

Grant To Reduce Fear Of Crime In Neighborhoods

WITH JAMES CUTHBERTSON

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has awarded the Police Foundation \$1,830,534 to conduct an 18-month experiment designed to reduce the fear of crime in inner-city neighborhoods, preserve commercial vitality in these areas, and, possibly, have an effect on the crime rate itself.

Attorney General William French Smith announced the award today with James K. Stewart, NIJ Director, in a ceremony at the Newark, NJ City Hall. Also in attendance were New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, Newark Mayor Kenneth Gibson, Newark Police Director Hubert Williams, and Police Foundation President Patrick V. Murphy.

The experimental programs will be undertaken simultaneously in Newark and another city to be named later.

Attorney General Smith said the Justice Department will be watching the pilot programs carefully.

Stewart said the experiments will focus on conditions in some neighborhoods that generate fear among the residents and provide an environment in which crime thrives.

"In the next few months," Stewart said, "Newark Police Department officials and Police Foundation researchers will be enlisting the help of the business community and private citizens in formulating strategies to reduce citizens fear of crime. These strategies should be developed by June or July and then given actual testing for 12 months."

Stewart, a former Oakland, California, police official, said that "as every police officer knows, the fear of crime contributes

greatly to a host of urban ills: the deterioration of neighborhoods, the drying up of commercial activities, and a fortress mentality among citizens that leads to abandonment of city streets by the law-abiders."

Stewart said the experiments will test the premise that a neighborhood whose character is within the control of the people who live there is generally a safer neighborhood.

"The overall effort," Stewart said, "is based on the belief that a community's fear of crime may itself be a major factor in the health and future of the city. The debilitating apprehension about crime weakens the fabric of an urban neighborhood's social and economic life.

"Police departments which work closely with representatives of the local neighborhoods and which expand their concern for crime incidents to also include order problems can reduce unwarranted citizen fear and encourage people to reclaim their streets and communities."

The central purpose of the experiments will be to test strategies for reducing fear of crime in a set of representative and statistically comparable inner-city neighborhoods.

A corollary objective will be to test the effect of the same strategies on the business life of the neighborhoods.

neighborhoods.

To test these general theories the study will examine several related questions:

- can united efforts by the police and community reduce disorderly behavior in public spaces and so reverse an atmosphere that suggests nobody cares about such behavior?

- will amelioration of these factors have a direct effect on reducing fear of crime and perceptions of a neighborhood as unsafe?

- will the reduction of fear of crime have a direct effect on reducing serious crime itself, on the premise that a neighborhood that is not fearful may attract less crime?

- will a reduction in serious crime, if any, reduce public fear of crime?

- will reduction of fear increase a neighborhood's commercial activity?

"Police alone cannot begin to rebuild communities demoralized by fear. If they are truly to keep the peace, police must work in tandem with citizens and all branches of local government that contribute to the health of the community.

Heman R. Clark, secretary of the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, announced that preliminary figures show that the State Highway Patrol made more than 50,000 DUI arrests in 1982 while traffic fatalities dropped by 199 when compared to 1981.

"This is the second largest drop in traffic fatalities from one year to the next since 1943 when the speed limit was 35 miles per hour, gas and tires rationed and there were other restrictions as a result of World War II," said Clark.

"The largest decline was in 1974 when traffic fatalities were 307 less than the previous year. The 55 miles per hour speed limit went into effect in 1974 because of the gas crisis," he added.

The last year that state traffic fatalities dipped below 1,300 was in 1961.

Clark credited the decline in part to the anti-drunk driving campaign spearheaded by Governor Jim Hunt and his Task Force on Drunken Driving.

The AAA-Carolina Motor Club is introducing a new alcohol education program aimed at elementary

school students in both Carolinas.

Called "Starting Early," the instruction program looks at the drinking issue from a child's perspective. It contains seven teaching modules, one for each grade level from kindergarten through the sixth grade. The program is currently available to all schools and community groups, according to the motor club.

The curriculum was developed by Dr. James Malfetti at Columbia University.

The "Starting Early" curriculum, according to the motor club, will help young people be better prepared for dealing with alcohol-related situations because students will

gain knowledge about how alcohol influences the mind and body.

-receive encouragement to explore attitudes about alcohol consumption.

-plan and act out ways, under adult supervision, to cope with, or avoid, situations where alcohol is involved.

A pilot project aimed at promoting racial and ethnic understanding among high school students in this ethnically diverse area will be launched next September, it was announced by the Miami Chapter of the American Jewish Committee and the Cuban National Planning Council, the co-sponsors of the program.

The project, "Hands Across the Campus," is modeled on a program developed in 1981 by AJC's Los Angeles Chapter.

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James Cuthbertson

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