

## Edgecliff Neighborhood Residential Burglary Reduction Program

The Edgecliff Neighborhood was identified as a transitional neighborhood in 1996. Officials from the Sheriff's and Prosecutor's offices realized that the area would continue to deteriorate and become a burden on Spokane County's resources if nothing was done. During the program analysis we found that burglaries were directly linked to a specific house in the neighborhood. Visitors to that house committed burglaries on their way to and from the house. These visitors purchased Methamphetamine from the occupants.

The program response had several goals:

1. Reduce burglaries by 40% the first year and 60% the second year.
2. Use the combined resources of the community, SCOPE, detectives, prosecutor and patrol officers to reduce crime. This required the belief that the criminal justice system can effectively reduce crime but that it takes all efforts to maintain the reduction and work on prevention.
3. Develop a program using the existing resources within the area i.e. a program that doesn't require additional money or manpower to maintain.
4. Make the Sheriff's Community Oriented Policing Effort a focal point in the community. Teach community members to resolve issues before they become problems requiring law enforcement intervention.
5. Raise the quality of life in the neighborhood.
6. Develop a positive interactive relationship between the prosecutor's office and law enforcement.

By 1999, we met or exceeded all of these goals. The Edgecliff Neighborhood Residential Burglary Reduction Program is currently expanding throughout the entire district and is considered a model pilot project throughout Spokane County. Crime rates diminished significantly. SCOPE-Edgecliff grows each day in numbers of volunteers and in program parameters. Patrol officers enjoy their job and the ability to make a difference. The prosecutor's office is reviewing a method to pair regionalized prosecutors with their sheriff's office counterparts to improve their working relationship. Community members have a positive attitude about the neighborhood and are increasingly seeing the need to become involved in the problem solving process.

## SCANNING

Edgecliff is a transition neighborhood in the valley of Spokane, Washington, which is adjacent to the city of Spokane and near areas with high levels of drug dealing and prostitution. Edgecliff residents are primarily elderly individuals or young families residing in low cost single- and multi-family housing. Those who could afford to move often did leaving abundantly cheap housing. New tenants were sometimes criminals who brought fear and "criminal associates" with them.

The Edgecliff Neighborhood Residential Burglary Reduction Program began in 1997 when the Spokane County Sheriff's Office crime analysis unit reviewed statistics and identified a high concentration of burglaries in Edgecliff over the prior two years. These statistics included reports and field contact interviews written by Crime Check operators and patrol deputies. Burglary also became the focus because it is often symptomatic of greater problems.

## ANALYSIS

Careful review of burglary reports from 1995 to 1997 immediately reduced the burglary problem. Approximately twenty percent of the crimes labeled burglaries were actually thefts or civil disputes. Deputies generally classified reports incorrectly because they were given false or insufficient information. Crime Check operators generally classified reports incorrectly because the legal definition of burglary was either misinterpreted or misapplied. In addition, details were often missing from these reports including information about the date, time, point of entry, missing property, suspects, whether the house was occupied or not and extenuating circumstances.

These inaccuracies skewed the initial analysis and proved that examination of crime statistics was only the first step in defining the problem. Program partners including the Sheriff's Office, the Spokane County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Community Oriented Policing Effort station in the Edgecliff Neighborhood and Washington State University (WSU) used several methods to obtain a more accurate representation.

Determining how the neighborhood defined the problem was accomplished with a survey created by WSU, the sheriff's office and the prosecuting attorney's office. A control area was selected in the Trentwood neighborhood, a similarly situated area of the valley that received normal law enforcement response during the grant program. Respondents in both areas were asked to provide demographic data, rate their concern over neighborhood problems, discuss neighborhood safety issues, evaluate the performance of the sheriff's office, report prior instances of victimization and their response, and to explain the extent of their knowledge about their neighborhood SCOPE stations and community policing concepts. The last page was left blank for comments.

Over fifty percent of the surveys were returned from each area. Edgecliff respondents overwhelmingly identified traffic (60%) as a major problem followed closely by burglary (47%), physical decay (45%), noise (43%), dogs (43%) and drunken youth (43%). Other identified problems included vandalism (34%), drug use (32%), and litter (26%). Overall, respondents expressed positive feelings about the neighborhood and law

enforcement, but they also included constructive criticism about the sheriffs office and the deputies who patrolled their neighborhood. Edgecliff residents did not believe deputies cared about them or their neighborhood.

Assessments were developed by the grant partners to evaluate relationships and look for similarities among victims, sites and suspects. The partners also hoped to identify any subconscious selection of sites by the suspects. Victims were asked about their age, their employment and hours, the number and age of residents in their residence and the type of residence. Site assessments noted a home's color, outside light setups, visual obstructions, distances from the road and neighboring homes, location on the block and distance from other burglary sites.

Victims self-identified themselves as middle class workers who were victimized Mondays through Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Wednesday was the most popular break-in day. No other similarities were noted. A review of the victims' criminal histories similarly showed no obvious relationship although a few had minor convictions from several years before. This review confirmed that the victims were middle class workers who were away from home during weekdays.

Suspect assessments asked about their lifestyle, the age when they first committed a crime, the punishment they received for prior crimes, their view of the criminal justice system and why they committed crimes in the Edgecliff Neighborhood. These assessments provided the greatest source of information. Fifteen suspects were interviewed and each admitted committing burglaries to finance drug habits. Their crimes were usually random and related only to whether the opportunity to steal was present at the same time as their need for drugs. They spent little or no time picking targets and admitted walking down the street knocking on doors.

Unfortunately they were often walking to or from a particular house, located in the middle of the Edgecliff Neighborhood, whose occupants regularly traded drugs for stolen property. This house and its occupants, two brothers who live with their mother, has been a problem in this area for over eighteen years. The brothers graduated from minor thefts and dealing marijuana to major trafficking in stolen property, franchising marijuana grow operations and dealing methamphetamine. This house was tied to numerous burglaries.

Suspects identified methamphetamine as their drug of choice during the height of the burglary problem. Methamphetamine users typically commit crimes against property to pay for drugs and basic living expenses because property is easily and quickly traded, pawned or sold. In addition, users gravitate towards cheap hotels and other low-income housing.

Mapping the burglaries by month identified "spike" periods where the numbers doubled or tripled for short periods of time within Edgecliff. These spikes were directly associated with periods when methamphetamine users came into the neighborhood to purchase the controlled substance or to pay a prior drug debt.

Gang association was also considered as a possible factor, because two known gang-associate houses were located in the Edgecliff Neighborhood but they were not connected to the burglary problem. An identifiable group of people was responsible for a large number of the burglaries but they did not meet the definition of a gang. They were merely acquaintances who used drugs and committed crimes together.

Over the years, the population of Spokane County has increased but the number of deputies remained stagnant. The last major increase in personnel occurred during the 1974 World's Fair and these hires began to retire en masse in 1996. The sheriff's office added forty new deputies from 1996 to 1997, resulting in a 52.6% turnover within the patrol division. New deputies typically begin their career working an afternoon shift, which means that less experienced personnel with limited investigative skills respond to most burglary reports.

Edgecliff is within District 2, a 25 square mile area. Deputies spent anywhere from one minute to two hours in the neighborhood per shift, making their presence inconsistent. The disparity was due to a high number of countywide calls for service and a lack of district integrity. During an average shift deputies spent more time driving than patrolling. Specific addresses with a high number of calls for service were not related to the increase in burglaries, but one low-income apartment complex was tied to a decrease in the neighborhood's quality of life.

Personnel numbers from the prosecutors' office also remained stagnant from 1995 to 1997 although efforts to increase productivity and efficiency were somewhat successful. During this period, felony trials increased from 130 to 188 per year. Retention by and rotation within the office resulted in a high turnover of deputy prosecutors handling burglary cases. Burglaries were prosecuted by the Property Team and classified as priority cases but they were often signed up and negotiated by less experienced prosecutors. In addition, cases were assigned by groups often rather than by geographic or other association. Detectives and prosecutors had minimal interaction unless a case went to trial.

The SCOPE-Edgecliff station was evaluated to determine whether its operation had an impact in the neighborhood and, if so whether it was positive or negative. Other SCOPE stations and programs were also evaluated to compare their effectiveness in their neighborhoods. The SCOPE program was implemented in 1994, and there were ten stations open in 1997, but they were often not staffed and had little measurable impact in their areas. SCOPE-Edgecliff was no exception. Survey respondents were largely unaware that a SCOPE station was even in their neighborhood. SCOPE-Edgecliff had approximately eight members but only one volunteered on a regular basis.

## RESPONSE

The response phase was designed to involve everyone interested in solving the problem. The participants included county animal control, the Catherine Johnson apartment complex, county code enforcement, a state community corrections officer, the Central Park condominium complex, a detective, Pratt elementary school, the media, a neighborhood prosecutor, four patrol deputies, residents, SCOPE-Edgecliff volunteers, two scouting groups, the Washington State Patrol (WSP), the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Water District. The response was also designed to use existing resources to ensure its survival when the grant ended. All programs and projects could be implemented without additional funding or personnel.

The response was developed to reduce burglaries and raise the quality of life in the Edgecliff Neighborhood. SCOPE-Edgecliff is the cornerstone of the response while

neighborhood residents are building blocks. The first step was creating an infrastructure at the station from which the members could teach the community. SCOPE volunteers assumed leadership roles by donating their time and energy to address quality of life issues within Edgecliff. The detective and prosecutor recruited volunteers, answered questions, provided resource information, mediated disputes, facilitated interaction and regularly attended and presented information at community, neighborhood and grant meetings.

Grant partners identified numerous potential programs and projects, some of which were successful and others which were not, but residents of the Edgecliff Neighborhood ultimately determined the course of the response. The detective and the neighborhood prosecutor acted as creators, coordinators or collaborators, but success was directly attributable to the level of interest from the volunteers, residents and community. The following is an alphabetical compilation of the response phase.

**Block Watch** - Some residents were already organized but Block Watch's presence did not increase in Edgecliff. The detective and prosecutor regularly consulted the Block Watch coordinator and SCOPE-Edgecliff provided Block Watch materials.

**Cemetery** - SCOPE members researched the history and previous restoration efforts at the county owned cemetery in Edgecliff. Volunteers got written quotes from the water district, agreed to the pay monthly fee and coordinated annual cleanups using community service labor. The county agreed to pay for the water hookup and to provide work crews to do yard maintenance.

**Complaints and Information** - Forms were created to track incoming complaints, information, referrals and resolutions from the neighborhood. SCOPE members originally referred most of these calls to the detective or prosecutor but now use their own tracking system.

**Community Emergency Response Team** - Two SCOPE members will be trained to work with the county department of emergency management and the federal emergency management agency in large scale disaster situations.

**Community Service** - SCOPE members supervise juvenile community service work crews and coordinate adult community service work crews. Crews include offenders who volunteer or who are volunteered. The detective and prosecutor request court authorized participation and suggest sentences be converted to community service. Crews pick up Utter, mow lawns and rake leaves.

**Department of Corrections** - The community corrections officer for the Edgecliff Neighborhood regularly visits the SCOPE station and updates the list of offenders living in the area. Deputies review this list to track released offenders and monitor for probation violations. In addition, the detective, prosecutor and CCO exchange information regarding specific offenders.

**District Integrity** - Each of the four deputies who patrol Edgecliff drafted a plan to use traditional and non-traditional law enforcement techniques to reduce crime in the neighborhood. Sheriff's office administrators agreed that these deputies could regain district integrity and take responsibility for all calls within their area. They still go out of district on priority calls but are not required to answer non-priority calls unless they have their own district under control. Deputies have a desk and a computer at the SCOPE

station and are encouraged to make their presence known. They now attend community events, visit Pratt Elementary School and regularly wave at all residents.

**Juveniles** - Several programs addressing juvenile issues were discussed. Resource and referral information was provided and three juvenile cases were prosecuted, but juveniles remain in need of comprehensive services within Edgecliff.

**Landlord/Tenant** - The detective and prosecutor researched adaptation of the Crime Free Multi Housing program to include individual and mobile home park housing, but the project stalled. The proposed project would have faced significant copyright hurdles. Property managers have been referred to Crime Free Multi Housing classes.

**Litter** - Edgecliff residents identified litter as a neighborhood problem. SCOPE members drafted a clean up proposal and route. The prosecutor coordinated partnership efforts between volunteers, residents, the prosecutor's office and work crews. Work crews have been out to the neighborhood several times to remove litter.

**Mapping** - Several maps have been made for the Edgecliff Neighborhood to identify all residences and businesses, particular problem houses, where sex offenders are registered, and where persons on probation reside. Mapping identified one owner of rental homes with several problem properties throughout the area.

**Neighborhood Meetings** - The detective and prosecutor proposed neighborhood meetings as first steps for small-scale problem solving, using the SARA problem-solving model. SCOPE members hosted one large and a few small meetings that brought immediate and dramatic improvements regarding identified problems. Several major problems were resolved in this manner.

**Newsletter** - SCOPE-Edgecliff started publishing neighborhood information in a column written for SCOPE-West Valley, but expanded to a four-page newsletter hand delivered by volunteers to over 2000 residences and businesses. The newsletter is edited by a SCOPE member and contains two pages of SCOPE information and community events written by SCOPE volunteers, one page of crime updates and prevention tips from the detective, and one page updating the status of cases by the prosecutor. Feedback from the community has been overwhelmingly positive.

**Nuisance Abatement** - The detective and prosecutor worked closely to research civil and criminal nuisance abatements for suspected drug houses. The prosecutor obtained examples of city abatement actions. SCOPE-Edgecliff and Pratt Elementary joined abatement proceedings against the neighborhood's main drug house by monitoring and reporting its activities. Several problem houses were neutralized through criminal prosecutions for violations of zoning laws. Deputies and the detective coordinated efforts to provide 24 hour monitoring of persistent problem houses. Each shift maintains regular contact, ranging from a wave to an arrest, with the residents and visitors of these houses.

**Property Seizure and Forfeiture** - The detective and prosecutor researched civil forfeiture statutes regarding real and personal property seized due to its use in the commission of a crime. The prosecutor attended forfeiture hearings and negotiated forfeitures as part of all felony plea agreements.

**Prowl checks** - Each month the deputies assigned to the district leave a list of the businesses that they checked during the previous month. SCOPE members hand-deliver a letter notifying businesses that an officer checked the business. The letter includes the date, time, deputy's name and any crime tips the deputy may have on how to better secure

the building or prevent crime. This program increases communication between the deputies, the volunteers and the businesses, and has elevated confidence in the sheriff's office.

**Publicity Book** - The prosecutor gathered information regarding the Edgecliff Neighborhood Residential Burglary Reduction Program then distributed copies to the county commissioners, sheriff's office, prosecutor's office and SCOPE-Edgecliff. The media was the primary source of this information, but school and newsletter articles were also included.

**Radar Reader Board** - Several SCOPE members are trained to work the radar gun and reader board and more are scheduled to attend upcoming classes. In addition, four volunteers will receive additional training to drive county vehicles to transport the largest reader board. The portable reader board was successfully used in the resolution of the Pratt traffic problem.

**Report Writing and Training** - Seven SCOPE volunteers are trained to take basic reports from Edgecliff residents and to request official report numbers from Crime Check. Members also make follow up contacts as part of the investigation of these reports. The detective and the prosecutor advised volunteers, taught a report writing class for reserve deputies and suggested improvements for Crime Check report writers.

**Resource Book and Numbers** - The detective and prosecutor created an outline and started compiling information regarding programs and projects in the Edgecliff Neighborhood. A finalized version would have been distributed to other SCOPE stations and neighborhood groups for future use.

**SCOPE-Edgecliff Station Relocation** - SCOPE-Edgecliff is currently housed in a soon to be demolished former drug home. Proposed relocation sites included buildings outside of the neighborhood, so SCOPE members are looking for a new office in the neighborhood. Another county owned building is in the neighborhood and volunteers are currently negotiating tenancy.

**Self-Assigned Caseloads** - The detective and the prosecutor have self-screened and -assigned caseloads. The detective maintained an active caseload comparable to other valley detectives while the prosecutor maintained a reduced caseload that emphasized a willingness to take any case to trial. Self-assignment allows for quicker identification and resolution of a problem. The detective's caseload included all property crimes, while the prosecutor's caseload included crimes ranging from zoning violations to second degree assaults.

**Senior Resources** - SCOPE members identify and investigate county programs to address problems affecting elderly at-risk residents. SCOPE members contact these residents to offer rides and errand running, or to merely inquire about their welfare. In appreciation and recognition of this program, the family of a recently deceased resident asked that any memorial contributions be donated to SCOPE-Edgecliff.

**Sex Offenders** - The prosecutor researched registration requirements for different levels and dissemination of information statutes, then advised the community regarding their responsibilities. The deputies and detective tracked sex offenders living in the Edgecliff Neighborhood and verified their registration. SCOPE members respond to questions and concerns.

**Safe Streets Now!** - The prosecutor coordinated, researched and drafted an adaptation of a joint city-county manual, pamphlets and training. SCOPE members were trained to take over implementation of the program with the Block Watch coordinator as facilitator.

**School Patrol** - Approximately eight SCOPE volunteers regularly patrol the drop-off, pick-up and crossing sites at Pratt Elementary School. These members work with Pratt volunteers to ensure the safety of the children. The detective provides improvement ideas and training. This program also includes patrol of surrounding streets to prevent trouble as students are walking to and from school and to place more volunteers in the neighborhood at the times most burglaries occur.

**Traffic** - Pratt Elementary experienced significant problems with speeding around the school while students were being dropped off and picked up. Volunteers followed the SARA problem-solving model and used the radar gun and reader board to substantially reduce the problem over a seven-month period. In addition, a four-way stop sign was installed, the bus route was altered, and drop-off and pick-up procedures were revised, then enforced.

**Walk for Success** - At the start of the school year, Pratt and SCOPE volunteers organized a "Walk for Success" throughout Edgecliff. Over 250 residents participated and voiced their intention to proactively fight crime and protect their community. Candidates for public office and the media paid special attention to this event and plans for a second "Walk" are underway.

## ASSESSMENT

The Edgecliff Neighborhood Residential Burglary Reduction Program significantly increased the quality of life and decreased the number of burglaries in this neighborhood. Burglary rates remained the same from January through June 1998, while the detective and prosecutor were the primary grant actors. During this period deputies developed strategies, SCOPE members were recruited and the station built an infrastructure. Burglaries were reduced 60% after all five elements of the grant partnership began working together. From July through December 1998 the SCOPE station evolved, community members got involved and deputies implemented their department-sanctioned proposals. Burglaries were reduced an additional 2.5% in the first three months of 1999, resulting in a total reduction of 62.5% during the response phase of this program.

**SCOPE-Edgecliff Station** - Membership grew from six to sixty-five including forty-five who regularly volunteer and attend monthly meetings. Volunteer hours increased from less than 100 to over 800 hours a month. The station is now open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The number of SCOPE-based programs is up from none to ten. Each program is designed by and coordinated with the community to raise the neighborhood quality of life. The station is increasingly recognized as a resource supported by residents and local businesses willing to donate services and funds. The station assumed a community leadership role.

**Deputies** - Deputies assigned to this district now spend approximately four hours per shift in their district. Deputies from all shifts work together addressing problem areas to prevent and reduce crime. These deputies understand their role in community oriented



policing and report increased job satisfaction directly attributable to their contribution to this community. Each officer develops knowledge of the area and criminals and regularly communicates with the detective to resolve crime.

**Detective** - The detective is assigned to the SCOPE station and reviews all property crime reports in this area. Cases are self-assigned by this detective. Crime types and locations are monitored to identify early trends. Deputies then work with the detective to develop a quick and efficient problem-solving plan. Problem oriented case resolution involves addressing all related cases in addition to specific cases. The working relationship between law enforcement and the prosecutor's office has developed to allow mutual understanding of agency expectations.

**Prosecutor** - The prosecutor was assigned to the SCOPE station and reviewed all problem property cases in this area. Cases were self assigned based on their high impact on the community. Fifteen defendants with over one hundred charges were sentenced to double or triple the standard sentence range. Several first-time offenders received typically low sentences but pled to the maximum number of felonies, which means another trip before the judge will result in much higher penalties. Ten burglary cases pled out with sentences ranging from thirty days to sixty-three months. Defendants now have huge incentives to avoid re-offending. Detectives and deputy prosecutors now have tools to re-incarcerate them for significant periods of time should this incentive prove lacking. The prosecutor's office is currently investigating a reorganization of its property prosecutors to pair them up with specific detectives and geographic areas.

**Community** - When the project began in 1997 the overall theme to the comments from the community were negative. The concerns of the community ranged from the burglaries in the neighborhood to traffic concerns. The majority of the statements had a negative slant towards law enforcement. The comments that were returned in 1999 have a positive view of the crime in the area and are very positive towards the SCOPE program. The neighborhoods trust in law enforcement is up from 79% to 92%. The belief the community and law enforcement should work together is up from 51% to 68%. The majority of the issues raised deal with zoning complaints within the neighborhood. The community did show a reduction in how many of the residents feel safe in the neighborhood but this can be directly linked to the residents becoming more aware of the crime around them. Crime in the area is down over 50%.