

### Organization Snapshot

El Monte Police VCAP's  
El Monte, California  
Year Started: 1996  
Number of Members: 90  
City Population: 130,000  
Website:  
[www.volunteerpolice.com](http://www.volunteerpolice.com)



*Pictured above: Members of the El Monte Police Volunteers Caring and Patrolling, VCAP, unit pose for a group photo at the NACOP Sixth Annual Citizen Patrol Conference.*

*Provide an overview of your community, where the C.O.P. group operates.*

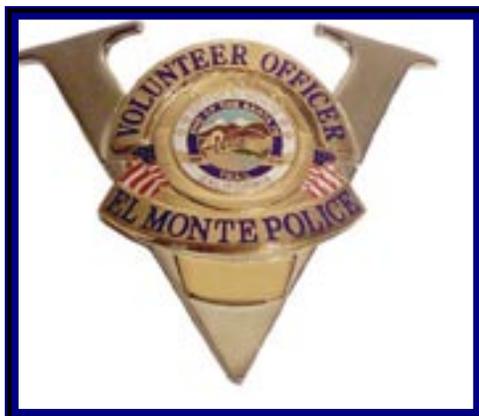
Located approximately 12 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, El Monte is the hub of the San Gabriel Valley, where two major freeways – Interstates 605 and 10 – intersect and is the ninth largest city (out of 88) in Los Angeles County with a population of approximately 130,000. El Monte also has an ethnically diverse and dynamic population with 72 percent Hispanic, 18 percent Asian, and 7 percent White

#### *Who started the organization and why?*

V.C.A.P. (Volunteers Caring and Patrolling) began in 1996 and was the brainchild of then Community Relations Supervisor and current Chief of Police Ken Weldon. Community Relations had always had and embraced citizen volunteers and Ken Weldon thought they would be even more effective assisting as uniformed patrol.

#### *How many people were initially involved and what did the organization look like then?*

When the program started in 1996, there were twelve volunteers who underwent three weeks of training and performed light duties.



By 2003, most of the volunteers had moved on and the program was on the verge of folding. New Police Chief Ken Weldon appointed me to rebuild the program and provide him with the best police volunteer force possible. Within a year, we had (90) uniformed police volunteers and we had decided to join NACOP as active members. Any success we achieved was accomplished as a direct result of Chief Ken Weldon allowing me the autonomy to recreate, build, and run the program without interference. Unlike many departments, we enjoy the complete, sincere and genuine support of our Chief and his Command Staff.

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

Initially, they were a visible presence in the community with minor assisting duties for our patrol officers.

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

Because of the socioeconomic makeup of the city, few of our citizens are ever able to retire. Of our (90) police volunteers, only (4) are retired. The others either hold down full-time jobs or are full-time students. Therefore, I had to design a program that accommodated the volunteers, their families and their jobs while simultaneously meeting the organizational goals desired by our Chief.

Our volunteers come to our department after already working their ten to twelve hour day or after a long day of college classes, change into their uniform, and then go out and assist our officers. Many of them have used their own vacation time to take off work and help us with an event. I am constantly working to motivate, inspire and specifically make this a “fun” place to come to and volunteer their time. I truly feel we have the most “user friendly” volunteer organization anywhere.

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

Our original patrol vehicles were two used white Ford, Crown Victorias which were repainted police units..

*What does your Citizen Patrol car fleet look like now, how many cars, what type, etc?*

We have (3) patrol cars, (1) van that is used for both patrol and special details, and (1) anti drug and alcohol pickup truck. All are black and white and equipped with a red and blue light bar. We also have an antique 57’ Chevy police car with the red “cherry” light.

*What type of uniforms do you have? Polo shirts? Sheriff's uniforms? Combination?*

We have three uniforms:  
Class A – light blue, long sleeve shirt with tie and Navy blue pants.  
Class B – light blue, short sleeve shirt with

Navy blue pants.  
Class C – royal blue, Polo style shirt with Navy blue pants.  
All our volunteers purchase their own uniforms.

*How many Citizen Patrol volunteers do you actively have now?*

Approximately (90). We are getting ready to begin training for (22) new V.C.A.P. Trainees who were chosen from over sixty applicants.

*What type of equipment do your members carry? Flashlights? Cuffs? Pepper Spray? etc.*

Radio, cell phone, Pepper Spray and flashlight. Most importantly, we require and encourage them to carry a friendly disposition and a good heart.

*Where is your Citizen Patrol office located - at the police station? Separate office? No office?*

In the Community Relations Office which is located on the opposite end of the city from the main police station. V.C.A.P. have their own office, working cubicle, computer and storage room inside the facility.

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

All V.C.A.P. are trained on the police radio

which they regularly use unless radio traffic is heavy. Then we prefer for them to communicate by department cell phone.

*How do you dispatch Citizen Patrol volunteers to accident scenes or calls for LE assistance?*

They are called to scene by our Dispatch

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

Most of our V.C.A.P. have already attended the department's 9-week, 18-class Citizen's Academy when they join V.C.A.P. After passing an oral appraisal interview and an extensive background check, they attend an 8-week, 32-hour training course which includes but is not limited to: policy and procedure, city and organizational history, communications, equipment, patrol, chemical agents, traffic control, report writing and leadership training.

We conduct training seminars on various weekends throughout the year and have a one-hour mandatory training session after every monthly meeting.

*Do you offer any Special Services to the public or LE such as fingerprinting, vacation checks, traffic control, crime scene control, stolen car checks, etc?*

We currently offer our V.C.A.P. members over (45) different services and duties they can choose



*Pictured above: One of the VCAP patrol vehicles.*

to perform for the department and the public. The operative word is "choose." We suggest that they try everything and then choose what they like to do best.

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

- Minimum 19 years of age.
- High School Diploma or Equivalent.
- No felony convictions requiring registration.
- Able to pass CPR/First Aid & Background.

*What were your most current year's statistics such as amount of miles patrolled, hours volunteered by all members total, drop in crime rate due to C.O.P., specific crimes stopped in progress or caught?*

In 2006, V.C.A.P. volunteered nearly 10,000 hours and staffed over 200 events at the request of the department, as well as organizations and schools throughout the city. These numbers have consistently risen since 2003.

Such consistent visibility has resulted in not only a drop in crime, but a stronger relationship with the community.

In fiscal terms, one only has to multiply the volunteer hours performed by the bottom pay step of a police officer to see the obvious savings to the department.

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

Trying to get all of the volunteers to record all of the hours they work. We would probably have double the hours we have recorded every year if they would remember to put in for all of them. A lot of volunteers don't understand the law enforcement concept that "if it's not written down, it never happened." Numbers



*Pictured Above from left to right: VCAP Coordinator, Jack Wills presents a symbolic check to El Monte Police Chief Ken Weldon for \$154,246.00 in unit savings*

may not be important to volunteers who just want to do good work, but it's imperative to running a successful program especially when requesting additional funds or equipment.

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

I am a big believer in aggressive recruiting. Aside from coordinating our Citizen's Academy and recruiting from there, I make it a point to routinely speak and promote V.C.A.P. at every, and I mean every, community, school, lodge, organization, club and business meeting and event in, and sometimes around, our city. It is something that I work very hard at and something that takes up a lot of your time.

Many of our V.C.A.P. go on to get hired as regular police officers either here or elsewhere. Others may simply leave through mere attrition. Turnover is inevitable and is something that you have to work at all of the time. Forget about coordinating volunteers, just maintaining an active volunteer membership and workforce alone is a full time job. If your uniformed police volunteer compliment is not what it should be or what you want it to be, then your Coordinator is not working hard enough.

*How do you rate the overall acceptance of your C.P. group with the public and LE department?*

I am lucky enough to work for a Police Chief who measures people by their hearts and not by their numbers. The success of our organization can primarily be measured not in numbers, but in the huge outpouring of acceptance and respect we have received from both the officers and the community. When a citizen routinely sees someone who looks like them, a mother, a son, a business owner, a teacher, who has decided to spend their spare time in uniform giving back to the community, then a bridge is built between the police department and the citizens in the community which they serve. Our department has one of the strongest relationships with its community of any department I have ever seen.

*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)*

I would like to get our ten hardest working V.C.A.P. members who have gone above and



*Pictured above: Volunteer Members of the El Monte Police VCAP Honor Guard unit*

beyond what this department could ever ask of them and take them to a future NACOP Regional Conference in Florida or another special event for volunteers.

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

Like every Volunteer Coordinator, it would be trying to supervise "normal" people who lead "normal" lives in the foreign environment of law enforcement. When I first began, I had already had a full and diverse law enforcement career having retired as a Sgt. with the El Monte Police. I remember another seasoned Citizen Patrol coordinator, Sergeant Darrell Hibbens of the Madera County Sheriff telling me, "This is going to be the hardest job you've ever had." Little did I know how right he was! Citizen volunteers don't have to do anything and usually don't fully understand or appreciate the dynamics or organizational culture of law enforcement or a police department. You are constantly a motivator, cheerleader, recruiter, instructor and supervisor while simultaneously coordinating between your volunteers and the department to ensure performance, professionalism, risk management and the overall organizational goals of your Police Chief.

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

Although our department is very supportive, we try not to be a drain on their resources. Therefore, we work very hard throughout the year to supplement our program with numerous fundraisers which vary from bike auctions, car shows, raffles, etc. There people and organizations within the community will support you if you're willing to work hard and actively pursue their support by educating them regarding your efforts

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

You name it and we do it. If a call comes in requesting our assistance at a special event, community function or obviously a police need, we will come.

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

Thankfully no, we've never had an injury.

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

Like many agencies we have hours performed recognition pins. However, what I truly feel differentiates us from other agencies is that this is the best possible place to volunteer. No where else can you choose from so many things to do, have the freedom to do what you want, and ultimately, have the most fun while you're doing it. Aside from laughing and enjoying yourself while you are here, there is no shortage of off-duty road trips, picnics, dinners and informal get togethers to make you part of our family.

### ***Most Significant Event***

A couple of years ago, a representative from the Special Olympics called me at the last moment to see if there was any way we could staff a Special Olympics event in another city. She advised that the police volunteers in that city were too busy to assist them. Since the event was outside our city I had to clear it through Police Chief Ken Weldon. His response was, "I don't care where our people go, as long as they're helping someone." I think that pretty much sums up our organization.

One of the primary reasons for the VCAPs success is the variety of programs volunteers can be involved with above and beyond traditional patrol functions. Some of the tasks available to the VCAP's are as follows:

**ADAPT - ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION TRAINING** - "ADAPT" carries the kind of positive projection that will help lead a child to feel he or she "is a winner" when they can say no to drugs and alcohol. The emphasis is placed in the 3rd and 6th grades to resist peer pressure and not harm themselves and their future through substance abuse. V.C.A.P. would assist an Officer with ADAPT training on campus.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT** - Assisting the Community Relations Lieutenant and/or Police Administration with general duties inside and outside the station.

**ADOPT-A-COP** - Visit Special Education Classes on a regular basis throughout the school year. Students will get to know a V.C.A.P. on a first-name basis and have a respect for law enforcement (a friend they can trust in a time of need).

**CAMPING WITH COPS** - Assist Officers when they take community juveniles to the river, lake, or overnight camping.

**CHRISTMAS DINNER** - Assist the Community Relations Office put together and distribute over 800 baskets (turkey dinners and presents) to underprivileged families in the community.

**CITIZENS' ACADEMY** - Assist with the actual setup and breakdown of each class. Assist with communications, mailings, emails, class preparation, etc.

**COMMUNICATIONS** - Assist dispatch with taking calls over the telephone. (V.C.A.P.s will not be required to dispatch calls to officers)

**CODE ENFORCEMENT** - Assist Code Enforcement with a variety of patrols, inspections, and enforcements throughout the city.

**COURT OFFICER** - Assist Court Officer with the transportation of important cases to various courthouses.

**CRIME SCENE CONTAINMENT** - Be "on call" to assist Officers to contain a crime scene for investigation and from the public.

**DATA ENTRY** - Entering gang information in the Detective Bureau, entering report and citation information in the Records Division, entering bicycle registrations in the Community Relations Office, assist with statistical entry data for the V.C.A.P. program.

**DETAILS** - Work special details for various events and functions. The role includes booth duty, drug display, flyers, foot patrol, security, traffic control, transportation, escorting dignitaries, fingerprinting, etc.

**FRONT COUNTER** - Assist citizens in the Main Station lobby or Community Relations Office lobby. Duties may include answering phones, translation, report taking, etc.

**GANG UNIT** - Assist with general office duties for the Gang Unit Detectives.

**IMPACT / RD PROGRAM** - Assist and Officer handing out flyers, setup, breakdown and/or presentation of an RD or Neighborhood Watch meeting.

**MCGRUFF, OFFICER "STEVE" AND REPLICA "WALK-AROUND" DOLLS** - Wear the costume at events to attract both adults and children and make a positive impact.

**MONITORING VICTIMS, WITNESSES & YOUTH CALLOUT** - Assist Officers and Detectives with monitoring of these persons.

**POLICE ACADEMY SCENARIOS** - Assist at the Academy by participating in scenarios as role players.

**POLICE RECREATION ORGANIZATION** - Assist Officers who volunteer their time to coach coed sports teams for High School age students.

**SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER** - Assist the S.R.O. with various duties, operations, or functions on and off the school campus.

**SUBPOENA SERVICE** - Assist the Detective Bureau to serve low level subpoenas.

**TATTOO REMOVAL PROGRAM** - Assist with screening, record keeping and transportation for the free of charge tattoo removal service for at-risk youth and former gang members trying to change their lives.

**TRAFFIC CONTROL** - Be on a "call-out" list for extensive traffic collisions.

**TRAINING DIVISION** - Assist the training division with general duties both inside and outside the station.

**TRANSLATION** - Assist the Detective Bureau with the translation of interviews involving victims, witnesses, and possibly a few suspects.

**VALLEY MALL FOOT PATROL** - Walk the Valley Mall and other shopping centers as needed.

**V.C.A.P. CALLOUT TEAM** - Assist the V.C.A.P. Detail Sergeant with any last minute or emergency details which need staffing. The Callout Team calls members on the V.C.A.P. roster in an attempt to find an available volunteer(s).

**VEHICLE GRAFFITI PATROL** - V.C.A.P. will monitor and audio record graffiti throughout the city.

**VEHICLE TOUCH PATROL** - V.C.A.P. monitors and records homeless and transient concerns within the community and reports them to the Coordinator.

**WITHOUT WARNING** - Assist the Community Relations Office with this DUI program which takes place prior to the proms at the local High School.