The Multi-jurisdictional Shared Information Network
A Great Idea - Be Prepared for the Challenges
Blaine A. Koops, Captain, Administrative Services

Holland Police Department

We've got the latest equipment, we've got the most contemporary software, we've got the manpower, we're motivated... ready to go, right?

Wrong!!! The technology manager comes to the table with the mindset that we operate with hard facts and data rather than through emotion and hearsay. Frequently, the biggest challenge to law enforcement technology administrator's isn't the procurement and installation of equipment, rather it's the political hurdles which can stifle the project. How often has the technology project manager heard, "we use Digital VAX and we're not going to switch" or "IBM is the only way to go- don't ask us to change".

Hidden agendas, protecting one's own turf or just not being knowledgeable are just a few of the pitfalls the multi-jurisdictional information manager must guard against.

Currently a number of criminal justice agencies in Ottawa County are participating in the multi-jurisdictional/discipline, federally funded, Weed and Seed program. Part of our Weed and Seed program goals are to enhance the shared records management system, and to improve the accessibility and usability of the data base to all municipal, county and state criminal justice agencies in Ottawa County. In addition, we are planning to develop a criminal justice information system that would be "one point" entry from dispatch, onto police agency records, to jail/booking facilities, onto the prosecutor's office and finally into the court system records. Under the auspices of the County of Ottawa - Management Information Services, City of Holland - Information Services and the Ottawa County Central Dispatch Authority a plan was developed to work towards these goals. One of, if not the most, formidable components of the project has been the political implications surrounding the project. There seems to be a
wide spectrum of expertise (or lack thereof) in the area of computer programming knowledge in the public service sector. Some agencies readily admitted little or no knowledge of computerized records management/while other agencies profess a wealth of knowledge in the area of computerization—where the mind set is that their "in-house" programs far exceed anything available off the shelf.

Very typically, strong personalities have positions of control in the public sector thus, the technology manager must be cognizant of this and have the skill, authority and political backing to act.

As the guiding principles of Community Policing suggest, everyone can benefit, if everyone has input. We found in the Ottawa County project that the best avenue to approach these challenges was through up front and frank communication. Goals, objectives and concerns were charted. Obviously, consensus is the hallmark to success of the project. The political ramifications, in and of itself, can be the Achilles Heel to the successful implementation of a project. Planning, openness and cooperation are all key to the success of the multi-jurisdictional information project.

The criminal justice practitioners of Ottawa County are proud of the advances we have made in our information sharing endeavors. All public safety units in Ottawa County are equipped with Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) or Mobile Computer Terminals (MCT) units. The units are dispatched in an effective and efficient way. Also, the information is used for crime analysis purposes. The county-wide fiber optic system allows for digitized mug shots and fingerprints to be transmitted between the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department.

Remote criminal arraignments are now routine between the three remote district courts and the Sheriff's Departments and Holland Police Department lock-up facility via the fiber link. The prosecutor and district court(s) have access to law enforcement records without requesting a physical "hard copy". Also, the prosecutor's office, district court and the probation department can access local law enforcement records as well as the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and State of Michigan (LEIN) Law Enforcement Network Information from their PCs. Likewise, law enforcement personnel can access other law enforcement agencies, district court and probation records through the system. These are results of the collaborative efforts of many dedicated people in the Criminal Justice profession of Ottawa County. Again, vision, open communication, and a willingness to compromise enabled us to realize this goal.

Our system has come a long way, still our plans call for an even more aggressive use of shared information and data resources. Plans for the near future include electronic generated traffic citations issued via the MCT system. Shortly, the general public will be able to access crime statistics via the Internet. Computerized crime locating and mapping through a Geographic Information System (GIS) are on the drawing board.

Still, one of the most important lessons a criminal justice information manager can learn is that the system cannot be everything for all people. Every criminal justice agency involved, big or small, must understand that there is a lot of giving before realizing the benefits of a multi-jurisdictional informational system. The project manager would be well advised to develop good working relationships with the personalities involved. A strong understanding
of the political dynamics by the project manager is essential **before** embarking on the project.

Not only do the criminal justice professionals benefit from the sharing of information but in the end the citizens of the community become the true benefactors since the ending results are safer neighborhoods and better communities to raise families and do business.

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**Problem Solving With Technology**
Elizabeth Bonello, *Lansing Police Department*

Problem solving is at the heart of Community Policing, and the Lansing Police Department is committed to working with neighborhoods to resolve quality of life concerns. Lieutenant Steven Person recently introduced the department's newest high-tech problem solving tool. "Our new web site demonstrates our continued efforts to allow citizens closer access to the police problem solving teams through the use of technology," said Lt. Person.

Using the Lansing Police Department's web site, citizens can have easy access to the problem solving team assigned to their area. Residents can report a problem to the police department via a secure Internet site. The complaint will then be forwarded to the sergeant assigned to that area. The sergeant will work with the team officers and residents to assess the problem and to develop a solution. The complainant can remain anonymous or provide their name and address. The web site also features a Crime Stoppers page which highlights unsolved crimes and wanted felons. Tips can be forwarded to the department via a secure Internet site or they can be called in at 483-STOP. Citizens can test their knowledge about the police, local laws, and community problem solving on one of the quizzes available in the "Donut Shop." Lt. Person stresses that, "A goal of the Lansing Police Department is to better inform the community of information that affects them." Technology plays a key role in achieving that goal and the department plans to continue exploring new avenues to advance their problem solving efforts. You can visit the Lansing Police Department's web site at www.lansingpolice.com.

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**COMMUNITY POLICING . . . What Is It?**
John C. Biggar, Chief, *Gerrish Township Police Department*

You may have seen or read material in recent months about Community Policing, commonly called COPS, and may have wondered what it is. You may also wonder why Gerrish Township Police Department would be moving in such a direction.

In the community policing concept both community and citizens must share the rights and
responsibility of identifying, prioritizing, and solving identified problems as full-fledged partners with the police.

To create true community policing, our police department must create and develop a new breed of line officer who acts as a direct link between the police and the people of the community.

Police officers must now become community outreach specialists and be freed from the demands of the patrol car radio and routine patrol so they can maintain daily, direct, face-to-face contact with the people they serve.

Our officers’ new and broad role demands continuous, sustained contact with all law-abiding people in the community. Together, the police and citizens can explore new and creative solutions to local concerns, with the citizens serving as supporters.

Our community policing officers still respond to calls and make arrests, but in addition, they go beyond this narrow focus to develop broad-based, long-term initiatives that improve the quality of life in Gerrish Township.

Community policing implies a new contract between the citizens and the police, thus offering new hope in overcoming widespread apathy in our community. This suggests that our police may now serve as a catalyst which challenges the citizens to accept their share of responsibility for the overall quality of life in Gerrish Township.

We are not approaching community policing as a new tactic to be applied and then abandoned. We see it as a new philosophy and organizational strategy that will provide us with the flexibility to meet all of our local needs and priorities well into the future. To make the change occur, we have assigned each officer a specific area within the township that they are responsible for. These areas are known as GAPS (Gerrish Alternative Policing Strategies).

We have also trained all of our officers in problem solving techniques so that they can now work with citizens or citizen groups to solve problems. We have given our officers the authority to manage their own GAP with the assurance that they alone, with the citizens, are going to be the decision makers. Our Township Board enthusiastically supports this new direction and in fact participates in the process completely.

**Community Policing is the future.** It provides a decentralized personal police service to our community. It recognizes that the police cannot impose change on our community from the outside. We encourage our people to be a resource that can be used to help us solve problems identified by our citizens as legitimate concerns. With our vision, "Community with Police …Caring and Sharing Together," we can take Gerrish Township into the new millennium and enhance the quality of life for us all.

*For additional information contact:*
Chief John C. Biggar
ACT NOW – What Is It?
John C. Biggar, Chief, Gerrish Township Police Department

ACT NOW is an acronym for Advisory Community Team – Neighbors On Watch. Nearly a year ago the Gerrish Police Department began meeting with a citizens group, which includes our Township Board, to begin to build new partnerships within our community to better serve the people. This group is one result of those meetings. We have met on a monthly basis and have sponsored some really great programs for citizens.

One of the first programs was on Neighborhood Watches. A Lansing Police Community Officer came to our meeting and gave a very informative presentation on the advantages of having a neighborhood watch in our own area. Officer Banelo also trained us on how to start our own neighborhood watches. Since that meeting we now have several within our township.

We had another meeting on home security. A Lansing Community Police Service officer attended and brought three tables of equipment and gave a very good program on how to make your home less of a target for the would-be thief.

We meet every third Monday of the month at the Gerrish Police Training Room. Please come and join us.

For additional information contact:
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Nexus of Community Policing & Domestic Violence Conference

Mark your calendars now! On October 27-29, 1999, The Nexus of Community Policing and Domestic Violence Conference will take place at the Midway Best Western, Lansing, Michigan. With funding from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) through the Michigan Regional Community Policing Institute, RCPI this conference will not be the traditional domestic violence conference. Using the philosophy of community policing that incorporates a customer based organizational transformation, unlimited partnerships and an information based unified effort to solve problems, the conference will build and enhance community partnerships to identify location, extent and nature of domestic violence in participants’ communities. This is a must for stakeholders, which include law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, faith-based and neighborhood association leadership, as well as victim advocates and government officials, who are seeking new ideas and new partners in developing innovative efforts in response to domestic violence.
LeForge Cooperative Policing Project
Michael Radzik, First Lieutenant, Washtenaw County Sheriffs Department

The Dilemma: How do you apply effective community policing strategies to a well established residential neighborhood that is divided between two distinct municipal jurisdictions served by two separate police agencies?

The Solution: Cooperative Policing.
That was the challenge facing the Washtenaw County Sheriffs Department and the Ypsilanti Police Department when each agency began independently implementing community policing strategies in an area known as the LeForge Road corridor. "LeForge" is a conglomeration of privately owned apartment complexes encompassing about ½ square mile on the northern edge of greater Ypsilanti. Cutting through the heart of the community is LeForge Road, the jurisdictional boundary between Ypsilanti Township and the City of Ypsilanti along the Huron River.

In years past, college students attending nearby Eastern Michigan University dominated LeForge. More recently, however, deteriorating property and "broken windows" left owners eager to work with police and local government to improve its image as a crime ridden community where drive-by shootings were commonplace and the crack cocaine trade flourished.

Independent community policing initiatives by both agencies had limited success. The criminal element rudely disregarded jurisdictional boundaries and there were inconsistent local statutes for things like curfew and blight. There was little or no communication between neighborhood watch groups because they were organized through different agencies. Deputies and officers independently assigned to LeForge felt restricted in their ability to bring the whole community together under one united strategy. That's when the managers and administrators of both police agencies along with township and city government put their heads together. The result was a decision to form a cooperative policing agreement for LeForge.

Under the agreement, sheriff's deputies and city police officers work pre-determined shifts together. Selected personnel assigned to the project were cross-sworn by both departments, and administrative agreements were made regarding policy compliance and union issues. Procedural roadblocks were overcome at the management level, such as report forms, logs, radio frequencies, dispatching, scheduling and station access. The result is a united police presence, i.e. a brown uniform and a blue uniform riding together in a city or county patrol car with equal authority in both jurisdictions.

Once established in a jointly operated mini-station, deputies and officers began recruiting apartment owners, managers and residents to combine resources toward a common goal. Representatives from township and city recreation, ordinance and building code departments were brought on board. Together, they identified crime and disorder issues common to the general area and specific to each complex. Action plans were developed and implemented, and the cooperative process has been institutionalized. Respective attorneys are now
considering modifying existing local statutes to be consistent between jurisdictions.

After one year of operation, the LeForge Cooperative Policing Project appears to be an effective solution to a unique problem.

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**SUBMISSIONS:**

All articles and photographs will be considered for publication. Community Policing Partnerships seeks articles on successful community policing stories, community partnerships, problem-solving strategies and other topics that are helpful to communities and law enforcement agencies. Please send articles and photographs (black and white glossy preferred) to:

Michigan Regional Community Policing Institute,
Community Policing Partnerships,

Attn: Christina Wilkerson,
1407 S. Harrison Road,
336 Nisbet Building,
East Lansing, MI 48823
or e-mail – christina.wilkerson@ssc.msu.edu.

**Neighborhood Associations of Michigan**

Maxie C. Jackson, Jr., Ph.D., NAM Secretariat

The Neighborhood Associations of Michigan (NAM) was established in 1985 through the efforts of Michigan State University's Urban Affairs Programs and interested presidents of neighborhood associations across the State of Michigan, and it is governed by an elected Board of Directors. NAM’s mission is to provide resources, technical assistance and information to neighborhood associations, and to facilitate mutually beneficial activities through statewide networks.

NAM hopes to educate, empower, and advocate for community-based organizations in their efforts to upgrade their quality of life and improve their communities throughout the State of Michigan. The following are illustrative of the program efforts of NAM:

- produces a tri-annual Directory of Michigan Neighborhood Associations,

- produces a quarterly newsletter, The Neighborhood News link; and the single issue Newsflash, as needed,

- convenes an Annual NAM Convention in the early Fall where the Annual NAM Community Builder’s Awards are presented, and

- facilitates the provision of training and technical assistance as requested by member
At the Annual Convention in 1997, NAM identified several issues that the organization should address in the coming years. NAM’s priorities for 1999-2000 are to increase membership, establish the NAM website and Power Net, develop programs and funding for statewide leadership training, and support local community collaborations and partnerships with other organizations to increase resources for NAM members. NAM is also expanding its successful Community Builder’s Awards to include police departments that have embraced the concept of community policing by presenting the First Community Policing Award at the 1999 Convention.

In addition to training and technical assistance, NAM has also been an advocate of community-based problem solving, and NAM also supports legislation and policies that help to build healthy Michigan neighborhoods. The quality of life for Michigan residents is largely dependent on the health of neighborhoods throughout the state. In concert with neighborhood-based groups, NAM continues to work for safe streets, stronger community organizations, and an improved housing stock.

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Upcoming Training – Open Seminars

- May 5, Problem Solving, Lansing, Michigan
- May 13, Crime and Data Analysis, East Lansing, MI
- May 20, Community Police Officer Training, Kentwood
- May 22, Problem Solving, Detroit & Ypsilanti
- May 24, Community Police Officer Training, Kentwood
- May 27, Community Police Officer Training, Kentwood
- June 2-3, Initiatives, Holland
- June 3, Problem Solving, Lansing
- June 9, Problem Solving, Detroit
- June 16, Problem Solving, Sault Ste. Marie
- June 17, Crime and Data Analysis, East Lansing, MI

For more information call 1-800-892-9051 or visit our website at:
www.cj.msu.edu/~outreach/rcpi

Community Policing: The New Millennium
A National Conference
WHEN: August 22-24, 1999
WHERE: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Mark your calendars now! This conference promises to include a wide variety of topics of interest and importance to police, community, government leaders, business and academic stakeholders committed to community policing. Community Policing: The New Millennium is expected to attract between 200-300 attendees from jurisdictions across the United States.

Mini-Grants Awarded
Eleven neighborhood or community groups from among the 27 departments working with the Michigan Regional Community Policing Institute were awarded grants totaling $9,680. Thirty-four applications were received.

Up to $1,500 was available to neighborhood or community-based organizations that were forming partnerships with RCPI police departments to fully implement community policing. Grant applicants had to show how the projects for which funding was sought would enhance local problem solving, create partnerships, address quality of life issues, or build capacity of community groups.

Final project reports which summarize the activities provided under the grant are due by no later than October 1, 1999. Summaries should include when and where the project was conducted, a description of the activities, the number of participants, and any measurable outcomes of the activities. Photographs, if possible should be included with the final report.