The Next Evolutionary Level of Community Policing

Gene Stokes

Abstract

For the past several years, progressive law enforcement managers have been involved in what has been described by Kelling (1988) as a "quiet revolution", that continues to reshape policing in the United States and the free world. Under a variety of names (problem oriented policing, neighborhood oriented policing, community policing), law enforcement agencies have developed new strategies and techniques to better serve the concerns and demands of their respective communities.

The purpose of this text is not to extol the virtues of community policing but to project the next evolutionary plateau of the process. The envisioned institutional change will not involve just the police, but will encompass public and private service agencies as well. The success of citizens and community policing officers working in concert with various governmental agencies to improve community conditions will encourage continued and increasing cooperative efforts. These tactics, coupled with the fiscal demands to curtail governmental revenues and programs, will spawn a holistic approach to the delivery of police and public safety/welfare services.

A holistic approach addresses criminal justice, socioeconomic, and environmental factors that adversely affect a community. It is this optimum policing strategy that will result in a lasting and positive impact that truly improves the quality of life of the community being served.

Introduction

At the beginning of the decade Toffler (1990) wrote, "...almost all major systems on which our society depends...are in simultaneous crisis...failure to prepare in advance for the turbulent nineties could produce a grave breakdown in public security" (p. 1).

As Hawkins (1991) noted, American law enforcement agencies are responding to rapid social change and emerging problems by rethinking their basic strategies. In response to problems such as crime, drugs, fear, and urban decay, law enforcement has begun experimenting with new approaches to their tasks.

This change in the manner and scope in which police operations are being conducted has occurred in large part because the existing calls-for-service system has proved to be ineffective, unmanageable and costly. Violent crimes are becoming more prevalent and citizens are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the quality of service delivered by their local police agencies.

The calls-for-service policing strategy was developed and enhanced with communications technology to respond rapidly to reports of crime or criminal activity. What was seen as an effective method of fighting crime has degenerated into an onerous and overburdened system clogged with frivolous complaints and demands for non-police related services (Sparrow, Moore, & Kennedy, 1990).

The incident-driven strategy has become institutionalized as a policing model to the point that the system has become more important than the service to be delivered. It has become engrained into police dispatchers and patrol officers that being available for the next call is more important than rendering proper service to the citizen at hand.

Moore and Kelling (1988) provided the most insightful glimpse of the

ineffectiveness of the calls-for-service system when they observed:

> Officers stare suspiciously at the community from automobiles, careen through city streets with sirens wailing, and arrive at a "crime scene" to comfort the victim of an offense that occurred twenty minutes earlier. They reject citizen requests for simple assistance so that they can get back "in service" - that is, back to the business of staring at the community from their cars. No wonder so many citizens find the police unresponsive. Officers treat problems which citizens take seriously - unsafe parks, loud neighbors - as unimportant. And when a group of citizens wants to talk about current police policies and procedures, they are met by a "community relations specialist" or, at best, a precinct patrol commander, neither of whom can respond to their problems without calling headquarters.

> This situation would not be so bad if the police were succeeding in their crime-fighting role. But the fact of the matter is that they are not. Crime rates continue to increase, and the chance that a violent crime among strangers will be solved to the satisfaction of the police (let alone the prosecutors and the courts) is still less than 20 percent. The reason for this poor performance, research now tells us, is that the police get less help than they need from victims and witnesses in the community (p. 50).

Kelling's "quiet revolution" to change the ills of the current system involves a strategy of looking past the symptoms of crime and public disorder to the root causes and working with citizens to eliminate or resolve these problems. With these tactics, police have come to realize they must be more than a reactive force that responds to crimes already committed - they must develop into a proactive entity that deals with a broad variety of conditions that tend to disrupt the community peace or adversely affect the quality of life.

As Meese (1993) noted, "When police officers deal with the symbols of urban decay - abandoned buildings, accumulated rubbish, panhandlers roaming the streets - they mitigate the conditions under which crime and disorder flourish. The result is lessened fear of crime and greater satisfaction with the police among members of the community" (p. 2). Meese concluded that, "Making the transition from a traditional reactive, incident driven style of policing to a proactive, problem-directed style of community oriented policing requires a comprehensive strategy that is based on long-term institutional change" (p. 5).

In managing and directing police services (or any service oriented business), the manager has three basic options in responding to an increase in the demands for services (Wilson & McLaren, 1977). These options include, increasing the allocation of personnel who render the service; redeploying the existing allocation of personnel to more effectively render the service; or changing the method in which the service is delivered.

To this point in time, law enforcement agencies have traditionally responded to an increase in crime rates or calls-for-service loads by calling for more police officers to fight the menace. Some of the more progressive agencies have re-deployed personnel, through innovative shift alignments, restructuring patrol areas, civilianization of sworn positions or by using a combination of these tactics. The re-deployment is standardly

designed to afford a larger pool of officers to respond to calls-for-service during peak reporting time periods. Few agencies, however, have closely examined or considered the third option of changing the way in which police services are delivered to the community.

When changes in the method of delivering police services have been addressed, the tactics have standardly not altered the base structure of the agency, but merely have reduced or cut existing levels of the service provided. With the advent of community policing, agencies are embarking on not just an isolated program or an "attitude adjustment", but turning to a system that radically changes the way in which they deliver police services to the community.

As Goldstein (1993) observed, "We are engaged in nothing less than rethinking, in all its multiple dimensions, the arrangement for the policing of our society" (p. 3). Bucqueroux (1995) cited surveys by the Police Executive Research Forum that indicates about two-thirds of police agencies in major jurisdictions claim to have adopted some form of community policing. While police agencies have rushed to embrace community policing (for grant funding or political purposes), the concept remains vague and ill defined. All too often, when community policing is implemented, it is reduced to yet another specialized unit, operating in inner city areas or high incident locales in which police have identified as drug or crime problems. In many agencies, such "community policing" teams can be distinguished from traditional undercover or tactical units by name only. As Klockars (1996) complained, "many police departments conversions to community policing have occurred instantaneously...proclamations notwithstanding, nothing really changed" (p. 12).

Clearly, community policing must go beyond traditional approaches of specialized units, centralized functions, and crime-specific management mandated targets and goals. Instead, community policing operations should reflect core principles as outlined in the Bureau of Justice Assistance Monograph, Understanding Community Policing, A Framework for Action (1994). These principles include:

- Community engagement and partnership - Proactive contact with residents to identify and prioritize neighborhood problems and concerns.

- Problem solving - Analysis and response to underlying conditions that create neighborhood problems.

- Decentralization - Geographic decentralization and delegation of authority to the street officer level.

- Ownership - Assignment of officer to geographic community to affix accountability and develop genuine concern for the community's welfare.

Many police agencies have successfully implemented community policing models that embody the above characteristics. For the most part, however, their efforts have concentrated on overt problems such as abandoned buildings, graffiti, trash, poor street lighting, or open drug dealing. While these are worthwhile and legitimate neighborhood concerns that should be addressed, the underlying causes of crime and community decay remain unscathed.

For community policing to move beyond resolving overt problems of order maintenance to striking at the foundational factors of crime and social decline, police agencies must make concerted efforts to mobilize citizens within their respective communities. Police officers, working with members of their communities, must establish coordinated endeavors with social service, housing, recreation, educational, private industry and volunteer organizations.

By coordinating these diverse entities, the community officer can form powerful alliances. As Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1994) noted, "whenever citizen groups, private industry, or private citizens have attacked the problems of crime, fear and disorder, the results have been remarkably better than those of the formal criminal justice system" (p. 35). Glensor (1995) agrees that the police cannot address crime problems alone and calls for a new synergy between governmental agencies. He stated, "The police now better realize that their effectiveness relies upon and draws from expertise and assistance of myriad government agencies and community resources, and that problem solving requires that officers deal with the underlying causes of crime and disorder rather than repeatedly addressing only their symptoms" (p. 1).

Holistic Approach

Similar to the principles employed by physicians who practice holistic medicine, the community policing officer must be concerned with all factors that may adversely affect the "patient". Just as the holistic physician treats not only the disease or injury but also prescribes preventive measures, the community policing officer must eradicate obvious harm as well as initiating actions to prevent the growth of criminal activity or disorder. To effectively heal the community and keep it healthy the community officer must consider the root causes for community decay, the socioeconomic and environmental factors as well as the symptoms that are manifested in criminal justice issues.

Perhaps the primary obstacle facing the community officer is the prevailing lack of coordination within the criminal justice system and throughout the various public service agencies. Criminal justice is a process comprised of relatively autonomous actors, organizations and agencies with independent, often contradictory missions and goals. The process has no centralized management charged with coordinating case flow or establishing priority investigations. In its desire to administer justice, the system rarely accomplishes its forgotten goal of reducing harm to the community.

The system is simply overloaded, from the initial criminal complaint (or call-for-service), to incarceration, prosecution, and sentenced confinement. The criminal justice system has become so clogged and burdensome that it is ineffective and unresponsive to the needs of the community.

Arrests and criminal cases are continuing to increase but the lack of local jail space for incarceration and state prison space for warehousing dangerous criminals, undermines the efforts of police, prosecutors and the courts. The use of bail, release on recognizance, probation and parole continue unabated. These necessary practices, used to manage overcrowded situations, severely reduce the deterrent threat of the law.

An added difficulty is that in an age when information is power, individual entities of the criminal justice system utilize databases that are incompatible (Swanson, Territo,

& Taylor, 1988). Moreover, some of the databases are not adequately maintained or updated. Much of this is understandable, since each agency has its own role in the process and develops a database to serve those particular needs. Yet, it is this type of provincial thinking and planning that further complicates the coordination and exchange of valuable information.

The coordination of energy is also lacking in the area of social service. The various public and private agencies in this field have worthy programs that address socioeconomic problems; however, each agency typically renders services in an isolated manner (often to the same clientele) without benefit of interaction. Surely cooperative efforts would result in the overall improvement in the delivery of social services.

Domestic violence is a prime example of non-coordination between police and public service agencies. To this point the criminal justice system and the social service agencies have for the most part been reactive in dealing with domestic violence. Active interaction between police investigations or intervention and counseling agencies is rare.

Additional factors in the holistic approach are the issues of adequate housing and environmental quality. Substandard and vacant housing severely impact the quality of a community. Unsecured and abandoned buildings provide opportunities for squatters and drug dealers. The visual environment left unattended leads to the further decay of the neighborhood. One broken window left unrepaired will certainly foster others (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

Again we see with these community concerns, a number of public service agencies, private concerns and civic groups are actively wrestling with environmental problems but rarely in a coordinated fashion. In fact, at times they appear to be at odds with each other.

Evidence of Agencies Moving Toward a Holistic Model

Throughout the United States, Canada and England certain law enforcement agencies are moving towards a more holistic model that attacks both the overt symptoms and the underlying factors that spawn crime and disorder. The more progressive of these agencies incorporate the aid and assistance of other public service agencies, private industry, and citizen groups to deliver a needed service or resolve neighborhood problems.

As Brown (1989) noted, the agencies incorporating community policing programs are moving at a varying pace, but they are all moving toward a service-delivery style. He stated, "The transition is not instantaneous; rather it is evolutionary. An institution that traditionally delivered services on the basis of time honored conventional wisdom cannot be expected to easily or quickly adopt a new method of operating" (p. 2).

The following is a brief review of efforts being made by agencies as they evolve into a holistic model.

Abshire (1995) reported on a recent National League of Cities Conference that focused on "re-inventing government" to be able to respond to rising demands for service and stagnant or shrinking budgets. Abshire cited examples of community-based policing programs working as teams with prosecutors and court officials in decentralized offices: Multnomah County, Oregon has placed prosecutors in police satellite offices

where the demand is greatest; Midtown New York City Criminal Court combines court trials, social services, and community service/probation functions in a single, decentralized operation, linked by an integrated computer system; and Hampton, Virginia operates decentralized community centers, staffed with police and interdepartmental government service teams.

Fleissner, Fedan, and Klinger (1992) recounted the evolution of partnership in Seattle which began in 1988 with the formation of the South Seattle Crime Prevention Council. A Seattle Police Department staff captain attended as a council member and acted upon public order and safety issues brought before the organization. The council soon enlisted the aid of the Seattle Housing Authority to enforce code violations and to evict drug dealers for public housing.

In short order, representatives from the Parks Department, the School Board, and the Department of Human Resources, joined the council as active members. The council proved so successful in dealing with community problems that similar councils were established in all four of the Seattle Police precincts where they continue to play a strong role in advising precinct commanders on community concerns. These councils ultimately supported the addition of 140 sworn and civilian positions to the police department to staff and support community policing teams deployed throughout the city.

An article by Button (1996) related the reorganization of Fresno, California juvenile probation officers to aline their caseloads according to school districts. The school board provided the police and probation officers with office space and computer equipment.

The teams instituted new procedures that required students cited for misdemeanor offenses to be dealt with at their high school jurisdiction, regardless of where the crime occurred. The "home school" renders sanctions, to include restitution, graffiti clean-up details, school work programs, or attendance at drug abuse or violence reduction classes. The program has been credited with dramatic reductions in school assaults and weapons possession.

Longueira (1995) documented the creation of Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NET's) in Miami that established community service centers in 13 separate neighborhoods. The centers are staffed by police officers, public service aides, code enforcement inspectors, sanitation and public works representatives, and clerical personnel. Six of the centers also have job counselors who assist residents in finding employment. Longueira stated, "NET centers have become hubs of positive interaction between citizens and government and this interaction is the key to their success" (p. 4).

Herbst (1995) gave an example of how seemingly minor adjustments in police service can result in a significant increase in coordination of government services. Police officers in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, distribute resource cards to citizens in need that lists phone numbers for such resources as shelters, clinics, family support and food distribution, as well as a comprehensive list of city departments. Herbst stated, "Helping to link those in need with resources should be a natural function of any law enforcement agency" (p. 2).

Community Opportunities Program for Youth (COPY Kids) has become one of Spokane's most popular community policing projects. The police department holds a series of week-long programs each summer for kids (11-15 years) from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. The kids work on a community-improvement project

along side police officers and other city employees, who act as supervisors and role models. They also attend workshops on self-esteem, anger management, and decision making. At the end of the week, each youth opens a savings account with the $40 they receive for participating in the program (Painter, 1995).

Alderson (1995) presented an English perspective on community policing and partnership with regard to the Manchester Police. Bobbies in that region have formed a steering committee to coordinate the efforts of such governmental services as youth, housing, probation, education, health, and volunteer groups. A specific program incorporates joint training of police and youth services workers. The Joint Services Youth Support Team, consisting of police, social workers, probation officers, and school teachers combine to deal with at risk youth to deter future criminal activity.

A Greensboro, North Carolina Police Department publication (1994) outlined an agency-wide commitment to community policing. The hallmark of the agency's efforts is the partnership with the Greensboro Housing Authority. The authority affords resource center space in each of the four public housing communities in the city. The authority also provides furnishings and equipment and pays the utility expenses incurred in the operation of the center.

The police department staffs the centers with officers who actively work with residents to resolve community problems. The presence of the officers and the cooperative efforts of the residents have led to the near eradication of drug sales and drug related activities in the public housing complexes in Greensboro.

A recent BJA Bulletin (1995) detailed efforts of the Norfolk, Virginia Police Department's Police Assisted Community Enforcement (PACE) program and the wide ranging community partnership that program encompasses. Perhaps the most advanced example of coordination of government services, the PACE program targets ten geographic communities with a staff of 15 officers. The officers work in concert with over a dozen city agencies and school officials that form the PACE support services committee.

The city has cut homicides by more than 10 percent in each of the last three years, and has reduced crime citywide by 26 percent and in some neighborhoods by as much as 40 percent. A good share of the credit goes to PACE working in conjunction with teams of social, health, and family services agencies (the Family Assistance Services Teams) and public works and environmental agencies (Neighborhood Environmental Assistance Teams) to cut through red tape and help residents reclaim their neighborhoods and resolve problems. The aforementioned BJA Bulletin observed:

> Law enforcement officers are showing that working in partnership with community members and groups is an effective and productive way to address a community's problems and needs. This effectiveness can translate into less crime, less fear of crime, and a greater sense of community power and cohesion. Law enforcement officials have long known that they cannot successfully deal alone with the twin issues of responding to crime and correcting the conditions that generate crime. Community partnerships are among the most promising assets in the ongoing struggle against violence and other crimes. (p. 1)

The above review of community policing operations is only a slice of the

endeavors of police agencies throughout the United States who are in the process of forming partnerships with their communities to maintain public order and improve the quality of life. While some agencies will fully embrace the concept and others will incorporate only selected tactics, the overall movement of the profession to a holistic model is evident.

This is not to say that police agencies will abandon answering calls-for-service from citizens. There will remain a legitimate function of responding to in-progress and emergency calls. However, the practice of merely allocating more personnel to handle increased call loads is no longer viable.

Method

The methodology used consisted of a standard review of literature and personal experience of the author in the field of community policing. Practical field exposure has been gained by administering two federal grants for community policing operations that incorporates 27 officers, 11 civilians, and 12 community station sites providing services to 26 geographic communities within Hillsborough County, Florida. As an advisory board member for the BJA publication, the Community Policing Exchange, the author also reviews community policing projects across the United States on a continuing basis.

The author is an adjunct professor for Hillsborough Community College, Tampa, Florida, and for the University of North Florida's Institute of Police Technology and Management, and has served as a guest lecturer for the National Sheriff's Association. In that role, the author has been afforded the opportunity to interact with over 300 students whose agencies are involved with community policing operations.

In the capacity of coordinator for the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office with the Community Policing Consortium's Peer Exchange Program, the author has been provided the opportunity to interact with representatives from fifteen separate law enforcement agencies in a mentoring program. The program assists in establishing community policing programs and offers direction for agencies seeking help from the Community Policing Consortium and the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Discussion

With much debate about what community policing is, it may be time to examine what community policing is not or should not be. Police agencies across the nation are facing budget crises with city and county governments limiting or cutting back funding and call for streamlining and flattening of organizations. What community policing cannot and should not attempt to create is a situation where the community and citizens become more dependent on the police. Community policing's goal should be just the opposite, to assist the community to become less dependent and self-reliant.

Goodbody (1995) fears we are asking too much of police without clear direction. He stated,

> While increasing governmental responsiveness is a worthy endeavor, using the police as the means to that end is not the solution. Being held accountable for the coordination of literally all city services is a monumental task and it is an unrealistic leap of faith to presume that the police institution

has the resources or capability to carry on all that its newly defined function will demand of it (p. 14).

While Goodbody has a legitimate concern for the potential resource drain and increase of responsibility with community policing, we cannot escape the central role police officers have in being the initial contact point for most of the ills and problems in society. Through the 911 system and police encounters with citizens during routine patrol, the police are normally the first representative of governmental services to come in contact with or become aware of community problems (Larson, 1985).

In fact, the police department is the government after 5:00 p.m. each day and on weekends and holidays. The police are one of the few agencies accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and are mandated by the public to respond to a variety of situations and to coordinate services. Eck and Spelman (1987) cited the prime example of the current mental health system. They observed, "the police in a central role in the mental health service system have become the street corner psychiatrists and the first point of referral" (p. 2).

In this role as first responder the police are the natural governmental body to coordinate services to the community. They also have been empowered with a vast array of statutory and regulatory authority to effectively and immediately resolve a wide range of problems. This does not mean that the police can be all things to all people - to the contrary - the stated goal is to assist the community to become self-reliant. Community policing officers should not be expected to handle all the frailties of the community, but they are the logical agents to be a catalyst for community organization and action.

Conclusions

From a review of the current community policing efforts of police agencies, it is apparent to the author that the process is evolving into a strategy that incorporates a holistic approach to maintaining and improving the quality of life in the affected community. This holistic strategy concerns itself with not just criminal justice issues but also looks to partner with citizens, private businesses, and other governmental agencies to address the environmental and socioeconomic factors that adversely impact the health of the community. The following is an outline for strategies that should be employed in a holistic process.

Criminal Justice Approach

The overriding need in the criminal justice system is the coordination of efforts between agencies with overlapping jurisdiction and with the various components of the system to include prosecutors, public defenders, the judiciary, probation and parole, and corrections. Some of the "team efforts" combining these components, as cited in the literature review of this text, are excellent examples of fostering coordinated endeavors.

Community policing as an alternate method of delivering police services, should be a hallmark of the holistic strategy. Decentralized assignment of officers to specific geographically identified communities should be a standard feature in all departments.

There is growing evidence that community policing is most effective when the designated community area is confined (decentralized) to a neighborhood level. After

evaluating Chicago's community policing for two years, Skogan (1995) became convinced that groups and organizations with a city-wide focus were less involved with community policing and had less impact on the individual community's quality of life. He wrote, "Locally oriented, membership based volunteers were much more involved and were important in generating citizen involvement in problem solving" (p. 3).

Community officers should establish community councils consisting of residents, merchants, neighborhood school principals, local park directors, area code enforcement officers, church leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure community problems and concerns are identified and addressed. Officers should follow-up with problem solving efforts to assist residents to implement solutions and to coordinate or refer government services if necessary.

Problem solving efforts must grow to extend throughout the entire agency. As an example, burglary detectives assigned a string of related burglaries should look at how the burglaries could have been prevented, as well as conducting the investigation to apprehend the suspect. Conversely, criminal investigators are quickly learning that their best source of information and criminal intelligence in a given area is the assigned community officer.

Agencies must adopt a differential response system to complaints and calls-for-service similar to the system long utilized by the Greensboro, North Carolina and Garden Grove, California Police Departments (Cohen & McEwen, 1984). These systems prioritize calls and divert non-emergency and routine calls away from street officers, leaving them with increased time for crime preventative and problem solving efforts.

Finally, police agencies need to interface their data systems with other law enforcement and public service agencies to ensure the ready availability of information needed to enhance crime analysis or problem solving projects.

Environmental Approach

This is an area in which community policing has made the most inroads and demonstrated the most success. This is partially due to the physical environment being so visually evident, that improvements are immediately seen and remain as a constant reminder.

However successful in isolated neighborhoods, the environmental approach has not reached its optimum level of effectiveness. Community officers should ensure that recreation and sports programs, neighborhood service centers, housing rehabilitation projects, environmental protection agencies, code enforcement officers, zoning authorities, nuisance abatement boards, city/county/state road departments, traffic engineers, utility companies, civic groups, and area businesses are all working in concert. These efforts should be to maintain and revitalize (if necessary) the physical environment of the community.

The best way for the officer to ensure this cooperative effort is not by his or her individual oversight (which would be impossible) but by maintaining an active community council and involving these entities as members. This strategy promotes cooperation between parties and ensures the efforts of the individual components are compatible to all parties involved. In this role, the officer acts as a facilitator - even to the extent that he or she can totally fade from the picture as the groups work together

on continuing projects.

Socioeconomic Approach

This is an arena that police rarely become involved, but the socioeconomic factors are at the very heart of the criminal justice problems in any community. Community officers should actively support such diverse programs as teenage pregnancy prevention, childcare and job training for female-headed households, and drug and alcohol abuse assistance.

Officers should also encourage coordinated efforts for job programs in the community. Such efforts should bring together local or neighboring Chamber of Commerce, federal, state and local job corps school and training, civic groups, and area businesses.

Domestic violence and child abuse are two of the socioeconomic factors that often come to police attention. However, to this point police involvement has typically been reactive and on a case by case basis. Agencies need to become more aggressive in protecting the most vulnerable members of our community. Computer aided dispatch data and analysis of calls for service can now be readily accessed by community officers to flag repeat dispatches to given addresses and alert officers of families and children at risk. Coordinated efforts between community officers, and criminal investigators can ensure prosecutors are aware of the full history of violence or abuse and that cases are properly prosecuted. Such early intervention can also lead to effective and meaningful counseling for the parties involved.

Continuing in this area, officers should also actively support (or initiate, if necessary) community seminars and workshops on the prevention of domestic violence, child abuse/neglect, self-esteem classes for children, and courses that teach parenting skills.

The three prongs of the holistic approach will develop at varying rates depending on the needs of the community and the willingness of the individual police agency to act upon these needs. However, the maximum possible assistance and service an agency is able to deliver to the community it is pledged to protect, will not be realized until all three prongs are addressed and the root causes of community decay are directly attacked.

Captain Gene Stokes is currently assigned as the district commander for District II, responsible for law enforcement operations in the northeast section of Hillsborough County, Florida. Captain Stokes has served with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office since 1972 in a variety of capacities including patrol deputy, detective, patrol supervisor, training supervisor, tactical commander and patrol shift commander. In the area of community policing, Captain Stokes has administered two federal grants, which incorporate 27 deputies, 11 civilians, and 12 community stations providing services to 27 geographic communities in the County. He is the Sheriff's Office coordinator with the Community Policing Consortium Peer Exchange Program interacting in that capacity with representatives from 15 law enforcement agencies in a mentoring program. Gene is an adjunct professor at Hillsborough Community College and for the University of North Florida's Institute of Police Technology and Management. He holds a Bachelors degree in Criminology from Eastern Kentucky University and a Masters of Education from the University of Tampa.

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