

Police Interview

Continued from page 7.

think we need to have is what we're doing right now, to create a liaison, create a familiar name so the gay and lesbian Community can relate that person as a police officer and to some of the people that wear the same uniform as him. At least we're creating a person that they can trust, even if they don't trust everybody else in the department. If it's going to be Greg, or Dave in the old north end, so on and so forth. They know this person, they know what their mind set is, they know what they're attitude is, and that's where we start. I think as we go along the stereotypes that the police have will start to break down, and the stereotypes that the gay and lesbian Community has of us as being very authoritative...

Greg: and narrow minded

Sonny: ...will also start to break down, and there will be a mutual feeling of familiarity.

OITM: We need to get to know each other.

Sonny: Exactly. That's the start, and I think the key is that language thing, 'cause I feel very uncomfortable. I don't want to call somebody something that they're going to take offense to.

Greg: Absolutely. I agree with Sonny that once we get the language down and get to know each other, and we know what to say, we're going to be just fine.

Dave: I find that being politically correct often lends a certain air of insincerity to the situation which I don't like. I don't like being insincere. I pretty much like to put all my cards on the table. I think that's one of the things that came out when we were selected for community based policing is that we don't like to play those political games. They suck. Lets get on with life and deal with each other in some sort of normal rational way.

Greg: Nobody here is an administration lapdog. As you'll see in the article I wrote, we are fairly autonomous in what we do and how we do it. We're given quite a bit of liberty in the way we do our jobs.

OITM: Along those lines, at this point do you feel that you have the support of the command staff to proceed with what we're doing? Is the department behind you?

Greg: I think so. Sonny and I talked to the chief and he thought it was fantastic.

Dave: From the standpoint of what the command staff thinks, we are breaking down traditional lines of policing and creating a productive line of communication with the community. We can say, Community Based Police can say, that we work for the community. We don't work for the police department, and I think that's the key to more effective policing. You can see the difference from how we act, and how we can act, and the way the line officer, the patrol officer can act. They have a schedule. They are supposed to be in a specific area, and they're responsible for answering all the calls at the same time they're trying to deal with somebody's concerns. From them you're going to get more of a cold shoulder, but from us you're going to get our undivided attention. We're going to be present with the person, the problem, the community, because we work for the community.

OITM: So how does the openness that you all are creating get to infiltrate the line officers?

Collective moan.

Greg: What we do in the community is a direct reflection of how the community will eventually react to everybody that works on line. If Dave goes out and he deals with somebody in a very favorable light, he does something good, they appreciate the approach, then the next time I have to deal with this person they'll say

"Hey, do you know Dave Scibek?" Already whatever wall they've put up around themselves when it comes to cops is stripped away, at least somewhat. When I get there I can use my personality and my skills and what I know about a situation to bring the wall down a little farther. I think if we do that, in the big picture that's eventually going to be transferred by the community to the whole force.

Sonny: And for these meetings, we grab some people who are working line and bring them to the meeting to come see what it's all about. Not just Community Based Police guys...it's our responsibility to turn these guys on to what we're doing, so they can see policing the way we deem it to be effective. More effective. We do it with neighborhood watch, we do it with neighborhood planning, and it's really funny because the patrol cop who's always dealing with people when things are out of control gets an opportunity to deal with people when they're in control and things aren't bad. They get treated much differently. A perfect example is when I asked one of the patrol cops to come to a drug prevention program we were doing at Rock Point, and when he got in there everybody was real friendly to him, and you could see the difference in his demeanor when he got out of the car and spent five minutes with me where people were happy to see us.

OITM: Do you feel like it's working, Community Based Police?

Dave: The public loves it, because there's a cop they know now, there's a constant presence, we can have the ability to permanently solve problems outside the line function. The guys on line aren't buying into it yet.

Tim: We've had people say "I don't want to have to be nice to people. I don't want to do that touchy feely stuff."

Dave: The line guys aren't buying into it yet. That's our ultimate goal, to change that.

Josie Juhasz, MA CCMHC

Specializing in Feminist Psychotherapy

Montpelier
802-229-5220

Some insurance
accepted

Janet K. Brown, M.A., C.A.C.
Licensed Psychologist
Certified Alcohol Counselor

Jean Townsend, M.A.
Certified Mental
Health Counselor

- ACOA • IDENTITY ISSUES
 - TRAUMA AND LOSS
 - DEPRESSION
- Individuals Couples Families

Milton, VT
(802) 893-4816

Burlington, VT
(802) 863-8162