COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Jury studied the areas of proactive partnerships between the public, Police and Sheriff’s Department entities involving several programs functioning in several Cities. Community Policing is known by a variety of names: Fillmore as a Police Storefront; Oxnard, a Community Policing Programs (COPS); Thousand Oaks, a Community oriented Policing & Problem Solving (COPPS); and San Buenaventura, a Community Problem Orientated Policing (CPOP) and Storefront Operation. The Grand Jury decided to spot check several facilities in each of these cities to determine if their organization and operation is having an impact on crime reduction.

FINDINGS

- Funding of these above programs was made available through the Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Block Grant, Office of Community Policing Services, (COPS Universal Grant), and Special Budget Appropriation Funds, from local cities, School Districts, and private sources. The Homeless Employment Resource Opportunity Center (HERO) assisted in grant applications to COPS. Funds were also available through a Family Preservation Grant.

- The Ventura County Sheriff’s Department has established several COPPS Units. The City of Thousand Oaks budgeted matching funds in 1997, to establish a COPPS Unit with monies from a Federal Crime Bill Grant. The objective was to focus on improving the overall quality of life in the community. A “Citizen’s Academy” was established in 1994 to develop an inside look with local law enforcement. The “Volunteers in Policing” Program is a step further to train citizens in the community to perform routine police functions. As of February 7, 1997, 175 citizens graduated from the “Citizen’s Academy” and 45 volunteers in policing have donated 1300 hours monthly to the Community Oriented Policing effort.

- The City of San Buenaventura has its own Police Department and operates its own version of this program CPOP; this includes Storefront Operations, Community Partnership, and a 12-Plan Scheduling and Geographical Team Policing. Therefore, crime has decreased by 12%.

The Harbor Storefront handles tourist information and also doubles as Police Precinct Station. The officers are working to develop a home page on the Internet to alert citizens of current issues, and to assist in making reports of minor crimes. Volunteers, working with the officers, handle business-telephone calls and direct tourists to various points of interest. They also assist in clean-up of surrounding neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Watch Meetings also have been established in the Storefronts. They continually work with other enforcement agencies, the School and Fire Districts, business community and very importantly, the public. The program operates within the Crime Prevention Unit, having 450 Block Captains in the City. Teams are scheduled to deliberately overlap during the hours of greater volume of activity. A three day course of training is required for
Conclusions

1. Community Policing units continue to work with law enforcement and are providing strong support to the partnerships between Cities, County, Law Enforcement and Community Policing Programs with the citizens.

2. Community Policing has made great strides and is accepted throughout Ventura County.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Law Enforcement should make every effort to encourage Community Policing principles.
2. An effort needs to be developed by the communities to establish measurable goals for each facility.
3. Annual detailed financial records and reports should be established by the communities to maintain accountability for continued funding.

COMMENDATION

The Ventura County Grand Jury salutes the efforts of the many officers and volunteers of all cities. The City of Fillmore has instituted a program which demonstrates a most positive effect within its community. These efforts are a positive approach to educate the communities about concerns, problem areas which safeguard neighborhood citizens.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

Ventura County Board of Supervisors
Ventura County Sheriff's Department
City of Fillmore
City of San Buenaventura
City of Oxnard
City of Thousand Oaks