

## Los Angeles County Sheriff's Volunteers On Patrol

**Organization Snapshot**

Year Started: 1992  
 Number of Members: 33  
 City Population: 187,172  
 Website: www.SCVSheriff.com  
 Coordinator: Dep. Patrick Rissler

***A discussion with Deputy Patrick Rissler,  
 Volunteer Coordinator, Los Angeles County  
 Sheriff's Department, Santa Clarita Valley Station***

We asked Deputy Patrick Rissler, the station's Volunteer Coordinator, a series of questions about the Santa Clarita Valley Volunteers On Patrol Program and their experiences. His responses are as follows.

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

The Santa Clarita Valley is located approximately 35 miles north of downtown Los Angeles and is approximately 200 square miles. It has a population of 187,172 and is policed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The City of Santa Clarita is within the valley and encompasses 46.7 miles with their population of 151,260 and contracts for police services with the Sheriff's Department.

Our group of patrolling volunteers are named Volunteers On Patrol

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

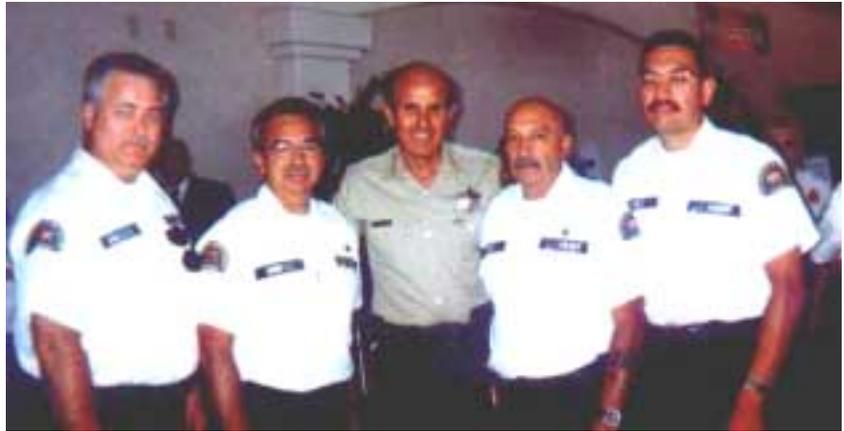
The Volunteers On Patrol program was initiated at the Santa Clarita Valley Station in August of 1992 by Deputy Patrick Rissler, the station's Volunteer Coordinator with the initial duties involving only Vacation Checks.

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

There were only four volunteers in the beginning assigned to the Volunteers On Patrol program with several other volunteers handling duties within the station, search and rescue, and our Posse.

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

For many years, law enforcement agencies such as the Sheriff's Department have offered a "Vacation Check" service to residents who plan on being away from home for an extended period. Deputies at the Santa Clarita Valley Station would conduct checks of the residences as time permitted during their shift. In the early 90s, as the population in the area escalated, calls for service increased



*Santa Clarita Valley Volunteers On Patrol with Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca at the NACOP 2001 Conference.*

along with more time at the calls for the deputies, which gave the deputies fewer opportunities to conduct meaningful checks.

The Volunteers On Patrol program was then promoted to bring back the meaningful checks of residents homes with benefits to all; for the residents, a higher level of service, for the image of the department as an organization of caring professionals, and for the volunteers as an opportunity to serve the department and the community they take pride in.

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

The biggest challenge at the time of the program's implementation was acceptance by the deputies of volunteers driving around conducting

the vacation checks. Deputy Rissler would constantly conduct briefings as to the benefits to not only the community but how it would benefit the deputies as well. The deputies would see the volunteers conducting the checks and came to the realization of the benefits. Our biggest challenge now is locating the volunteer who wants a rewarding challenge, and will want to complete our training program, and remain committed to the program.

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

Initially we used our detective vehicles for the vacation checks. In September of 1996 we received our first vehicle which is a 1988 Chevrolet Caprice, white in color with the department markings and with "Volunteers On

Patrol" on the rear quarterpanel. On top, there is a yellow light bar. Our second vehicle which is identical as our first car was received in November, 1998.

***What type of uniforms do you have?***

The Volunteer On Patrol uniform consists of a white collared shirt with epaulets and are adorned with the department's Volunteer patch on both shoulders, name stripe in navy blue above the left breast pocket, and "LA SHERIFF" navy blue stripe above the right breast pocket. The pants are navy blue with a uniform basketweave belt.

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

Presently, we have twenty active Volunteer On Patrol members. In addition we have assigned thirteen Volunteers On Bikes, a program which utilizes volunteers patrolling on bicycles.

***What type of equipment do your members carry?***

The equipment the volunteers are allowed to carry are a 3 D cell flashlight, tool kit, voice recorder, keys clip, personal cell phone, pager and departmental handheld radios.

***Where is your Citizen Patrol office located?***

The volunteers for the entire station have an office along with the explorers and reserve deputies which is a

converted interview room. A locked file cabinet has the Volunteer On Patrol logs, log book, traffic control vests, citation books, and other items.

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

The volunteers are trained in the use of the department radios and one of the Volunteer On Patrol vehicles is equipped with a mobile department radio.

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

The volunteers are currently not dispatched to traffic accidents. If they are in the area of an accident, they are to ask the traffic deputy handling the scene if their assistance is requested. They are not to go to any law enforcement incident; however they are trained to broadcast information if they see a suspect of a crime while on patrol.

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

The training that the volunteers receive is extensive and includes some of the following: school security checks, park security checks, business checks, observation techniques, pre and post patrol procedures, radio procedures, traffic control procedures, citation writing, traffic cone/flare patterns,

driver training and more. The volunteers also must complete thirty-two hours of Ride Alongs with deputies, two traffic units and two crime units. The trainee will be mentored with an experienced volunteer until he/she is knowledgeable enough to be out on his own.

***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?***

The special services that the volunteers can offer vary depending on the amount of help a deputy needs. They have been used in a variety of incidents from searching for missing persons, conducting school checks, park checks, patrolling for graffiti, and property damage, assisting at sobriety check points, traffic control, command post operations, abandoned vehicle abatement, whatever can be thought up the volunteers are happy to assist. The biggest service they provide is handicapped parking citations. The volunteers have been trained in writing handicapped parking citations within the unincorporated and city areas.

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

The qualifications are as follows: be a United States Citizen, be a high school graduate or equivalent, be at least 18 years old, must pass a simple background investigation which includes fingerprinting and serve a minimum of sixteen hours per month.

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



Santa Clarita Valley Volunteers On Patrol

During 2001, we patrolled over 10,000 miles, performed 379 vacation checks, issued 143 disabled parking citations, and worked on 474 abandoned vehicles. For more statistical information please check our web page at SCVSheriff.com, Volunteers On Patrol page.

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

Our biggest challenge is the recruiting and maintaining allegiance to the program. A lot of people are willing to volunteer but few want to go through all the training involved and then continue the minimum sixteen hours per month.

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

Most of the volunteers are recruited by word of mouth, however we do community events where we hand out our Volunteers On Patrol pamphlet to whomever is interested.

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

The deputies have readily accepted the Volunteers On Patrol and they utilize them most at traffic accidents or street closures for traffic control.

*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)*

My wand would be waived to get us new vehicles both equipped with the mobile radios.

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

Our program does not have an operating budget by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, therefore



*Santa Clarita Valley Volunteers On Patrol vehicle*

all funds are requested through the Santa Clarita Valley's Sheriff's Booster Club which pays for items for volunteers to complete the job.

*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 have utilized our volunteers at our annual 4th of July parade, our Holiday parade and our city's Marathon for traffic control.

*Has any Citizen Patrol member ever been injured while performing their duties?*

None of our members have been injured while performing their duties.

*How do you motivate, recognize and*

*reward your Citizen Patrol Volunteers*

Our booster club pays for an annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon at a local restaurant which recognizes volunteers, from throughout the station, for their hours of service.

*Do you provide insurance for your volunteers while on duty? If so, what kind?*

Volunteers are indemnified by the County of Los Angeles for third party liability arising as a result of their activities as a volunteer, unless their actions are fraudulent, malicious, criminal or outside the scope of their volunteer assignment. Volunteers are not indemnified for punitive damages.

*We would like to thank Deputy Patrick Rissler for taking the time to share this information with our readers.*

### **Most Significant Event**

Sadly, on August 31, 2001, our friend Deputy Jake Kuredjian (60M2), was killed in the line of duty. In response to this tragedy, several of our volunteers left their jobs early (some at their own expense), cancelled scheduled vacations, and dropped whatever they were doing to provide support to the station personnel by sharing in the grief, running errands, serving coffee, handling telephone calls and other inquires, and providing any assistance asked of them. At his funeral, several of our volunteers attended the services, side by side with the sworn personnel honoring their fallen friend with great pride.