

The Police Chief

THE PROFESSIONAL VOICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

DECEMBER 2017

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Inside:

IACP 2017 in Review

Homelessness & Mental Illness

Community Outreach



Community Wellness through Engagement & Outreach: Strategies from Indio, California

By Michael Washburn, Chief of Police; Benjamin Guitron, Administrative Officer; Ivan Carrillo, Community Outreach Coordinator; Erika Martinez, Senior Management Analyst; and Sherri Van Dorn, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police, Indio, California, Police Department



The City of Indio is the largest and most populated city in the Coachella Valley desert region of southern California. The city's estimated population is about 89,000; nearly 68 percent of residents are Hispanic and approximately 33 percent of residents are 18 years of age or younger.¹ The city is served by the Indio Police Department, which is a full-service law enforcement agency, with a total authorized strength of 74 sworn and 45 non-sworn personnel, as well as more than 56 volunteer staff.

The Indio Police Department is a law enforcement agency whose mission, in partnership with the community, is to safeguard and improve community wellness by using both traditional and nontraditional policing methods that promote trust. It is a public safety agency that empowers residents to improve community health and regain ownership of their neighborhoods through ongoing community engagement and outreach. The Indio Police Department has adopted strategies that emphasize data analysis, collaboration, and problem-solving to address challenges faced by the community.

Tight budgets have made it necessary for the Indio Police Department to maximize existing resources and share information across sectors. By analyzing data in new ways, the police department began to target interventions more precisely. In addition, the Indio Police Department developed the Office of Community Safety to improve engagement across all community segments. Through the Office of Community Safety, the Indio Police Department strategically engages and promotes cross-sector community partnerships that facilitate and support crime prevention and community wellness. The Office of Community Safety maintains an outstanding level of agency collaboration with other organizations, both in the public and private sector. Some of these partners include community-based groups; faith-based organizations; local business owners; academic institutions; law enforcement and governmental agencies; and local, state, and federal agencies.

Our Community ... Our Commitment

The motto of the Indio Police Department is "Our Community ... Our Commitment." In order to embrace and model this ideal, the agency recognizes the importance of bridging theory with the practice of community policing. This is why the Office of Community Safety promotes community partnership and engagement practices through the principles of Crime Prevention Through Community

***Inset:** Safe Routes to School aims to increase the number of children who walk and bicycle to school, while increasing the safety of the activities. **Left:** Local youth and Indio officers take part in annual flag-football Turkey Bowl.*

Recommendations for Community Outreach and Engagement Projects

In its journey to improved community wellness, Indio Police Department has learned what works to engage a community. The following are recommendations drawn from its experience for other agencies looking to implement similar programs:

- » Embed community policing and problem-solving throughout the entire agency.
- » Develop comprehensive volunteer programs for both adults and youth—Indio has both a CHIP Program (Citizens Helping Indio Police) for adults and a Cadet Program for youth.
- » Build collaborative community partnerships—when community health and wellness is at stake, everyone is on the same team.
- » Host face-to-face community meetings, and invite honest, constructive input from community members and stakeholders.
- » Educate and empower community members to help develop buy-in and ownership. Drive home the mentality that everyone is responsible for creating and maintaining public safety.
- » Partner with colleges and universities to host interns in the agency.
- » Listen and learn from critical feedback received through advisory boards, community surveys, ride-alongs, internships, Coffee with a Cop, and other community-police engagements.
- » Build relationships through community events—shared experiences build friendships.
- » Remember that law enforcement agencies are in the customer service business.
- » Tell the agency's own story with a blend of traditional and modern outreach: form a social media team with department members from every unit of the department to proactively engage community members and invite them into the agency on a daily basis.

Engagement (CPTCE). Developed by the American Crime Prevention Institute, CPTCE is "the strategic inclusion, involvement, and engagement of grass root community members in the facilitation and support of crime prevention and related community policing efforts."² Consistent with CPTCE philosophies, the department strives to merge modern, evidenced-based crime prevention strategies with community policing practices to facilitate community outreach programs that reinforce trust and respect between law enforcement and the local community.

Investing in Youth through Family and Community Collaboration

The City of Indio serves two school districts with a total of 19 schools, which provide the Indio Police Department with extended educational and outreach opportunities. The police department, community services, and city council also jointly developed a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to educate and engage youth in local government. The

selected youth participate as a voice to the city council and serve as liaisons between their schools, communities, and the police department. Within Indio, the YAC members have provided valuable input to the community building project team for the local teen center, written and produced songs to communicate the message to teens not to drink or drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and participated in Every 15 Minutes Program presentations at local high schools to demonstrate the tragedy related to teen traffic collisions involving drunk driving. In fact, a member of the city's YAC was the recipient of the All-America City Youth Award.³

With youth forming one of the largest population segments in the city, the Indio Police Department is committed to initiating partnerships and strategies that seek to safeguard education, reduce juvenile crime, and improve community wellness.

Intervention has proven critical in preventing youths from engaging in juvenile crime.⁴ Accordingly, in 2014, the Indio Police



Top: The Indio Police Department holds quarterly meetings with stakeholders of the Crime-Free Multi-Housing Project. **Bottom:** Indio officers and community members attend annual National Night Out community-building events.

Department enhanced its commitment to city youth by initiating a series of bilingual Parent Project training sessions that are free of charge. The Parent Project is a nationally recognized parenting training program specifically designed for “parents raising difficult or out-of-control children.”⁵ The primary goals of this program are to reduce family conflict, juvenile crime, drug use, gang involvement, truancy, and poor school performance.⁶ The Indio Police Department introduced the Indio Parent Project in an effort to provide families with the skills and strategies needed to deal with out-of-control students, with the belief that juvenile crime prevention and intervention should begin at home. In fact, this intervention program started as part of the Indio Smart Policing Initiative prevention efforts, which ultimately

resulted in a 44 percent decline in burglary crimes compared to the same period in 2013, according to research results conducted by the University of California, Riverside.⁷ The Indio Parent Project is sustained by an ongoing collaborative partnership with the Desert Sands Unified School District, the County of Riverside Probation Department, and the Indio faith-based community.

Friendly Rivalry through Healthy Sporting Events

As previously stated, juvenile crime prevention efforts are an ongoing priority for the Office of Community Safety. The Indio Police Department, on average over the past five years, participated in four community sporting events per year; the games are held throughout the city and school districts.

A community favorite is the annual Turkey Bowl, held near the Thanksgiving holiday, where Indio police officers kick off against teens from the Indio Teen Center in a spirited game of flag football. These community events allow Indio Police Department officers to effectively continue to maintain open lines of communication between themselves and the city's youth, which has proven to be critical in keeping the Indio community healthy and safe. Bragging rights are on the line, too, of course! The County of Riverside Probation Department is also a collaborative partner and supporter of Indio “Cops vs. Kids” community games.

Safe Routes to School

In an effort to safeguard education and improve community wellness, the Indio Police Department participates in the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. The program is aimed at increasing the number of children who walk and bicycle to school, while also increasing the safety of these activities.⁸ Law enforcement agencies play a very important role in this program, working with engineers, health advocates, and parents to improve student safety while also encouraging more physical activity. Recently, the city of Indio partnered with Caltrans’ (California Department of Transportation’s) Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program for a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Master Plan. This program aims to support the Caltrans mission statement: “Provide a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system to enhance California’s economy and livability.” The SRTS Master Plan provides a clear and comprehensive framework for safety improvements around Indio’s schools, with a focus on non-motorized transportation options within a one-half mile radius around the city’s 19 schools. The project is a collaborative effort led by the city and police department as well as partners from the Desert Sands and Coachella Valley Unified School Districts and the Riverside University Health System Public Health Department.⁹

National Night Out

The Indio Police Department is a proud and long-time participant of National Night Out, a community-building campaign to encourage crime prevention awareness and community-police partnerships across the United States.¹⁰ This crime prevention campaign is celebrated with block parties, cookouts, parades, festivals, visits from local officials, law enforcement safety fairs, and youth events. The Indio Police Department recognizes neighborhood spirit and unity as the first defense against crime. For this reason, Indio continuously celebrates a variety of special citywide and neighborhood events, which continue to support and empower residents to claim ownership of their neighborhoods through the increase

of community members' presence in public spaces.

Collaborative Problem-Solving

Similar to many other communities in the United States, the city of Indio is not immune to the social issue of homelessness. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates there are approximately 550,000 people experiencing homelessness in the United States, and more than 20 percent of those individuals are in California.¹¹ Riverside County's 2017 Point-in-Time count revealed that, in January 2017, there were 1,638 unsheltered people experiencing homelessness in Riverside County, 89 of whom were in Indio.¹² The issue of homelessness affects all elements of a community, including the business community. In an effort to enhance collaborative solutions with the business sector, the city council reached out to the Office of the Chief of Police to create specific strategic objectives and actions to mitigate the negative impacts of homelessness on Indio businesses.

Capitalizing on the foundational work initiated by retired Indio Chief of Police Richard Twiss through such cross-sector collaboration as the Community Outreach Resource Program (CORP), Chief Washburn and the Office of Community Safety held a series of business district meetings to discuss

the impacts of homelessness on Indio businesses. The series of discussions led to the formation of Indio Businesses in Action, a coalition of active Indio business operators whose mission is to minimize the impacts of homelessness on Indio businesses through empowerment and collaborative problem-solving efforts. This group brings together Indio businesses that are facing quality-of-life challenges and provides opportunities to develop effective strategies to address both individual and universal problems. This approach has resulted in the identification of a few business owners who have excelled at addressing homelessness issues on their respective properties. These model businesses now serve as peer coaches to other businesses. In addition, Indio Police Department offers free security inspections to all businesses within Indio using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, a well-known strategy to improve safety by making a place less attractive to criminal activity through environmental improvements.¹³ The Indio Police Department is also a long-time practitioner of conventional prevention and outreach programs such as the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program (CFMHP). The CFMHP is a solution-oriented crime prevention initiative designed to help rental property owners, managers, residents, police, and other

agencies work together to keep illegal nuisance activity off rental property.¹⁴ This program has been very effective in making Indio multi-family dwellings safer and more desirable places to live. The Indio Police Department holds quarterly meetings on the topic, which helps the department work collaboratively with property managers of community multi-housing dwellings address issues affecting their properties. Currently, there are more than 40 crime-free properties and participants in the program.

Neighborhood Watch, another crime prevention strategy practiced by the agency, allows the Indio Police Department to inform city neighborhoods on how to discourage, deter, and prevent community crime.¹⁵ As of now, there are more than 22 neighborhood watch groups actively collaborating with the Indio Police Department.

Implementation and Sustainability

Agencies looking to enhance their service to their communities need to recognize that successful health and wellness initiatives require commitment from all stakeholders. Active community engagement requires staffing commitments from the agency in order to create and sustain community-police partnerships. Thus, the Indio Police Department created the position of Community Outreach Coordinator to help supplement

PIPS TECHNOLOGY™
DETECTION INNOVATION

P392 Camera
P492 Camera
Mobile Camera

Exceptional Recognition Performance

Number Plate: 233SAM
Date: 07/23/2017 9:11:29
Location: San Diego Freeway 5, S El Camino Real
Make Model: Volvo V40
Vehicle Type: Sedan
Color: Red
Description: Pedestal spoiler, Clean Air Vehicle Decals

STOLEN ▶ AMBER ▶ WANTED

Tel: 1 (833) 747.7577 | www.PIPSTechnology.com

A **NEOLOGY** Business

administrative staff and oversee day-to-day community contacts. This investment in outreach staff helps fulfill law enforcement's commitment to improving community wellness and is cost effective from a fiscal standpoint. In addition, outreach staff benefits youth health and safety in the city through community engagement programs such as the Parent Project and "Cops vs. Kids" community games.

Second, it is crucial that public safety agencies adopt strategies that emphasize data analysis, collaboration, and problem-solving to address challenges facing communities. A police department that truly reflects the spirit of community policing is also a learning organization. For example, the Indio Police Department's Office of Community Safety actively seeks ways to develop cost-effective, evidence-based policing strategies by working in partnership with research institutions such as the University of California, Riverside, and Arizona State University and the Office of Community Safety continues to strategically engage in cross-sector community partnerships that facilitate and support crime prevention and community wellness efforts.

Conclusion

It is understood that the development and continued success of a healthy community lies in the relationships forged and the trust developed across all sectors of the community: neighborhoods, schools, businesses, family and social service providers, faith-based organizations, and all levels of

government service agencies. However, when developing and building upon the foundation of community wellness, it is also important to recognize that every community is different. It is vital that law enforcement agencies intimately know their communities' needs and not be afraid to ask their residents for critical and constructive input and feedback. They must also be willing and able to educate the community and empower stakeholders to be actively engaged in their communities through activities such as neighborhood watches, town hall meetings, community surveys, and memberships on boards and commissions.

Law enforcement agencies in the 21st century must also accept and embrace the idea that technology has changed exponentially over the past decades, and that they, along with their communities, must evolve and develop new approaches to community outreach and interactions. The use of traditional outreach must be complemented by the use of modern technology and social media in the ongoing development of community trust, health, and wellness. ♦

Notes:

¹U.S. Census Bureau, Census Reporter Profile, "Indio, CA," 2016, <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0636448-indio-ca>.

²American Crime Prevention Institute, "CPTCE – Fall," 2017, <http://acpionline.com/seminars/cptceoct2017>.

³Every 15 Minutes, <http://www.everyfifteenminutes.org/aboutus>; National Civic

League, "All America City Award," <http://www.nationalcivicleague.org/allamerica-cityaward>.

⁴Youth.gov, "Prevention & Early Intervention," <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/juvenile-justice/prevention-and-early-intervention>.

⁵The Parent Project, "Who We Are," <https://www.parentproject.com/index.php/about-us/who-we-are>.

⁶The Parent Project, "Changing Destructive Adolescent Behavior," <https://www.parentproject.com/index.php/about-us/programs-offered/changing-destructive-adolescent-behavior>.

⁷Robert Nash Parker and Erika Martinez, *Indio, California, Smart Policing Initiative: Reducing Burglaries through Predictive Policing and Community Engagement* (July 2014), http://content.indiopd.org/pdf/2014SPI_Report.pdf.

⁸Safe Routes to School National Partnership, "Safe Routes to School 101," <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/101/about>.

⁹City of Indio, "Safe Routes for School Master Plan," news release, <http://www.indio.org/news/displaynews.htm?NewsID=322&TargetID=1,2,3,7,8,6,11,12,13,14,5,15,16,4,17,18,19>.

¹⁰National Association of Town Watch, National Night Out, "About Us," <https://natw.org/about>.

¹¹Meghan Henry et al., *The 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016), 8, 12, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

¹²County of Riverside, Department of Public Social Services, *2017 Point-In-Time Homeless Count Data Report Summary*, April 10, 2017, <http://dpss.co.riverside.ca.us/files/pdf/2017-rivco-pit-city-data-v2a.pdf>.

¹³Julia Ryan, "What Is CPTED and How Can It Help Your Community?" *TTA Today* (blog), July 10, 2014, Bureau of Justice Assistance, <https://www.bjatrain.org/media/blog/what-cpted-and-how-can-it-help-your-community>.

¹⁴International Crime Free Association, "Crime Free Multi-Housing," <http://www.crime-free-association.org/multi-housing.htm>.

¹⁵National Crime Prevention Council, "Neighborhood Watch," <http://www.npc.org/topics/home-and-neighborhood-safety/neighborhood-watch>.

Chief of Police **Michael Washburn** is a 31-year veteran of law enforcement. He began his career in 1986 at the Seattle Police Department before becoming Indio's 19th chief of police on August 16, 2016. Chief Washburn holds a master in administration of justice degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and bachelor of arts degrees from Central Washington University in both law and justice and sociology.

Administrative Officer **Benjamin Guitron** has been with the department for more than 33 years and oversees the Office of Community Safety and is responsible for department Volunteer Services. He is a certified training instructor and teaches on subjects such as community policing and community relations. Mr. Guitron is an Indio native and is active in many community organizations.

Community Outreach Coordinator **Ivan Carrillo** has been with the department for four years and serves in the Office of Community Safety. Mr. Carrillo holds a master in social sciences degree, with an emphasis in community organizing, from California State University San Bernardino and a bachelor of arts degree in criminal justice.

Senior Management Analyst **Erika Martinez** has been with the department for more than nine years and oversees the Administrative Services Unit. She holds a master in management degree from the University of Redlands and a bachelor of arts degree in political science, with an emphasis in public policy, from the University of California Berkeley.

Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police **Sherri Van Dorn** has been with the department for more than eight years supporting the Office of the Chief. Prior to her tenure with Indio Police Department, Ms. Van Dorn served as the district director for former California State Senator Jim Battin, which included specializing as a community liaison in the areas of public safety and business administration.