



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2010 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 12, 2010

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Richardson Police Department, Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Richardson, TX

Jurisdiction population(s): Approximately 99,000

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2009, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: January Year: 2000

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in San José, California, October 2010. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Bill Keffler

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Richardson

Name: Dan Johnson

Title: Deputy City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Richardson

Name: Michelle Thames

Title: Assistant City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Richardson

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Greg Sowell
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2010 ICMA Annual Awards – Community Partnership Awards

Richardson Police Department, Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program

Overview

The Richardson Police Department (RPD) serves as a “Higher Caliber” law enforcement agency for the 99,822 residents of Richardson, Texas, a suburban city of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Police Chief Jimmy L. Spivey challenges each employee to live, work, and perform to a higher standard, while preventing harm and providing exceptional service through partnerships. The RPD stands upon three principles: prevention, performance and partnerships. The strongest partnership exists between the Department’s 232 employees and the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS). The Department has a legacy of working with community volunteers, which began with one volunteer in 1992 and today, has increased to more than 80.

As times have changed, traditional roles for police officers have also changed. In the early 1970’s, many tasks that had historically been performed by police officers were being transitioned over to civilian employees. A handful of volunteers began working within the RPD, performing tasks such as basic filing and other miscellaneous administrative functions. As police/citizen partnership efforts grew in the 1990’s, a desire for more volunteers followed, so the Department also began using graduates from the Citizen Police Academy (CPA) and individuals from the Senior Citizen Center. The increase in volunteers enabled the Department to expand its Neighborhood Crime Watch and as a result, the Richardson Heights Neighborhood became the first neighborhood to start a volunteer Crime Watch Patrol (CWP). On January 1, 2000, the RPD formally commenced the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) program.

Problem Assessment, Challenge/Need That Prompted Local Gov't. to Develop the Program

In 2002, the Volunteer program was staged for many changes. The newly appointed Chief of Police, Larry Zacharias, pledged to make volunteerism a top priority for his administration. The city as a whole was experiencing very challenging economic times. Richardson was well known for its "Telecom Corridor," a dense area of high tech corporations. When the market dropped, many of these businesses faltered and either went out of business or downsized dramatically. With much of the city's economy relying on this struggling industry, many challenging decisions faced city management. During this time period the City of Richardson elected to offer a retirement incentive plan. In all, 16 sworn officers and 4 civilians took the early retirement package. This created an immediate staffing shortage throughout all areas of the department. Even with increased recruiting efforts, it would take years to reclaim these positions, notwithstanding normal yearly attrition. Chief Zacharias recognized that engagement of the community thru volunteerism was desirable not only to deter crime, but to sustain and grow the level and quality of services the police department provided. The challenge was that the Department lacked the traditional level of employees who provided these services.

Program Implementation and Costs

To find new and creative ways to utilize volunteers, the RPD formed a new committee that was led by a paid Volunteer Coordinator who was responsible for implementing the plans. The new opportunities for the VIPS included assisting with scanning and filing in the Records Division, inventory and data entry with the Property and Evidence Section, and general departmental support with copying and shredding. Additionally, to free-up patrol officers from non-essential tasks, commanders determined that VIPS could also assist with marking and towing abandoned vehicles; providing traffic control at crash scenes; and checking vacant houses

while residents were away on vacation. Detectives also identified the ability for VIPS to manage a bicycle investigation and recovery initiative. Regardless of the assignment, each unit in the Department needing VIPS assistance would be responsible for assessing a specific need, and then creating a job description for each VIPS assignment. The Volunteer Coordinator would then assist the unit with recruiting and training the volunteer.

The only costs associated with the VIPS program were for the salary of the Volunteer Coordinator and the uniforms and equipment for the VIPS assigned to Field Operations. Retired patrol vehicles were utilized by the VIPS, after each car had been restriped and equipped with yellow and white overhead lights and specific RPD/VIPS striping and marking. As the VIPS program expanded, so has citizen involvement in Neighborhood Crime Watch and Crime Watch Patrol (CWP). The only cost associated with the CWP's (now covering 11 separate neighborhoods encompassing 11,852 homes) relates to equipment and training. Patrollers receive two sessions of training where police officers instruct specified CWP training for 6 hours. RPD supplies "Crime Watch Patrol" jackets and t-shirts, as well as two sets of magnetic signs for their vehicles.

Tangible Results/Measurable Outcomes of the Program

Initially, when the program began, roles for volunteers were very limited in scope and impact. Today, the VIPS play a vital role in helping the RPD maintain the superior quality of life Richardson residents expect. As a result, over time, the duties of VIPS have further expanded to include warrant data entry, sex offender database entry, uniform issuance, property and evidence management and other critical clerical jobs that traditionally have been performed by police officers or civilian employees. In the field, not a day goes by that patrol officers have routinely utilized VIPS to assist them on calls for service, including helping with traffic/accident

direction, abandoned vehicle marking, conducting found property recovery, vacation house checks, critical infrastructure security checks and assisting on other specialized programs, such as commercial vehicle inspections and the Lock Box program.

Not only have the responsibilities for volunteers increased, but the number of volunteers has increased to over 80 and in 2009, they performed 16,000 hours of service. This was an added value of \$323,998 to the City. Since the inception of the first CWP in Richardson, 10 more CWP's have followed, with at least 5 more in development for 2010. The CWP's, apart from VIPS, have 306 volunteers who contributed 6,467 hours in 2009. This is the equivalent of \$130,526 added value to the City. Our statistics have shown that when a CWP is started in a neighborhood, the overall crime rate decreases. Heights Crime Watch Patrol was implemented in 1993 in response to a dramatic increase in property crimes in their area including home burglaries and criminal mischief. A year later, that same neighborhood enjoyed an 83% reduction in property crimes.

RPD is privileged to have exceptional volunteers. For instance, the Texas Crime Prevention Association named Tom Jones (1998) and Lynn Sanders (2001) the Outstanding Crime Prevention Citizen of the Year for the entire State of Texas.

Lessons Learned During Planning, Implementation and Analysis of the Program

Many lessons have been learned from this experience. First, a plan is essential to the survival of any program. In this case, the plan included forming a committee to discern the needs of the department and the capabilities of the volunteers. As the plan developed, it was learned that flexibility was key to the success. As outlined in the aforementioned paragraphs, the VIPS were originally entrusted with minor jobs and, as RPD's confidence in their abilities grew, so did their job responsibilities.

Second, you must have a strong backing from your government officials. In our case, we needed to change the way city ordinances were written to allow volunteers to perform the necessary tasks. Without support from the City Council and City Manager Bill Keffler, the Volunteer program would have been hampered from the start.

The third lesson revolves around recruiting. Departments who are successful are generally very creative in the ways they approach challenges. In this case, Richardson has gone to new heights in creativity. Richardson believes that volunteers can be found in all age groups. Richardson actively recruits volunteers from its Senior Center where a majority of the attendees are retired. Richardson also actively recruits volunteers from the local university (The University of Texas at Dallas). Not to be overshadowed, the working class is an area where vast resources are available, but are often overlooked. Recruiting efforts for this group not only includes the VIPS, but the Crime Watch Patrols and Neighborhood Crime Watch. One advantage of using this demographic is that they, many times, are willing to work all hours, including at night. This in itself is a great help in reducing crime in neighborhoods.

Through the early efforts of Chief Zacharias, the continued and planned development of the Volunteers in Police Service Program championed by Chief Jimmy Spivey, the citizens of Richardson and the Richardson Police Department have benefited greatly from the contributions of our volunteers. RPD VIPS are now indispensable to the Police Department and our community. This lasting, effective, and mutually beneficial partnership has been an invaluable asset to the City of Richardson and the Richardson Police Department, while continually enhancing the quality of life for all Richardson residents.