



2003 Herman Goldstein Award

Marietta Strategically Targeting Areas with Resources (M-STAR)

Summary

In 1996, the Marietta Police Department was a 911-driven agency that only reacted to reports of crime and disturbances. Police personnel were not encouraged, recognized or rewarded for efforts to solve community problems or build community ties. Other than dialing 911 to have an officer respond to a complaint, the community had few avenues of approach to enlist the help of the Marietta Police Department in solving or mediating problems. In short, the police and community were viewed as two different entities with little chance for interaction. When a citizen called the police to handle a non-traditional law enforcement problem, officers were not trained to properly address the problem and many times failed to direct the citizen to the proper resources. As would be expected, this often left the police officer and citizen frustrated due to a lack of closure.

Seeing that a mechanism was needed to partner the police with the community, the Marietta Police Department started a community policing effort in 1997. This resulted in the implementation of a Community Outreach Unit. The Community Outreach Unit consisted of school resource officers, DARE officers, and bicycle officers. This unit now consists of seventeen officers. In addition to the allocation of resources to community policing efforts, all departmental personnel were trained in community policing to include the SARA problem solving method. The department's reward system was also re-structured. Supervisors were instructed to reward those active in community policing efforts not only through evaluations which were connected to merit raises but also with formal and informal praise, recognition and commendations. Officers who took

the extra time and effort to work with citizens to solve problems were recognized as the new leaders of the department. Even with these monumental organizational changes, the department knew more had to be done.

The culmination of the Marietta Police Department's community partnership initiative came to fruition in October of 2000 with the kick-off of the Marietta Strategically Targeting Areas with Resources (M-STAR) program. This program, a result of years of intensive teamwork-based study and research, brought together police officers, citizens and members of other city departments as problem solving teams. The city was divided into five zones, all administrated by a police supervisor holding the rank of commander. Each commander, with a diverse zone management team of police officers, city employees from other departments, and community members was responsible for reducing crime and improving quality of life issues in their respective zones.

As a result of the M-STAR program, crime and quality of life issues were addressed on a regular basis by zone management teams. In the first two full years of the program Part I crime was reduced by 13.3% in year one and 4.1% in year two. A vehicle for police and community partnership had proven more than successful, resulting in a model for others to follow.

Description

Prior to 1996, the Marietta Police Department utilized a traditional 911-driven policing style. The department responded in a reactive fashion to calls for service. Very little interaction with the community existed. Recognizing that the department's level of service to the community was not being maximized, the leadership of the police department, with input from community members and city leadership determined that it was time for a change in the department's style of policing. The department decided to pursue a community policing philosophy. A Community Outreach Unit was formed consisting of SRO officers, DARE officers and bike officers. While the Community Outreach Unit was successful and embraced by the community, the department acknowledged that more needed to be done to close the gap in police-community interaction.

While the Marietta Police Department had established a successful Community Outreach Unit, it was obvious that more was needed to create an overall culture in the City of Marietta of police-community interaction. The Community Outreach Unit was making a difference. SRO and DARE officers were making a positive impact with city school children. Bicycle officers created a greater visual police presence in the community, while working with many neighborhoods in the city to solve problems and make them safer. As a whole, the Community Outreach Unit was making a greater number of officers accessible to the community. However, several needs were not being met.

Although community policing training had been provided to all departmental personnel, only a handful of the department's employees, namely the Community

Outreach Unit, were actually in a position to provide community policing services. Although officers in regular assignments were encouraged to practice community policing, the reality of the situation was that they couldn't successfully do it even if the desire existed. Other than the Community Outreach Unit, there was no resource for the street level officer to turn to for help in solving community problems. Street level officers were still having their actions dictated by a 911-driven system where they were expected to respond to a call, briefly handle it and then go back in service to catch yet another call. It became a regular practice for officers to continue providing the "not a police problem" response to a citizen's problem or to refer those citizens to the Community Outreach Unit. Street level officers were not involved in community policing efforts and the community was not having their problems solved in a team-based manner as was necessary. It was essential to get street level patrol officers, first responders, assimilated into a community policing philosophy.

Not all of the department's supervisors were in support of community policing. Some supervisors either didn't fully understand the principles of community policing, felt threatened by it or just didn't believe in it. Without their support, achieving positive results was close to impossible. Supervisors within the department controlled many of the resources available. Therefore, those resources wouldn't be provided when needed or at best would only be provided after a command level supervisor put pressure on a lower level supervisor to provide the resources. Inter-departmental cooperation became even more strained when commanding officers had a difference of opinion regarding the provision of resources. Internal politics sometimes got in the way of problem solving. It was painfully obvious that the overwhelming majority of supervisors within the

department had to understand and support the department's community policing efforts. In order to accomplish that endeavor, those individuals had to be integrally involved in the process.

The active involvement of other departments within the city, such as code enforcement, public works, utilities, etc. was necessary in order to solve many of the problems citizens brought to the attention of police officers. Rarely did a major neighborhood or community problem only involve a police issue. Usually, the problem also revolved around unkempt houses or property, insufficient street lighting or other concerns. These were not problems police officers could solve on their own. Other city departments had to step forward to share in the teamwork necessary to bring problems to resolution. With the existing workload being carried by these city departments, convincing them to assist with issues being brought to their attention by the police department wasn't an easy job. Often other departments might see the request as a police department request rather than a community request. Some departments chose to place those requests on the back-burner or ignore them altogether. If problems that were multi-faceted were to be solved, the other departments in the city would have to be involved.

The citizens of Marietta were not having their problems addressed in a consistent and timely manner. While some citizens in certain neighborhoods had Community Outreach officers regularly available to assist them, other neighborhoods and business communities throughout the city were without assistance for all but the most simple of police matters. If a citizen in a community without routine Community Outreach Unit presence had a problem which needed resolution, they were often told their issue was not a police problem or were given some ineffective guidance toward an indirect resolution

of the problem. There was no team approach from law enforcement to solving the problem with the citizen.

These were all needs that had to be addressed in order to bring the Marietta Police Department to the level of service it wished to provide to the citizens of Marietta. Crime reduction and quality of life improvement could not be accomplished by the police department alone. The assistance of the community and other city departments was required.

The chief of police designated a deputy chief to lead a team of police senior command staff members in the study and design of a process which would close the gaps necessary to bring community policing full circle at the Marietta Police Department. This group studied several programs nationwide and decided to design a program based on the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) COMPSTAT program. NYPD's COMPSTAT program placed accountability at the level of commander to reduce crime statistics. The NYPD relied much on the Broken Windows Theory of attacking smaller crimes and public blight which served as a stepping stone to more serious crime issues. The Marietta Police Department staff decided to take NYPD's COMPSTAT program and add the additional levels of community involvement and the involvement of other city departments. Before moving forward, members of the Marietta Police Department made trips to New York City and Port St. Lucie, Florida to watch their zone management programs in action. While neither represented exactly what the Marietta Police Department wished to achieve, both had very admirable programs in place. The seeds of the Marietta Police Department M-STAR program had been planted. The police command staff moved forward taking the steps necessary to make the program a reality.

The first step of the M-STAR program was to ensure that police personnel felt a sense of responsibility for what was happening in the community. This was accomplished by abolishing the city's previous zone structure of often smaller zones and replacing it with five larger zones. The zones were divided based on geographical and roadway considerations, coupled with calls for service statistics. The department's five existing captains were re-titled as commanders and one commander was placed in charge of each zone. The zones were given the numerical designations of zones 1-5. Patrol officers working uniform patrol street shifts were permanently assigned to the five zones. Permanent assignments allowed officers to feel ownership of their zones. They would grow to know the residents and businesses within their zone and feel a bond with the zone.

Zone commanders would then select teams from within the police department and other city departments to assist them with managing their respective zone. In order to facilitate the cooperation of other departments in the city, the chief of police presented the program to the city manager who adopted it as a city-wide program. Department heads from other departments in the city participated in M-STAR planning meetings and had input on how the program would be drafted. Zone management team police members consisted of the zone commander, a lieutenant, two sergeants, two bike officers, a detective, a traffic or narcotics officer and one officer from each uniform patrol shift who worked the zone in question. In addition to members from the police department and other city departments, community members were added to zone management teams.

A zone management team action form would be developed to allow citizens, police officers and other city employees to report quality of life issues or other concerns.

Once completed, these forms would be directed to the appropriate zone commander who would distribute the form to those who needed to take action to resolve the problem. The commander would track the form to ensure the problem was resolved. The problem may be sent to a police special unit such as traffic or narcotics or to another city department such as code enforcement, fire services or public works. The action form gave the department a tool to ensure that problems were tracked and ultimately resolved. This form would be of paramount importance to tackling tough quality of life issues that required an extended response.

Internal M-STAR meetings would be held on a monthly basis within the police department. During the meetings, statistical crime data provided by the department's crime analysis section would be presented by each zone commander in regard to their respective zone. The audience would be the chief of police and three deputy chiefs who would study the statistical data and ask pertinent questions about trends, patterns and responses. The commanders would be responsible for reporting on strategic responses they had taken to reduce crime in their zones and what they planned to do to counter any identified trends. Quality of life issues would also be presented by each commander.

External M-STAR town hall meetings would be held on a quarterly basis for each zone. The zone commander, with his or her zone management team, would be responsible for presenting information regarding crime and quality of life issues to citizens who attended the town hall meeting. Representatives from other city departments, particularly code enforcement, were present to answer questions and make comments. Citizens would be encouraged to express issues or concerns they have while at the meeting or to contact the zone commander outside of the meeting any time they so

wished. Zone management team representatives from the community would also be encouraged to be present at this meeting.

Statistical analysis was one of the keys to making the program work. The police department's crime analyst would produce month-to-month, year-to-year and quarter-to-quarter comparisons of Part I crimes in addition to narcotics arrests. These comparisons would be studied by zone commanders and reviewed by the chief of police and deputy chiefs to develop strategies to reduce spikes in crime. The crime analyst would also produce hot spot maps illustrating geographic areas of the city which were being hit hard by certain types of crime. Hot spot maps would be shared with uniform patrol officers and other effected personnel to make them aware of what areas to concentrate enforcement activity. Extending the statistical analysis yet another step, zone commanders would be given computer access to statistical information which they could query on a daily basis. This allowed zone commanders to study data on their own, rather than waiting on a crime analyst. Future plans for crime analysis would include allowing officers on the street to access immediate statistical data via wireless laptop computer applications. This would enable officers to share information with citizens and the business community instantaneously when asked.

Prior to moving forward with implementation of the M-STAR program, the program's guidelines were presented to the city manager and mayor and council. There was unwavering support for the program from everyone.

The chief of police and deputy chiefs met to discuss which commanders they felt would be best suited for the five zones. All five commanders were assigned to zones that most closely matched their known strengths and weaknesses. The commanders were

notified of their zone assignments, and then given time to study their zones before the selection of zone management team members was conducted.

Police officers on uniform patrol shifts were placed in fixed zone assignments several months before the M-STAR program was to start. There was an initial mixture of reluctance and exuberance, as expected. The police members of the zone management teams were then chosen in a process similar to a professional sports draft. The zone commanders studied the different officers of the department and sat around a large table taking turns choosing team members that they knew would be compatible with the specific needs of their respective zones. Before the list of teams was finalized, all zone management team members agreed to serve. No officers were forced to serve on a team if they did not want to. Desire to be involved was very important.

After years of planning, the M-STAR process was officially announced and unveiled in 2000 at a city-wide town hall meeting. The meeting was held in city hall, and all five zone commanders had booths set up so citizens could meet the zone commander and zone management teams from their zones. Citizens were told what zones they lived in, and some were asked to volunteer to serve on zone management teams. The chief of police and each zone commander made a short speech to the overflow audience. Public interest was overwhelming. The dates of future town hall meetings for each zone were announced. The M-STAR program had officially begun. The Marietta Police Department had started a new style of policing. The police department and City of Marietta as a whole were about to up their level of service.

The results of the M-STAR process were immediate. Within two months, the program was responsible for the apprehension of two burglary suspects who were

committing a rash of daytime residential burglaries in one of the city's zones. While studying the statistical crime data and hot spot maps, one of the zone team members recognized a pattern in a certain neighborhood and worked with a detective to solve the case. A check of truancy records showed two teenagers from that neighborhood were missing school on the same days as the burglaries were occurring. The teenagers were interviewed by investigators and confessed to the burglaries.

Patrol officers, who were only somewhat involved in community policing prior to M-STAR, were completely integrated in the process. They work permanent zones, know the citizens and business owners in their zones, are involved in problem solving both on calls and as a team with others and now understand the importance of partnership with community. Marietta Police Department patrol officers now serve as training resources for other police departments in the state interested in community policing.

Zone commanders, who were also in charge of uniform patrol shifts, investigations and administration, worked together in a never before seen spirit of cooperation to resolve problem in their zones. Internal cooperation within the police department improved drastically. Any disagreements over resources were quickly resolved by an agreement to share or a schedule being developed. Everyone was keenly aware that not only did they want efforts in their own zones to be successful, but they didn't want to be the roadblock which prevented another zone's efforts from being achieved. Teamwork between zone commanders and officers from all levels of the department's chain of command intensified to a machine-like efficiency. The department's available resources were more effectively matched to its demand.

Accountability for results was also stronger than ever. Whereas in the past a supervisor might have blamed a problem not being solved on lack of cooperation from detectives or traffic, now no such objections surfaced. Results were expected without excuse, and they were produced. If a zone commander was having a difficult time solving a certain problem, all of the department's resources, and the resources of other city departments if necessary, were pooled to solve the problem.

City departments worked together smoothly to resolve problems. If the police department received a multi-faceted complaint dealing with drug dealing, run-down property and poorly lit streets, the police department would tackle the narcotics violations while code enforcement addressed the ramshackle house and public works addressed the issue of more adequate lighting. Complaints and problems transcended departmental lines in all directions, police to sanitation, code enforcement to police, public works to code enforcement all through the use of action forms. The action forms required documented responses and were tracked by zone commanders until the problem was either resolved or determined to be outside the scope of the city's capabilities.

Community involvement in problem solving increased dramatically after the implementation of M-STAR. Attendance at quarterly M-STAR town hall meetings ranged from 15 to well over 100 citizens for the five zones. As one would expect, the importance of issues in the zones often dictated the number of citizens to attend the meetings. Zones with few if any serious issues would have a lower turnout than zones with a greater number of on-going serious issues. Citizens voiced their opinions on matters including code enforcement, narcotics, traffic, noise and construction. Many citizens brought forward problems that police and other city officials didn't even know

existed. The interaction created an increased trust and sense of teamwork never before experienced at the Marietta Police Department. Citizens and city employees exchanged phone calls, e-mails and face-to-face visits on a regular basis, whenever a problem arose or when a citizen just wanted to say "thank you" for a job well done.

While the department is aware that crime reduction is dependent on many factors, the City of Marietta did experience a significant decrease in Part I crime when comparing the years before and the years after the M-STAR program's development. Part I crime was reduced by 13.3% the first full year after the program began. The Part I crime rate in Marietta then continued to drop an additional 4.1% in the second full year of the program.

Quality of life issues are arguably where the M-STAR program has the most positive impact. Numerous factors effect crime rates that police departments and cities sometimes have no influence over. While the same is true of some quality of life issues, a great deal of such issues can be directly approached and improved by police departments and local governments. The department also learned that while crime is an important issue with citizens, they are more worried about those things which affect their lives directly on a day-to-day basis. Those items are quality of life issues. If those issues deteriorate, citizens are affected by them daily. If they improve, citizens enjoy an improved life. The Marietta Police Department M-STAR program has had an overwhelmingly positive influence on quality of life issues. Some quality of life issues involve crime as well, but most do not. Many quality of life issues were reported by citizens, business owners and city employees. Some examples of quality of life issues improved by the M-STAR program include:

- Police zone commander contacting the city sewer department to repair a privately owned sewer line while the owner was out of town. This helped the absent owner's neighbor who was suffering the consequences of the broken sewer line;
- Painting over graffiti;
- Brighter street lights to replace dim lights in high crime areas;
- Successfully addressing zoning issues through Cobb County for run-down properties that bordered City of Marietta properties;
- Reducing false alarms at businesses through positive exchanges with management;
- Repairing broken fire hydrants;
- Repairing a leaning retaining wall next to a public sidewalk;
- Condemning numerous dilapidated homes;
- Closing businesses that were operating illegally out of homes;
- Vagrant camps being disbanded;
- No parking signs being posted after requested by neighborhoods;
- A traffic signal (\$200,000 state project) installed at a dangerous intersection;
- Drug dealers and prostitutes on street corners being arrested;
- Speed trailers being placed in residential neighborhoods to slow traffic;
- Enforcement of stop sign and speeding violations after complaints;
- Shrubbery trimmed on private property after it obstructed sidewalks, causing pedestrians to walk in roadway to pass;
- Barking dog complaints ending in polite conversation with the dog owners who corrected the problem;

- Enforcement of Day Laborer ordinance after complaints of individuals stepping into roadway and littering at pick-up sites;
- Temporary police task force developed to intensify enforcement efforts in a high crime area;
- A crime-ridden restaurant/bar was targeted and closed due to M-STAR complaints;
- Successfully working with the state department of transportation to re-structure a roadway where people were driving dangerously, thus eliminating the problem.

The documented results of M-STAR included greater internal communication and cooperation within the police department, increased police-community interactions, increased city-citizen interaction and a heightened level of service to the community.

References

Bratton, William W. & Knobler, Peter (1998). *Turnaround: How America's Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic*. Random House.

Goldstein, H. (1990/ *Problem-Oriented Policing*. McGraw Hill.

Kelling, G.L. & Coles, CM. (1998). *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities*. Touchstone Books.

New York City Police Department COMPSTAT Meeting.

Port St. Lucie Police Department, Florida Zone Management Meeting.

Silverman, E.B. (1999). *NYPD Battles Crime: Innovative Strategies in Policing*. Northeastern University Press.

Agency and Officer Information

The M-STAR program was adopted not only at all levels of rank within the police department, but also as a city-wide initiative. The city manager understood the potential of the program and made all city departments a part of M-STAR. Department heads from other departments in the city participated in M-STAR planning meetings and had input on how the program would be drafted.

All departmental personnel were trained in community policing to include the SARA problem solving method. In addition, all members of the police department and members of other city departments that were to be involved in zone management teams were trained on the purpose and guidelines of the M-STAR program. Personnel received information on the importance of never ignoring a citizen's issue, even if it was not remotely related to their specific position as a city employee. The action form was explained thoroughly and emphasis was placed on the complete resolution of any problems presented by citizens, regardless of how minor or overwhelming they appeared. In addition, a very thorough departmental booklet was developed which outlined the M-STAR program. This booklet was used not only to train officers, but also to share with the public when they had questions about M-STAR.

The department's reward system was re-structured. Supervisors rewarded those active in community policing efforts through performance evaluations which were connected to merit raises as well as with formal and informal praise, recognition and commendations. Officers fully understood that solving problems within the community was not only expected and rewarded but would also make the difference between a successful or unsuccessful career within the department.

The financial and personnel resources required to develop and maintain the M-STAR program has been minimal. 100% of funding for the program comes from previously existing accounts within the police department's annual budget. No new monies have been budgeted to conduct the program and no personnel have been hired because of the program. Estimated costs include \$5,000 a year for overtime and \$1,000 a year for copying fees.

Agency Contact Person

Deputy Chief David Beam

Marietta Police Department

150 Haynes Street

Marietta, GA 30060

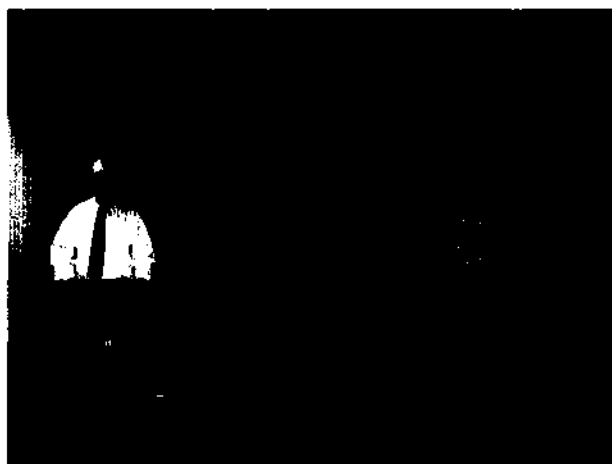
Phone: (770) 794-5351

Fax:(770)794-5375

E-Mail: dbeam@city.marietta.ga.us



**2003 Herman Goldstein Award
Supporting Documents**



Commander Wayne Kennedy of Zone 5 presents information on the strategic response his zone plans to initiate in regard to crime and quality of life issues within Zone 5. This is part of a monthly internal meeting at the police department where all commanders report on their zones to the chief and deputy chiefs. The senior staff as a whole then works together to then formulate additional ideas for strategic response.



These photos depict actual Town Hall Meetings in some of the department's zones.





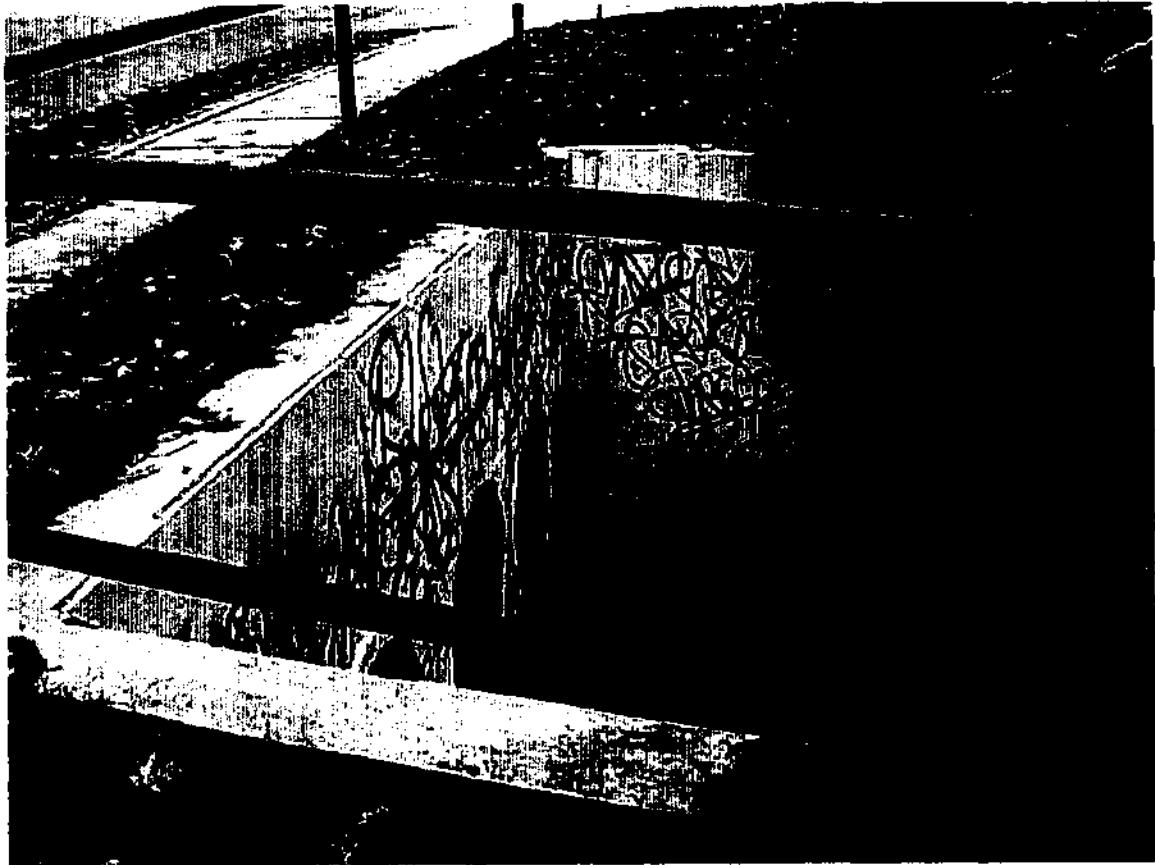
This was an occupied home on Lemon Street in Zone 3. The Zone 3 Commander received a complaint about this house and worked with the City Zoning Department to successfully get the home and yard cleaned up.



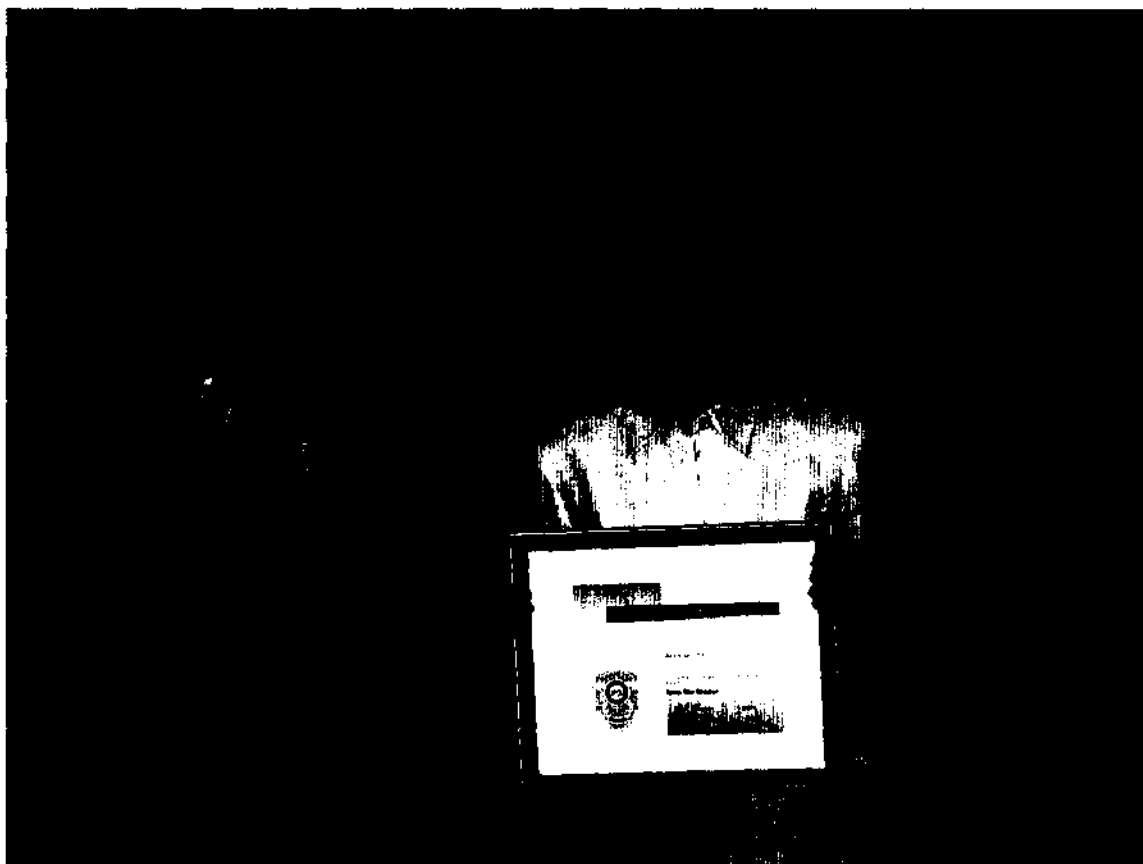
This was an abandoned home in one of the zones in Marietta that local drug users and dealers began using to sell and consume narcotics. The zone commander worked to get the home condemned and it was then torn down.



At an M-STAR town hall meeting several residents complained about this retaining wall. Apparently the wall was leaning and citizens were concerned that it was a safety hazard for pedestrians using the adjoined sidewalk. The zone commander worked with the City's Street Department and had the wall repaired.



Removing graffiti from the City's five zones is a major initiative of the M-STAR program. Here is an example of graffiti on a culvert reported through the M-STAR program by a citizen.



Zone 3 Commander Bill Grogan is pictured with Zone 3 resident Annette Lewis. Mrs. Lewis called 911 after witnessing three suspects painting graffiti on a local business. She then identified all three after they were stopped by police units moments later. Mrs. Lewis, who is also on the City of Marietta School Board, was recognized at a school board meeting by Commander Grogan.



This city park and nearby business center was identified through the M-STAR statistical process as being victimized by a serial thief who was breaking into automobiles. The zone commander set up an undercover sting that resulted in a habitual felon being arrested.





This is a group of citizens, police officers and other city representatives from one of the City's zones that came together on a national clean up day and walked neighborhoods in the zone picking up trash and debris. The M-STAR program has united citizens and City employees in numerous community improvement efforts.