

SENIOR VOLUNTEER PATROLS

SUMMARY

Senior Volunteer Patrols are made up of citizens who volunteer to assist police and fire departments. The volunteers perform assignments such as traffic control, evidence transport, handicapped parking citations and many more duties that would otherwise take the police and firefighters away from their more important duties. Senior Volunteer Patrols perform these tasks and many others. In fiscal year 2002/2003,¹ the volunteers in the three jurisdictions investigated were on the job for 290,390 hours, at a cost of \$260,738 for the program. In the three jurisdictions examined, there was a net value of \$4,542,313 to those governments studied in this report based on a standardized value of \$16.54 per hour.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Determine the worth of the senior volunteer programs by evaluating the costs of the programs and estimating the value returned to the community by the services performed.

PROCEDURES EMPLOYED

The Grand Jury limited its investigation to three jurisdictions:

- The Sheriff's department, covering the largest area of the County of San Diego, which includes all of the cities in the county contracting with the Sheriff.
- The San Diego Police Department, the largest municipal police force.
- The La Mesa Police Department, which is representative of the volunteer program in the smaller cities.

During the investigation, the Grand Jury obtained information from the following sources:

- Interviews with members of the San Diego Police Department.
- Documentation from the San Diego County Sheriff, the San Diego Police Department and the La Mesa Police Department describing various aspects of their volunteer programs.
- Various media reports.

¹ After repeated attempts to obtain the dollar amounts for fiscal year 2002/2003 the dollar amounts supplied by the San Diego Police Department are for calendar year 2003, however, we have been advised by them that the dollar amounts are comparable to fiscal year amounts.

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- A “ride along” to evaluate actual services rendered.
- Published accounts written by a member of the volunteer program.²

DISCUSSION

In the course of the Grand Jury’s investigations of government within the County of San Diego, mandated by the California Penal Code, they occasionally find an organization that stands out, as an example of government functioning at it’s best. One of those organizations is the Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol, (R.S.V.P.) or Senior Volunteer Patrol (S.V.P.) created by the various law enforcement departments of the County.

The Grand Jury investigated the volunteer program to determine whether there are cost savings to the various law enforcement agencies. To make this determination the Grand Jury investigated four areas: utilization of volunteers, the value to the agencies of the services received, the dollar value placed on these services and the cost to the agencies to maintain the volunteer program.

Utilization of Volunteers:

The specific tasks assigned to the volunteers by all, or most, of the law enforcement agencies are:

- YANA Calls & Visits³
- Vacation Checks⁴
- Traffic Control
- Handicap parking violations
- Abandoned Vehicle Abatement
- Evidence Transport
- Fingerprinting

² *An Extra Pair of Eyes*, by Carlene Ray Carter, Silverado Publishing, 2002

³ The YANA (You Are Not Alone) program is an outreach plan that provides for the volunteers to either call or visit the elderly or disabled, at their request, to check the welfare of the person and note any problems encountered for referral to the proper agency

⁴ When a citizen leaves on vacation their home is vulnerable to theft and vandalism. The vacation check program provides for, at the request of the homeowner, periodic checks of the home.

- Deputy Assists
- Fire Department Assists
- Special Events
- Citizen Contacts
- Citizen Assists
- Graffiti Control
- Red Zone Parking Warnings
- Helmet Warnings
- Bicycle Registrations
- Clerical Duties
- Senior Safety Presentations
- Any other duties deemed as appropriate by the commander

The selection process for volunteers varies among jurisdictions, but generally, the following criteria are followed:

1. Depending on the jurisdiction, applicants must be at least 50 to 55 years of age.
2. Both male and female applicants are accepted.
3. Applicants agree to abide by all department and program rules.
4. Applicants must pass a background check, consisting of complete criminal history computer check; Department of Justice fingerprint check; and a check of references.
5. Applicant must successfully complete the Basic RSVP Academy course.

Training

To prepare the volunteers for handling these tasks, new volunteers are sent to a two-week academy where they are taught the proper procedures for accomplishing their assigned duties. In addition, monthly meetings are held in which the volunteers are updated on procedures and where problems encountered by the volunteers are addressed.

The volunteers commit a minimum of six hours per week to the patrol duties, although many volunteers exceed this time commitment.

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Each of the volunteers is also trained in the non-confrontational policies of the law enforcement agencies as it affects the volunteers. This non-confrontational policy is a vital part of the program's success. The volunteers are trained to recognize confrontational situations and how to avoid them. This system provides for the safety of the volunteers, their acceptance by the public and helps to avoid potential problems that could arise from the use of "cop wannabees".

Value to the agencies of the services received.

Before the senior volunteer programs were adopted, patrol officers performed each of the tasks described in the foregoing section whenever time permitted. If sufficient time were not available to perform the tasks, they would, by necessity, remain undone. With volunteers performing these tasks, the officers are freed to concentrate on duties that require a sworn officer to perform. We have determined, as a result of interviews, that the volunteers in these programs are not only accepted by the sworn officers, but are welcomed by the majority of them.

Dollar value of the services performed by volunteers.

During fiscal year 2002-2003, 601 volunteers with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department logged 137,718 man-hours. Approximately 500 volunteers with the San Diego Police Department logged 135,674 hours, and the volunteers at the La Mesa Police Department logged 16,998 hours. The hours volunteered by senior citizens are valued by the departments at \$16.54 per hour. The value returned to the community of \$4,803,051 is dramatically less than the cost of the sworn officers who had been performing these duties.

Cost of maintaining the program.

The cost of maintaining the Senior Volunteer Program includes all of the expenses incurred in the operation of the program, such as, uniforms, training, supervision, vehicles and maintenance and supplies. The cost to the Sheriff's Department was \$54,056 using part time supervision; cost to the San Diego Police Department was \$125,682; and the cost to the La Mesa Police Department was \$81,000. In the La Mesa and the San Diego Police departments, a full time officer is assigned for supervision.

FACTS AND FINDINGS

Facts

This Grand Jury finds that the Senior Volunteer Patrol program provides significant savings to the jurisdictions served. The savings are derived by having volunteers perform valuable services while freeing sworn officers to perform their law enforcement duties.

Findings

The Senior Volunteer Patrol program provides a real service in the community by performing the routine duties that were formerly performed by sworn officers and deputies, freeing these sworn officers to focus on protecting the citizens of San Diego County.

The services provided by the volunteers comes at a cost of \$260,738 to the jurisdictions examined. That cost, while significant, is outweighed by the benefits derived from the use of the volunteers. The value placed on the hours contributed by the volunteers by the departments examined in this report for fiscal year 2002/2003 is \$4,803,051. The net value of these services by the volunteers is \$4,542,313 for the year, using the modest value being used of \$16.54 per hour. When you also consider the value to the local governments of freeing sworn officers from routine jobs, the value of the volunteers is even more apparent.

One issue that has not been evaluated by this Jury is the revenue brought in by the writing of citations for the unauthorized use of handicapped parking. While this revenue is probably quite significant, this revenue has not been considered in determining the value of the Senior Volunteer Patrol program. To determine the true cost and value of the programs, the citation revenues should be included. Even without the revenues, the Senior Volunteer Programs give far more value back to the community than it costs to maintain.

COMMENDATION

The men and women volunteering their services to the Senior Volunteer Patrols are a dedicated group of citizens who are worthy of commendation by this Grand Jury. They provide a valuable service to the communities they serve by performing the routine duties that otherwise would take sworn officers away from the essential tasks that they perform.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 04-04-1** Senior Volunteer Programs should continue to be funded in the communities they serve.
- 04-04-2** Where appropriate, law enforcement agencies should examine ways to have additional duties and responsibilities performed by Senior Volunteers.

REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

The California Penal Code §933 (c) requires any public agency which the Grand Jury has reviewed, and about which it has issued a final report, to comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the agency. Such comment shall be made *no later than 90 days* after the Grand Jury publishes its report (filed with the Clerk of the Court); except that in the case of a report containing findings and recommendations pertaining to a department or agency headed by an elected County official (e.g. District Attorney, Sheriff, etc.), such comment shall be made *within 60 days* to the Presiding Judge with an information copy sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Furthermore, California Penal Code §933.05(a), (b), (c), details, as follows, the manner in which such comment(s) are to be made:

- (a) As to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall

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indicate one of the following:

- (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.
 - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) As to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
- (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
 - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
 - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
 - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
- (c) If a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with the Penal Code §933.05 are required by the date indicated:

<u>RESPONDING AGENCY</u>	<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>DATE</u>
La Mesa Police Department	04-04-1, 04-04-2	
San Diego County Sheriff Department	04-04-1, 04-04-2	
San Diego Police Department	04-04-1, 04-04-2	