

MEMORANDUM

To: Police Services Board Members

From: Carol Miller, COP Program Administrator

Date: December 10, 2009

Subject: Citizens on Patrol – Pilot Program

Recommendation: That the Citizens on Patrol program continue with the funding from the Board reserve, 06-6-4331-0000. And possible future funding sources be researched.

Program Start Up

In November 2008 the Board approved funding for the Citizens on Patrol pilot program. Advertisements for volunteers were placed in the Orillia Packet and on the City of Orillia bulletin board. Staff developed a program manual based on the very successful program operating in Caledon. Interviews were conducted in early March 2009 and twelve individuals were chosen for the program start up.

Training was provided to the members by two Barrie Police Service officers

- on common occurrences,
- how to report to the Provincial Communications Centre,
- report writing,
- the Alpha code
- and general rules of conduct

Teams of two were assigned. Each team was provided a flashlight, a cell phone, a \$5 Tim Card and a \$10 gas card for each patrol. The first patrol was on June 19th, 2009 with two teams going out from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. Most weekends from June through to the end of November, two teams were out . On long weekends a team was usually out on Sunday night as well. The Citizens on Patrol also patrolled on Halloween night from 8 p.m. to midnight in addition to their regular hours. The members patrolled a total of 232.85 hours and traveled 3,326.40 kilometers during the pilot project.

After each patrol members were required to submit reports listing the areas patrolled, any noted suspicious activities, vehicles or persons that were observed. Attached is a listing of the total incidents observed and reported.

Observations

The following are some of the conditions and trends seen by the patrollers throughout the five months of patrolling.

1. Some areas of the city are dark and desolate in the wee hours of the morning which promotes unhealthy activity. Some of the areas are the old Walmart, some schoolyards, businesses, the alleyways in downtown core etc. It might be beneficial to install and educate the community on the benefits of lighting, either motion or standard, which help in deterring 'dark deeds in dark corners'.
2. Many business owners and the general public seem not to be aware of the program. More advertising and publicity would ensure the public in general know we are out there watching.
3. Drunkenness in the downtown core is a common sight with staggering, vomiting and fighting going on. Often public safety is at risk as a result. Perhaps a greater emphasis needs to be placed on enforcement of the Liquor License Act.
4. Many very young people on the streets in the late hours – kids that appear to be 10 – 12 years old and sometimes younger are out walking around at midnight and 1:00 a.m.
5. Graffiti is on the increase as summer progresses, possibly related to the previous point.

Member Comments

The team members were canvassed for their comments by the administrator and some have been incorporated into this report.

"We are volunteering our time in an effort to contribute to our community. By having groups like C.O.P. we can assist the police in making the community a safer place for all."

“We are not the police. We can move about the area without being noticed. We blend in with the general population giving us a huge advantage in our ability to observe and report.”

“Police could take advantage of this and let us be an extra set of eyes and ears in watching for stolen vehicles, missing persons, special attention to properties at risk, etc. They can’t be everywhere all the time. But with the ‘invisible’ Citizens on Patrol members driving around and watching they could increase their effectiveness being proactive. We want to be involved.”

“The Orillia OPP Detachment is new to the Citizens on Patrol Program. The program ran a 5 month pilot project which was very successful. As the liaison officer I can say I feel the project was very triumphant. As any new program it had its aches & pains but in all it was successful and will be even stronger in years to come as I’m sure the volunteers will increase. The volunteers gladly gave up their own personal time & energy to help monitor the activity taking place on city streets, parks, commercial areas, school property etc in the city of Orillia.

The group of citizens reported on incidents such as disturbances, graffiti, insecure premises, mischief, noise, parking issues, public intoxic persons, suspicious persons & suspicious vehicles.

The program was well accepted by the members of the Orillia Detachment. The Orillia Detachment is very supportive of the program & its continuance into 2010.” Sgt. R. Moore, COP OPP Liaison

Goals and Objectives 2010

- Increased program publicity
- Active recruitment campaign to attract more members
- More interaction with police
- More and better cell phones, scanners or a radio so that we can know what is going on during the hours that we are out there
- Feedback at our monthly meetings regarding the outcome of our calls and/or reports
- Increase the hours we patrol which can be done easily when we have more members
- Interaction with other Citizens on Patrol groups in the province so that we can learn and share from each other therefore becoming more efficient
- Follow-up on the ‘ride-along’ idea with other Citizen on Patrol groups, such as Barrie, Caledon. Most members made contact but did not hear back to date
- More dialogue and information sharing between members at our meetings

- Occasional guest speakers to bring us insights and information relating to our program

Conclusion

This five month pilot project has been a huge success, in spite of some set-backs. The initial lack of acceptance within the police community has been mostly reversed. A noticeable increase in information flow has been seen in that members are provided current criminal information, such as photos of newest graffiti, photos of wanted persons, etc. This was seen as a positive by the group and the additional information was welcomed. This provides the C.O.P. teams with something to work with and a sense of inclusion. It would be beneficial to everyone if the Teams were provided information and photographs on missing persons, descriptions of wanted vehicles etc. posted in the portable and/or distributed to the teams via email on a more regular basis. The police community has a group of ready, willing and able citizens who are out there watching, waiting and reporting suspicious activities free of charge. They need to be persuaded to trust us to help by letting us be the extra sets of eyes and ears. It is hoped that there will be a process whereby someone would read these over and, if helpful, be able to match up unsolved criminal acts to details and observations noted in any particular area by a C.O.P. member.

We want to be involved, and to be utilized to our fullest potential. We want to help make the City of Orillia a safer and nicer place to live.

Prepared and submitted by

Carol Miller, Administrator
Citizens on Patrol