

Fighting Back Against CRIME

Chapel Hill Police Put Aside Fear, Reach Out to Children, Residents

BY AMY SWAN
STAFF WRITER

"Hello, Chapel Hill police." Seven o'clock on a Saturday night, and, except for the receptionist answering calls behind plate-glass windows, the station appears empty. The sound of a radio drifts into the waiting area from behind the glass, and an officer stops by to rehash the day's football scores.

It's not at all like on TV, with police rushing in and out, and people waiting to be fingerprinted. In fact, it's kind of disappointing as far as excitement is concerned.

Facing Fear

Out on patrol, the situation is a little different.

Robert Carden, a public safety officer, is spending his 12-hour shift in area two, a territory that encompasses all of campus and reaches the border between Chapel Hill and Durham County.

Heading down N.C. 54, the radar gun tracks a motorcycle going 72 in a 35. Carden turns on the flashing lights and takes off after it. Down the hill, the biker pulls off the road, and Carden leaves his car to talk to the man.

Lucky for Carden, the guy doesn't give him any trouble.

But police work does not always go this smoothly. Dramatically increased crime rates in the Chapel Hill area have forced officers to deal with the fact that the next

person they pull over might not be courteous, that they might have an automatic weapon under their jacket.

"There's a lot more of it and it's a lot more violent," Carden said of area crime.

When he first came to Chapel Hill seven years ago, if anyone saw a gun, the force would talk about it for two weeks, he said.

"Now," Carden said, "we see guns two or three times a day. Guns are everywhere."

"It makes you a lot more aware, a lot more safety-conscious," he said.

Lt. Tim Presley, who has been involved in Chapel Hill law enforcement for 18 years, said this increased safety awareness had resulted in police taking a more offensive role. A role that can cause people to lose respect for the police, he said.

"It's a shame because it really somewhat hinders the relationship between the police and the community," he said.

Presley said working in Chapel Hill had become more of a challenge. "Several years ago, calls that concerned a crime in progress were few and far between," he said.

Now, those calls come in more frequently, and officers think their jobs are more dangerous, he said.

"Officers experience fear on a daily basis," Presley said.

Carden echoed Presley's sentiments. The longer he worked as a police officer, the more apprehensive he got, he said.

"You've got to use your common sense because people will kill you. They don't care if you have a police uniform on."

Chapel Hill police Chief Ralph Pendergraph agreed. "These people put themselves on the line quite often."

The danger factor puts Pendergraph in a difficult position. He said it was tough for him to put people in danger because he cared about them.

Working in a College Town

Capt. Gregg Jarvis, who is in charge of support services for the department, said Chapel Hill presented a unique set of circumstances to work under.

With its wide variety of cultures, its combination of affluent neighborhoods and public housing projects, and the presence of the University, Jarvis said, "It's a different kind of place to police, and it takes a special kind of officer."

He said there were not many communities this size that could handle 30,000 people in a one-block area and deal with it well.

And with events like Halloween and the NCAA championship celebration, crowd control has become somewhat of a specialty for the Chapel Hill police.

Jarvis cites successful management and planning as keys to the relative ease with which the force has handled these events in the past. He said one of the force's top priorities was to make sure that when big crowds happened, they happened safely.

He said he thought the officers and the students had a mutual respect.

"I think it's a real positive relationship," he said.

In addition to his regular duties as a police officer, Jarvis also serves on the Chancellor's Committee for Greek Affairs, a position that requires him to deal with students on a regular basis.

He said that the police recognized the college as "part of the vitality of this community" and avoided an "us against them" attitude toward the students.

Pendergraph said the police actually felt somewhat duty-bound toward the students.

"We feel like be-



Chapel Hill public safety officers such as Joe Layton and Russ Woody try to improve relations with community members by taking time out to visit neighborhoods and listen to residents' concerns.

cause of the large number of students we have here, some of whom have not yet totally acclimated to the independent lifestyle, we have a certain responsibility," he said.

He said the police couldn't help but care about the welfare of some young community members when their parents were trusting the police to assist them in making the transition to life on their own.

Jarvis said most officers had been college students themselves, so they understood what the lifestyle was like.

He said he thought this ability to relate caused the department to exercise control in a manner different from that of many other departments. For example, Chapel Hill police make very few arrests at football games compared to other college towns, he said.

"Our policy has always been to arrest as a last result," Jarvis said.

He said this policy had enabled the force to cooperate more with students and to devote more time to more serious crime.

Presley said college students often could be perceived as a nuisance at night, but he added, "I think officers realize there are 20,000 people living in this town and that only a small percentage of them are breaking the rules."

Of course, officers can get sick of explaining to students on weekends that they

are being arrested for intoxication, he said.

He said most students in these situations were most worried about how it would affect their future. This concern probably is behind students' low repeat-offender rate.

Jarvis said students simply needed to

and secondary school students to ensure that their voices are heard. Through programs like Drug Abuse Resistance Education and Thursday's teen speak-out, the police are making efforts to find out what is on the minds of youths.

The speak-out was extremely positive, both for the children involved and the officers, Sullivan said. "Everybody left with a positive, upbeat attitude."

By holding speak-outs and informal lunch-time talks in schools, Sullivan hopes to get the message across that police are approachable and willing to listen.

To counter the charge that police "just don't understand," Sullivan said he and his fellow officers visited neighborhoods regularly to see what went on in young people's daily lives.

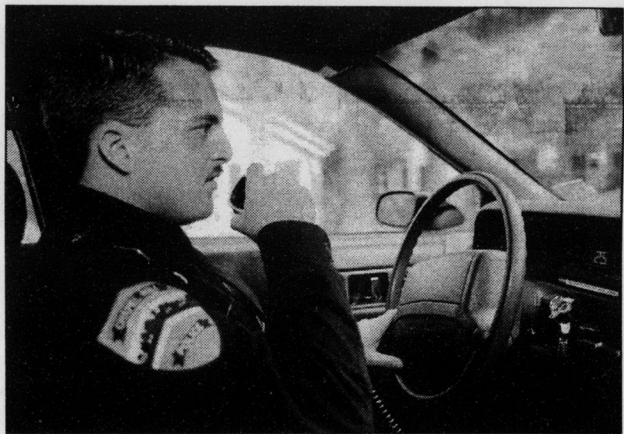
Sullivan said his goal was to develop a mutual respect and empathy between youths and the police, a vital facet of what he termed "community policing."

"You spend a lot of time out in the neighborhoods just developing trust."

And trust is the bottom line, Sullivan and his fellow officers said. In a community where drugs, violence and crime are becoming all too prevalent, officers need to be able to count on the leadership of community members and students when it comes to making Chapel Hill a safe place for students and natives alike.

Reported Incidents	1991-92	1992-93	Percent Change
Drug arrests	168	205	+22 percent
Homicide	0	0	same
Rape	27	38	+41 percent
Robbery	61	104	+70 percent
Aggravated assault	189	240	+27 percent
Burglary/break-in	671	609	-9 percent
Larceny	1,863	1,878	+1 percent
Motor vehicle theft	107	95	-11 percent

SOURCE: CHAPEL HILL POLICE DEPARTMENT



Public safety officer Russ Woody responds to a call Friday while patrolling Chapel Hill.

DTH/ROSS TAYLOR

Community Members Try to Stanch Spread of Crime With Grass-Roots Tactics

BY JON GOLDBERG
STAFF WRITER

Three miles from the luxury of The Oaks, there lives another Chapel Hill.

Oliver Davis, a 9-year-old fourth-grader at Carboro Elementary School, said he had to take a roundabout route from the bus stop to his home every afternoon to avoid the drug dealers in his neighborhood.

Antwan Foushee, an 11-year-old sixth-grader at Guy B. Phillips Middle School, said that although no one had offered him drugs, drug pushers were always circling, searching for deals.

Some members of the community

don't want to see Oliver, Antwan and other children succumb to a life determined by crime, drugs and violence.

And they are doing something about it.

Hargraves Center

The William M. Hargraves Recreation Center, located at 216 N. Roberson St., offers programs designed to assist children like Oliver and Antwan make better life choices than some of their peers.

"If some kids didn't hang out here, they'd be doing drugs or selling drugs," said Kecia Hargraves, a 15-year-old freshman at Chapel Hill High School. "It keeps them out of trouble."

The Path Choice Program invites suc-

cessful members from the black community to talk to children on the first Saturday of every month.

"Path Choice is a role-model program where we bring in speakers to talk to inner-city youths about how they prepared for their careers and what and who inspired them," said Evelyn Dove-Coleman, founder of the Path Choice program.

"It encourages a path of life that is crime-free, illiteracy-free and drug-free. It's about following one's mind instead of peer pressure."

"Every community has had problems with crime and drug usage and under-education. We're looking for a way to do something about it."

Dove-Coleman said previous speakers included doctors, lawyers, nurses and professors. Carl Fox, Orange County district attorney, will speak in December.

Dove-Coleman said the program had been a success.

"I think children's responses have been favorable," she said. "They meet people they ordinarily wouldn't have a chance to meet. Some of these kids will be saying these kinds of things in the future. The true benefits are down the road."

Nate Davis, facility manager of Hargraves, agreed: "I think it really helps kids a lot. You find kids who feel like there is no use in trying. They feel that they can't accomplish anything."

"With people speaking to them about their success, it changes their outlook on life."

Antwan said Path Choice was a valuable program. "It was cool. We did skits. He told me things to make me think I have a chance."

The Path Choice Program is not the only effort made at Hargraves to alleviate the problems that young people encounter on a daily basis.

The Mission in Excellence For Students of the Future is a program that offers after-school tutoring for at-risk and minority students who are experiencing academic difficulty. The sessions meet three times a week.

"We've seen vast improvement in the

children," said Esphur Foster, who is on the board of directors for Mission in Excellence. "All of the children but one returned from last year."

Antwan said he had improved academically since he started attending the programs.

"The Mission in Excellence helps me a lot," he said. "I was slow until I got into the program."

In addition to the Path Choice Program and Mission in Excellence, the Hargraves Center offers an after-school program for children in elementary school, special functions for Halloween and Black History Month and occasionally teen dances.

Davis is trying to open the center on weekend nights to give children an alternative place to have fun while keeping them off the streets.

"A lot of them hang out," Davis said. "If they had more to do, it might keep them off Franklin Street. If there were more to do for kids, it would help the problem."

Davis, who has worked at Hargraves for more than 20 years, said he had seen many children turn their lives around due to the efforts made at the center.

"I've seen a lot of kids come through here and better themselves," he said. "I've really enjoyed doing it."

Pine Knolls Community Center

Hargraves is not the only center in Chapel Hill for at-risk children.

Pine Knolls Community Center also offers programs to keep children out of trouble. Pine Knolls holds arts-and-crafts classes, cooking classes and field trips to roller-skating rinks and other places.

"Pine Knolls has been effective," school board member-elect LaVonda Burnette said.

"The basic activities that we take for granted, they might not have the opportunity to do. It is essential to the success of young people."

Burnette, 22, is a living example that these programs can succeed. She was raised in Chapel Hill and attended Hargraves summer camps in her youth.

"It was great, and there was a lot of

love," she said. "Nate (Davis) was there. We were one big, happy family. This place has had a tremendous impact on my life."

Burnette said her 6-year-old daughter would attend Mission in Excellence and other after-school programs.

Some community leaders said that when individuals assisted the disadvantaged in a community, the effects were tremendous.

"There is no substitution for community center programs," said Ralph Pendergraph, Chapel Hill chief of police. "They are the most effective programs in high-crime areas. They provide early intervention for kids. Kids need this."

"They look out and see things that are negative. If they want to be what they can be, they need supervision."

Lizzie Mae's Southern Kitchen

While community center programs focus on proactive solutions to abating the problem of crime, some efforts have been made to assist adults who already have been through a struggle.

Lizzie Mae Collins has a philosophy on how to stop crime and drug use.

"It's like teaching a bird how to fly," she said as she looked up from her Bible in her empty restaurant. "Once it learns, it can fly on its own. We just need to love."

Collins has tried to make a difference in the lives of people whose lives were dictated by crime since she opened Lizzie Mae's Southern Kitchen on Aug. 21, 1992.

Collins knew seven people who had been mired in a life of crime and drugs. She said society had given up on them.

She wanted to deter them from this lifestyle, so she gave them jobs at her restaurant.

"One reason I own the place is to put money back into the community and to help men and women get their lives together," she said. "I want to help them be better than they are now."

Collins serves fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, collards, cornbread and other Southern meals from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Lunch costs \$5 and dinner is \$5.50, but she makes an exception when people are unable to afford her prices.



Lizzie Mae Collins has tried to help people through her restaurant.

"If they come in and say, 'Lizzie Mae, I got a dollar,' then I give them a piece of cornbread and some greens and fill them up," she said. "It gives them some pride paying for it. I make them feel like they're human."

Collins admitted that the business was struggling. She could not afford to pay the other employees and must operate the kitchen by herself.

"I started out working with seven people, but things went downhill," she said.

"I'm going through a hard time and trying to make it work. I can't afford to advertise. I can buy food and keep trying. I wish I could give everybody a job."

Collins, Davis, Foster, Dove-Coleman and other members of the community have dedicated countless hours to deter children from crime and improve their lives.

Collins summed up their efforts best.

"People turn a deaf ear to their dreams," she said.

"Together we stand and divided we fall. I want to make a difference in the community. That's my dream."



Nate Davis, Hargraves Recreation Center facility manager, takes a breather during a basketball game with Kisha Newsome and several other area youths.

DTH/ROSS TAYLOR