

Organization Snapshot

Year Started: 2000
Number of Members: 10
Town Population: 4,000
Website:
www.nacop.org/purcellville

A discussion with Chief Dave Simpson, Chief of Police, Town of Purcellville, Virginia

We met with Chief Simpson and members of the Purcellville CST in June, 2002, at Police Headquarters and asked a series of questions about their group and their experiences. Their responses are as follows.

Provide an overview of your community, where the C.O.P. group operates (population, size, etc.)

Purcellville, Virginia, is located approximately one hour northwest of Washington, DC and is in Loudoun County. The town has a population of 4,000 and is growing. Many people who work in the business districts of Virginia and Washington, DC have and are continuing to move to towns like Purcellville because of its rural setting and country atmosphere which provides an excellent setting to raise a family and enjoy life.

Who started the C.O.P organization and why?


The group was formed in the year 2000 as a way to assist the Police Department with their needs. While the town is relatively small in population, it has many people passing through enroute to other towns further west causing traffic issues and the potential for crime.

How many people were initially involved.

The organization started with 10 volunteers with the goal of no more than 20 total.

What were your initial goals (crime reduction only, assist law enforcement with traffic, etc.)?

The initial goals of the organization are



**Community Policing
with a personal touch.**

When a family moves to the Town of Purcellville, VA a Police Officer personally visits the new resident's home and welcomes them with an information package about the town and introduces themselves as "their" Police Officer who they can call with any issues that may affect them.

the same as today - to assist the Police Department with extra "Eyes and Ears" and other non-enforcement duties such as traffic control, etc.

What type of challenges did you face initially and what are they now if any?

Initially the biggest challenge was establishing mutual trust between the department and the volunteers, a common challenge faced by most new volunteer groups.

Our biggest challenge now is the ongoing recruiting of professional, committed, volunteers.

If you have patrol cars, what was your first patrol car, (make, model, condition, etc.)?

Our volunteers use their own cars, if needed, but also patrol with Officers in standard marked patrol cars as the observer.

What type of uniforms do you have?

The volunteer's uniform has the same look and feel of the officer's minus the badge. On the left shoulder is the Purcellville Citizen Support Team patch and on the right side is the American flag along with name tags above the front right pocket.

How many Citizen Patrol volunteers do you actively have now?

Currently, we have nine volunteers, all of whom are active and our goal is

to have twenty. Considering the total number of sworn Patrol Officers is eight with two supervisors and one Chief, we match the number of Officers with trained volunteers one for one.

What type of equipment do your members carry?

Radios to communicate, a traffic vest, flashlight, whistle, CPR mask, and gloves.

Where is your Citizen Patrol office located?

We utilize the town hall for our meeting facilities and operate out of the Police Department.

How do you communicate between cars, volunteers and Law Enforcement? Cell phones, radios?

Standard two way radios.

How do you dispatch Citizen Patrol volunteers to accident scenes or calls for Law Enforcement assistance?

We utilize pagers for volunteers who are not on patrol and radios for when they are on patrol.

What type of initial training do Citizen Patrol volunteers get and is there any ongoing training?

Initial formal training includes CPR and First Aid certification, Traffic Control, Police Procedures and the use of a Radar Gun to identify speeders.

Do you offer any Special Services to the public or Law Enforcement such as fingerprinting, vacation checks, Traffic control, crime scene control, stolen car checks, etc?

We provide assistance with many special events for traffic and security control in addition to fingerprinting which we do over 1,000 per year. We will also be assisting with DWI checkpoints in the future. We also assist in the distribution of "Welcome Packages" for new residents.

What are the qualifications to become a Citizen Patrol member and what type of background check do applicants go through?

An applicant must be 21 years old or over and be a resident of Virginia. We also conduct a background check on

each candidate along with a review of their driving record.

What were your most current year's statistics such as number of total hours volunteered by all members.

In our first year of operation we had a total of over 1,000 hours of service from the group.

What is your number one ongoing challenge, assuming you have one?

Our number one, ongoing challenge is recruiting, expansion of the group, and educating the citizens of who we are.

How do you recruit new members and what is your average turn over of members?

Most of our members are recruited by word of mouth and the majority of those who have joined stay with us. We try to be very selective when we recruit new members so our investment in them will be rewarded with years of service.

How do you rate the overall acceptance of your Citizen Patrol group with the public and Law Enforcement department?



Pictured above, Chief Dave Simpson (third from right) along with members of the PCST.

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Acceptance has been very positive with both the public and the Police Department.

If you could wave a "magic wand" and get whatever you wanted for your Citizen Patrol group, what one thing would you ask for? (tough question but an interesting one)

Our number one need at this time is seven new digital radios for our volunteers along with a dedicated patrol car for them.

What are the most common issues/problems you face (if you wish to discuss this)?

Lack of citizen awareness regarding our organization as we are still very new.

What is your annual operating budget in dollars, assuming you have one?

The town has provided a budget of approximately five thousand dollars.

What special events do you provide support for such as High School football games, Fairs, Graduations, traffic control for Marathon's and clean up days, etc?

We provide support for all the activities mentioned above as well as local parades.

Has any Citizen Patrol member ever been injured while performing his/her duties?

We are pleased to state that none of our members have ever been injured while on duty.

How do you motivate, recognize and reward your Citizen Patrol Volunteers?



Map obtained from www.mapquest.com

The town provides very nice 11"x14" certificates of recognition along with a dinner for the volunteers.

What was the most significant event that your Citizen Patrol group can take credit for such as they called in a major crime in progress, found a stolen car, found a missing child, etc?

The town of Purcellville is home to Fireman's Field which is considered to be one of the finest Little League Baseball fields in the country and truly a first class facility. In 2001 it was host to the "Babe Ruth World Series" where

16-18 year olds competed for the title. The event brought in over 4,000 visitors to the town which caused its population to double during the week of the event. The Purcellville Citizens Support Team worked hand in hand with the Police Department to help assist with Traffic Control, Event Security and overall Public Safety for the week. This is a perfect example of how well trained and dedicated citizen volunteers can work with law enforcement to help protect their communities.

Most Significant Event

Supporting local Law Enforcement during the "Babe Ruth Baseball Little League" event which doubled the towns population for one week during the World Series playoffs.