



SANTA CRUZ POLICE DEPARTMENT
155 Center Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

MEDIA RELEASE



DATE/TIME: Wednesday October 12, 2016

TOPIC: Santa Cruz Police Highlights Community-Oriented Policing Tradition

INFORMATION:

Santa Cruz Police Department Highlights Community-Oriented Policing Tradition

(OCT. 12) SANTA CRUZ, CA — The Santa Cruz Police Department today announced it will mark the 10th annual Officer Jim Howes Community Service Award presentation through an upcoming series of articles exploring the department's longstanding commitment to Community-Oriented Policing.

The five-part series will delve into the strategies and practices Santa Cruz Police Department (SCPD) officers utilize to engage and collaborate with residents and business owners to reduce and prevent crime, build trust and create mutual respect.

"Community-Oriented Policing helps us align the department's values with those of Santa Cruz," Deputy Police Chief Rick Martinez said. "Policing isn't just about making arrests, it's about partnering to find long-term solutions on issues affecting our city."

SCPD has been on the forefront of Community-Oriented Policing since the department first enacted the philosophy more than 20 years ago under the direction of then-Police Chief Steve Belcher. Many of the progressive programs and policies SCPD has employed for decades also are recommended by the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing Report, which was finalized in 2015.

"We wanted to work with the community more. The department should be an open book," said Belcher, who helped institute a proactive problem-solving response to neighborhood issues that emphasized community partnerships.

Up until that point, SCPD had been a traditional police department focused on response times and making arrests. But rising crime rates coupled with tensions locally — shootings, immigration raids, out-of-control beach parties — and around the country, including the 1992 L.A. riots, led Belcher and SCPD to reassess their policing model.

Community-Oriented Policing looks at the root cause of an issue. Rather than repeatedly deal with the same call for service, officers gave new attention to problem solving in order to prevent the issues from reoccurring.

"Officers became responsible not just for responding to calls, but for solving the problems the calls reported," Belcher said. "It was an evolutionary process."

Early Community-Oriented Policing initiatives in Santa Cruz included:

- Specifically assigned beats for officers so they could get to know neighborhoods and residents could become familiar with them.
- Launching the first Citizen Police Academy classes to offer transparency about how policing works in Santa Cruz.
- Installing dashcams in patrol cars to record police work.
- Establishing civilian oversight for enhanced accountability.
- Partnering with other agencies — such as the City Parks and Recreation Department, State Parks, the state department of Alcohol Beverage Control and more — to find creative solutions to problems.
- Starting Neighborhood Watch programs, led by the Community Policing Coordinator, who was Officer Jim Howes.

“We had to close that missing link,” Belcher said. “It sounds very simple but it was revolutionary and it paid dividends.”

Officer Jim Howes served as a Santa Cruz Police Officer for 26 years and was known throughout the City for his positive approach and partnership building between the City and community. The Officer Jim Howes Community Service Award was established in 2007 when he retired, and is given annually to one city employee and one community member for outstanding service to the community. Nominations are open through Thursday, Nov. 3.

SCPD’s progressive approach to Community-Oriented Policing has changed the culture of the police department over time, and many of the programs started under Chief Belcher continue today. The five-part series to be shared on the SCPD blog (<http://santacruzpolice.blogspot.com/>) and will explore the many Community-Oriented Policing programs developed and implemented by SCPD, such as:

- Youth initiatives to connect with kids and prevent crime, while building trust.
- Intervention programs that support community-based partnerships to reduce crime and address vulnerable populations.
- Policies that provide transparency, accountability and opportunities for community engagement.
- The use of technology, including social media, to build community interaction, trust and legitimacy.

The final installment of the series will discuss the department’s ongoing efforts to be responsive and relevant to the community it serves, including new and expanded programs that are in the works.

ABOUT SCPD

The Santa Cruz Police Department (SCPD) is committed to working in partnership with the community to enhance public safety, prevent crime, enforce laws and protect the rights of all people through innovative problem-solving approaches. A progressive, professional organization, SCPD officers are dedicated to conducting themselves with the highest ethical standards and the department is accountable to the community. SCPD has 94 sworn officers and 29 civilian staff to protect and serve Santa Cruz’s 64,000 residents and millions of annual visitors. Learn more at www.santacruzpolice.com, <http://santacruzpolice.blogspot.com>, or via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest.

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Anonymous tips can also be sent to the police department through our Tip Line (831) 420-5995, or from our Website; www.santacruzpolice.com . Tipsters can also submit an anonymous tip via our smartphone app or from an SMS text. Visit our Website for instructions.