

ISLA VISTA AND ITS FOOT PATROL

A Collaboration that Counts

In the course of the 2011-12 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury's (Jury) annual inspection of detention facilities, the Jury visited the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department's Isla Vista Foot Patrol Substation (Foot Patrol). During this inspection, the Jury became aware of the close collaboration between the Foot Patrol and the surrounding community to reduce crime and make the community safer. This effort by all the participants has put the Isla Vista Foot Patrol on the world radar with requests coming from national and international agencies for consultation on safe and effective crowd control.

The Isla Vista Foot Patrol

The Isla Vista Foot Patrol opened its doors in 1971 in response to the tensions generated by local Vietnam War protests and subsequent riots. The mission was to build bridges linking law enforcement with the community. Since then two or three officers walk or bicycle through the streets of Isla Vista (IV), getting to know the people and letting the people know them. The importance of this relationship has grown over the years as these officers patrol a beat of less than one square mile in size but with a population of over 23,000, many of them college students. The special challenge the community confronts is that a new class arrives every year, and many of them are 18 and away from home for the first time.

Today's Foot Patrol is staffed by 14 Sheriff's Deputies in cooperation with seven officers from the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB), two California Highway Patrol officers and one parking enforcement agent.

Three Foot Patrol programs are of particular note: Halloween in Isla Vista, Stop Burglaries in IV, and the Safety Focus Group.

Halloween In Isla Vista

Halloween in Isla Vista is the largest single annual event covered by the Sheriff's Department, and its Foot Patrol is the point agency. Preparation takes up to three months with multiple agencies coordinating their expertise to make this a safe event. Included, among others, are the fire department, hospitals, ambulance services, the Red Cross, and all surrounding law enforcement agencies. Volunteers from the community and UCSB join in by providing other services such as recycling bins, rehydration stations, and food booths. Volunteers join the IV Parks and Recreation District for the clean up.

In 2008 Isla Vista was identified as "the place to be" on Halloween, and 45,000 eager celebrants showed up. Realizing the danger, as well as the cost, of an event this size, the Associated Student Body (ASB) and UCSB stepped forward with a "Keep It Local" program, urging students not to invite their out-of-town friends. The ASB and the

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University also stepped up alcohol education programs including op-ed pieces in the campus newspaper pointing out the dangers and consequences of excessive drinking. The Sheriff's Department put stringent rules into place that included no open containers, no music audible from the street, a midnight curfew, etc. In 2011 only an estimated 22,000 celebrated. It is worth noting that only 10 percent of those cited or arrested were local. The Foot Patrol credits this low number of law breakers to the locals knowing and following the rules.

While still expensive, over \$500,000 in 2011, costs are down considerably because of the Foot Patrol rethinking portions of this budget. Through rescheduling of overtime and other cost savings measures, over \$100,000 was cut from the 2010 figure. Arrests, citations, and transports to hospitals remained about the same. Grand Jury observers of the Halloween celebration were impressed with the respect shown by and for the law officers throughout the evening. No "show of force" was required.

Stop Burglaries in IV

When a new commander was appointed to the Foot Patrol almost two years ago, he was astounded at the number of residential burglaries, and that so many occurred where doors and windows had been left unlocked.

Through outreach to the ASB, an aggressive theft prevention program was developed. A clever logo that caught people's attention was created and an inexpensive sticker using its character was developed. The ASB printed and paid for the stickers that could be affixed to almost anything, from cups to pizza boxes to paper bags. The stickers reminded residents to "Lock Doors and Windows." Other participants in this program are the IV Safety Committee, IV Business Owners, the IV Tenants Union, Office of Student Life, and IV Property Owners Association. The first nine months of the program produced a 26.4 percent decrease in these crimes.



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Recently property owners augmented the program with refrigerator magnets to reinforce the message of “Lock Doors and Windows.”



Safety Focus Group

In collaboration with the ASB, the Foot Patrol has established a Safety Focus Group made up of students who represent a variety of interests. They meet regularly with the Foot Patrol commander. By bringing student concerns to the Foot Patrol, law enforcement is better able to target its efforts for more effective community safety. The Safety Focus Group points out small things that make a difference, including broken glass in the streets, or large matters such as fencing along the bluffs to prevent fatal falls. Group participants also suggest other important safety measures such as gradually moving patrols north to the end of Del Playa Drive where assaults often happen as the evenings grow later and people straggle home.

CONCLUSION

The 2011-12 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury commends the Isla Vista Foot Patrol for its outreach to this community through respect and open communication. The Jury also commends the various community groups' enthusiastic response and participation.

No response to this report is required.