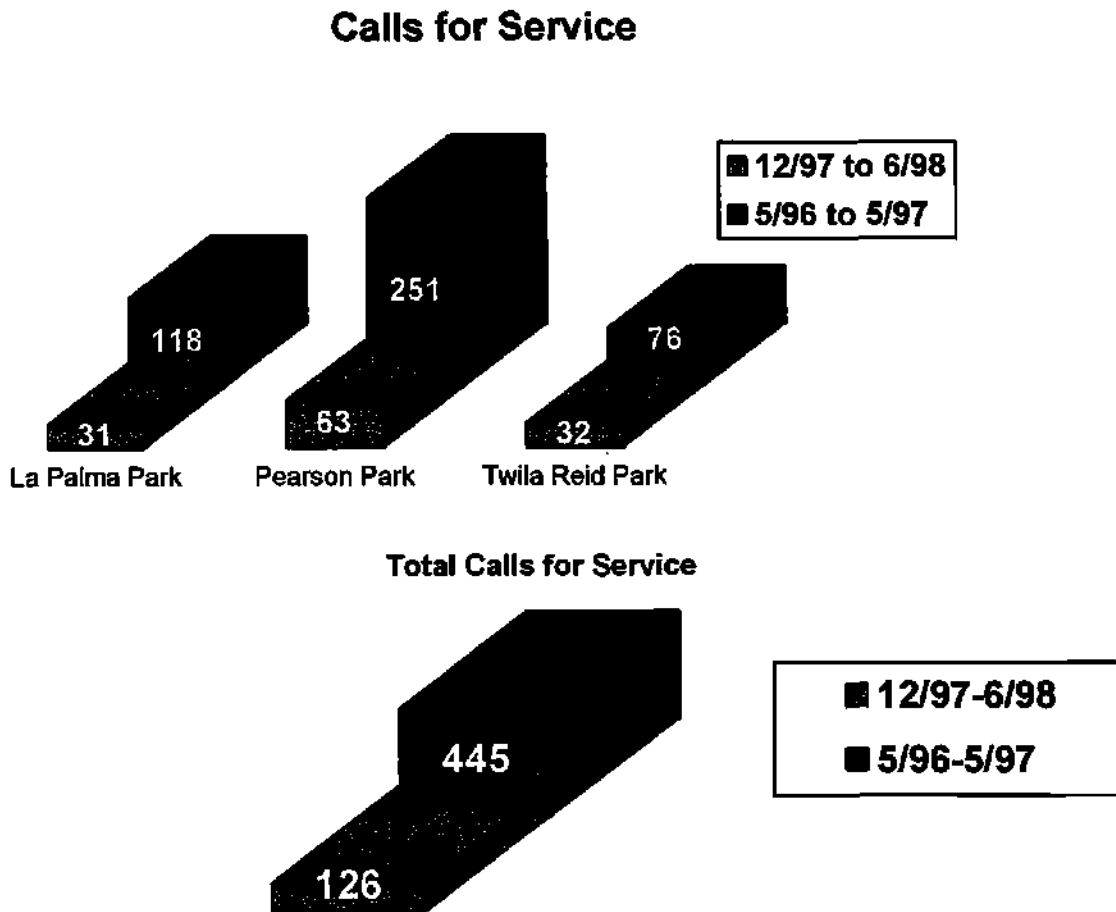
On Tuesday December 16,1997, the "Parole Free Zone" went into effect at the three parks.

Shortly after the implementation of the program, the Los Angeles Times featured an article describing the program. The article was accurate and positive. The Orange County News channel also featured the program in its broadcast. The response from both public and city officials was and continues to be overwhelmingly positive.

ASSESSMENT

During the first few days of the program, six arrests were made. One of the subjects arrested was also found to be in possession of a knife, which constituted another violation. Within a few weeks officers noticed a decrease in illegal activity. We were pleased to see how well the Parole Free Zone worked.

Calls for service were evaluated from December 16,1997 to June 9,1998.



These statistics were compared to the initial statistics from May 1, 1997, to May 19, 1997. Calls for service are low and have dropped considerably in all three of the parks. Most noticeable is the visual appearance. Prior to the Parole Free Zone it was common for groups of transients and gang members to congregate in various areas of the park. The Parole Free Zone had a direct effect on this activity.

One of our concerns was the issue of displacement. We have monitored the surrounding areas and have spoken to several patrol officers who work in the Parole Free Zone areas. We have also spoken to residents, business owners and park employees who live and work in these areas. Based on our observations and information, we have not noticed any significant displacement as a result of this initiative.

Several of the patrol officers who work in the location of these parks have commented on the decrease in traffic and illegal activity.

Residents who live in the surrounding areas have also commented on the improved appearance and have voiced their approval.

Business owners are pleased with the program. The loitering in front of their respective businesses has noticeably decreased.

Park rangers and employees of the park are also pleased with the Parole Free Zone. They say the parks are much safer now and more appealing to the public.

Before the Parole Free Zone, our Street Narcotic Unit found it easy to purchase narcotics from individuals in the park. Because of the Parole Free Zone, this activity has been reduced and the Street Narcotic Unit now finds it difficult to purchase illegal drugs in these parks. The decrease of illegal sales and use of narcotics has allowed this Unit to focus their efforts on other areas of the city.

The Anaheim Parole Office continues to support the Parole Free Zone initiative. When an individual who is on parole is contacted in one of these parks, a Parole Agent is contacted in the field by radio or by phone at their office. We verify the individual is a narcotic offender and has been advised of the "Parole Free Zone". Once verified, the subject is arrested at the scene for a parole violation. The arrest and booking process is simple. Once in jail, a parole hold is placed on the individual, who is later transported to the appropriate location for housing.

Since the inception of the "Parole Free Zone," we have received several requests from other Police agencies across the nation requesting information regarding the "Parole Free Zone" program. As a result of these requests, we created a packet explaining the program and we send it to agencies requesting this information.

Because of its success, we have recently requested that five additional Anaheim parks be added to the "Parole Free Zone" program. This request is pending.

In conclusion, the benefits of the program had a direct and positive effect on the community as well as on the actual person who is on parole. The program deters him or her from being in an area which would be detrimental to their rehabilitation. The cost to implement the program was minuscule. Research, letters to department heads, and contacting of the individuals on parole who would be affected by the action was the most time consuming part of the process.

This was all accomplished as a result of problem solving techniques and the Community Policing philosophy.

In short, our city and the community continues to benefit from the "Parole Free Zone". These parks are now much safer and families can enjoy them without the fear of being victims of crime. Crime continues to diminish, not only inside the parks, but in the surrounding areas as well.

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