

PAYDAYS, PITFALLS AND PROBLEMS OF CREATING AND OPERATING A CRIME STOPPERS PROGRAM IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES

(The Montrose, Colorado, Experience)

- Recognize and **evaluate the need** for a Crime Stoppers program.
 - Crime, opioid addiction, domestic violence & unrest are on the increase.
 - Under-staffed and stressed Law Enforcement Agencies need help.
 - Education of an uninformed or uncaring population is required to fight crime.
 - Marijuana legalization has greatly increased crime and illegal grows.
 - + Residents probably know you and will be receptive.
 - + There are more opportunities to make public presentations.
 - Residents do not want to believe serious crime exists.
 - Montrose crime is the same as Denver on per capita basis.
 - Montrose Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Bureau do not want publicity about crime and criminals.

- Become familiar with already **existing Crime Stoppers programs** within the state.
 - Locate programs in your region who are CSUSA members.
 - + CSUSA members are overwhelmingly generous with their programs.
 - + Larger C.S. programs are generally sympathetic and willing to help smaller and newer programs.
 - Not all C.S. programs are members of CSUSA.
 - Many are simply devious ways to pay snitches.
 - Many programs do not follow Best Practices and can be liable.

- Locate and **retain legal counsel.**

- They should be experienced in corporate law, willing to reduce their fees for a non-profit and believe in THE CAUSE, aka Crime Stoppers.
 - “Borrow” as much as possible from CSUSA programs (not just in the area).
 - Corporate structure includes not just Articles and ByLaws but also a comprehensive Policies and Procedures Manual.
 - Research and set up By-laws and follow legal requirements from your lawyers.
 - Ask other programs for copies of their policies and procedures and modify them in accordance with your specific needs and state law requirements.
 - Some states, like CO, have statutes protecting Crime Stoppers records.
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- + In a smaller community, leaders know which attorneys are competent, community oriented, and financially secure.
 - + If the attorney has done this before, he/she is familiar with current changes in the law and unique aspects of non-profits.
 - In our area, there are 250 non-profits requiring similar service, thus many requests for help and fee reduction.
 - Except for unique circumstances, law practice may not be nearly as lucrative as in a larger metropolitan area, resulting in less economic freedom to donate time.

- Locate and engage an **accounting firm** which is both competent and pro bono oriented.
 - An I.R.C. 501 (c)(3) designation is essential.
 - While smaller programs may not have the larger budgets of those in large cities, the requirements still apply and failure to comply may have disastrous consequences.
 - In CO, a non-profit must have a Secretary of State solicitation number under most circumstances to solicit money. Likewise, to run a raffle, and specific games of chance, training and a license are required. Penalties can be disastrous both personally and program-wise.
- + In smaller communities, you know which CPAs are willing to help.
- + Because of my work with the area Hospice, a benefactor donated both the time and money for setting up the I.R.S. designation and accounting for our program.
- + Due to community size, the relationship with the firm is more personal.
- It is the same problem with finding legal counsel- too many non-profits.

- Develop a quality **Board of Directors**.
 - Meet with 1 or 2 interested people and list those in the community who not only believe in the program but would be effective in making it successful.
 - Be selective and diverse-Remember-no active law enforcement.
 - Enlist a Board member who has run a non-profit or has corporate business experience.
 - Avoid active politicians and those who have their own personal agendas.
 - While we meet in a church and receive our mail at the Police Dept., we advise everyone that we are neither part of nor affiliated with any law enforcement agency.
 - Every Board applicant completes an Application, Commitment Letter, Background Check authorization and Conflict of Interest Statement. They also receive a Director Job Description, Anti-Discrimination Policy, Mission Statement and a copy of the ByLaws and Policy and Procedures Manual.
 - Everyone involved with the program must pass a Background Check, including our Coordinator.
- + There is more knowledge about people and their characteristics and habits in smaller communities, therefore better basis to evaluate a potential Board member.
- Avoid the temptation to just add friends and neighbors, even though you see them more frequently in small communities.
- In smaller communities, there are a limited number of dedicated leaders, leading to complicated interconnections and dual Directorships.

- Set up a **Fundraising Committee**, establishing the needs and possible sources of funding.
 - Select members who are outgoing, personable and can handle rejection.
 - Consider the typical resources: government, philanthropic grants, civic organizations and social clubs, golf tournaments, but also think out of the box, i.e., trips to the zoo, wine festivals and winery visits, and creative adventures, like Dancing with the Stars.
 - Meet with a couple of community leaders and list their thoughts of fundraising.
 - Secure long range funding sources and create other funding efforts.
 - Research “Thank You” media announcements for potential donors and contributors.
 - Cultivate local government leadership for guidance and funding.
 - What works for Montrose Regional Crime Stoppers:
 - Montrose County Board of County Commissioners
 - Montrose Police Department
 - Alpine Bank-largest in the region
 - Be certain to recognize funders at every opportunity.
 - Use current information and statistics: daily police blotters, increases in crime stats, arrests made and cases cleared.
 - We are also expanding into electronic donations: PayPal, Go Fund Me, Amazon Smile, and the Kroger automatic donation from grocery purchases.
- + We know these people and thus, they are easier to approach.
- + Knowing the understaffing of our law enforcement, a better argument can be made that their funding provides a great return on investment. In smaller communities, a deputy costs \$60,000 - \$80,000 per year and much more in larger cities.
- Local economies may be in trouble (ours was down when we started).

- It may be easier for a potential funder to say NO when they know you.
- Alternate sources such as proceeds from criminal forfeitures or specific fines and penalties may be harder to implement since the governments themselves may be struggling.

FUNDRAISING THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

John W. Nelson

Several thoughts come to mind when I consider fundraising. Some of you may enjoy knocking on doors and asking for donations. Personally, I do not. Several traditional concepts are simply over-worked in our area or are dominated by long-established non-profits. **Galas, banquets and golf tournaments are over-done.** Besides, they take a great deal of commitment and time. There are 250 non-profits in our community and we are number 251. We must be creative and think outside the box.

1. **Grants:** (a) Montrose Community Foundation, (b) Telluride C.F., (c) research may provide law enforcement and other grant sources.
2. **Government sources:** Cities and counties from Telluride to Olathe may be willing to spring for some funds or at least publicity support. They are all strapped so I do not hold out much hope for cash.
3. **Outsider events:** Mesa County C.S. brought in the Harlem Ambassadors (like the Globetrotters) for a special event. Our C.A.S.A. now stages a dodge ball tournament each year. Mesa County C.S. also tried concerts.
4. **Letter appeals:** I believe that a well-written letter to the head of each Home Owner Association in the coverage area would produce results. (Otter Pond, Cobble Creek, Bridges, etc.) Our program will enhance their community safety. A slightly modified letter should also go to the Montrose Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development Association and Montrose Economic Development

- Council. Other business sources might include DMEA, San Miguel Power and a few select others. Banks and local merchants are already over-solicited for good causes.
5. **Quick-draw events:** Local artists donate their paintings, completed in 3 hours, for a prize. They are voted upon by the public and then auctioned off. Worland, Wyo. has used this successfully. The internet can provide more information on this.
 6. **Duck races:** The Chamber has the ducks. We could use the controllable Cobble Creek stream, run 2 or 3 heats and sell chances at \$10 each.
 7. **3 on 3 basketball contests:** We could close Main or another street downtown, charge \$100 per team, have 3 or 4 age brackets, seek \$750 or \$1,000 from underwriters, charge admission and award prizes to the winners. Themopolis, Wyo. has done this successfully.
 8. **Social & Service Club presentations:** Our area has a very generous array of organizations that take great pride in supporting worthy community causes. Individual presentations to these groups could be very productive.
 9. **Dancing with the Stars:** Enlist 6 organizations to each sponsor a dancing couple.
 10. **Local dance studios** and enthusiast do the teaching and choreographing. Our CASA has done this for 2 years and the public eats it up.
 11. **Annual donor plaques:** Donors receive plaques for a \$200 donation and year stick-on designations for \$100 donations.
 12. **Motorcycle poker run:** Volunteer man checkpoints around a scenic highway run.

- Develop a basic **Business Plan** based upon a reasonable budget, not fanciful.
 - Discuss expenditures and percentages with neighboring Crime Stoppers programs and other area non-profits.
 - Develop a reasonable annual Budget, with a semi-annual budget review. It is a process, not a product. Evolution is essential, as is constant analysis.
 - + In smaller communities, other non-profits are generally willing to help.
 - In ours, the 250 competing non-profits are all doing similar things to raise funds.
- Select and **elect key Officers.**
 - This process starts informally from the very outset.
 - It took us several meetings to get a feel for which folks had the enthusiasm, ability, time and commitment to serve.
 - Know their history in the community and track record (once elected, it is tough to ask for their resignation).
 - (I remember the state legislator –cop, attorney)
 - Avoid those with known personal agendas and “joiners”.
 - The President / Chair and Vice President / Vice-Chair are critical and must have a good working relationship.
 - + In small communities, you know many folks by reputation and history, both good and bad.
 - Your program will be under scrutiny more personally in a small town and your actions and public comments will have a greater impact, for good or for ill.

- Elect a **Treasurer** with intimate knowledge of accounting, such as a young banker.
 - Delegate responsibility for paying expenses, sending donation thank you letters and budget tracking for not only accuracy but transparency.
- Elect or employ a **Secretary** capable of maintaining accurate minutes of all Board meetings. Memories fade but complete and accurate minutes do not.
 - Our Secretary also reports on rewards for arrests based on information from the 2 law enforcement agency Assistant Coordinators.
- Employ a **part-time Coordinator** as an independent contractor.
 - Larger programs use full-time law enforcement officers as Program Coordinators.
 - In smaller communities like ours (20,000) with under-staffed agencies, volunteers must serve that diverse function.
 - Volunteer burn-out is a very real hazard.
 - While the need grows with the successes of the program, adequate funding must be in place to assure continuing growth and success.
 - In Colorado today, one of the fastest growing states (could be legal marijuana), it is very difficult to find qualified potential employees, especially in smaller communities.

- Purchase **Directors' Error and Omissions** (non-profit Directors and Officers) and other related insurance coverage.
 - Protect your Board members, program and its assets from the very outset.
 - Follow CSUSA Best Practices for efficiency and avoiding liability.
 - Due to the more dispersed duties and responsibilities caused by a smaller community, under-staffed law enforcement agencies and reliance on volunteers, there is an increased probability of mistakes being made and thus, potential legal liability.

Set up **Tip Protocol and Procedures** with Dispatch responsible for receiving Tips.

- Montrose Regional Dispatch Center (under the Sheriff's control) disperses all Tips to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- We utilize an Assistant Coordinator in each of the 2 main law enforcement agencies to direct the Tips to appropriate personnel and follow up on each one until an arrest is made or the Tip proves ineffective.
- Consider using the P3 web-based communication system.
 - We found it to be the best solution for the buck. We use the anonymous telephone number **(970-249-8500)** the mobile app **P3Tips** and the web **P3Tips.com**.
- Our Secretary monitors and reports on arrests, based upon information from our 2 Assistant Coordinators at the law enforcement agencies.
- We have 4 separate Dispatch Centers (wasteful, delays, lack of cooperation).
- The two major law enforcement agencies, run by good people, do not cooperate.
- We walk a line to not offend or criticize either agency or Dispatch Center.
- The results are delays in 911 calls, a horrible waste of money in duplication and under-staffing due to piracy and few qualified job applicants.
- We utilize Alpine Bank for our **banking needs** (they are an annual funder), one of their officers is our Treasurer and they handle the reward payments.
 - A close banking relationship is mandatory. You need complete cooperation to enable the teller line to pay out cash in an envelope to a person who identifies themselves only by a Tip number and Reward code.

- **Promote, publicize and publish** in diverse media, especially on social media.
 - The public cannot assist and provide Tips if they are unaware of Crime Stoppers.
 - We have, including today, made 102 individual presentations, i.e., radio, TV, newspapers, electronic news media, social and civic organizations.
 - We use metal signage, electronic signage, leaflets, bumper stickers and business cards to carry the message in English and Spanish.
 - We publish Alerts on high profile crimes for all agencies.
 - Utilize Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and similar means.
 - Facebook, Twitter and an up to date website are absolutely essential
 - We utilize a police officer electronic specialist and several volunteers.
 - Do not be modest - brag about the program's accomplishments in every media and as often as possible.
 - Our favorites are arrests of counterfeiters, a drugstore robber, a sexual predator in Alabama, several multi-charge burglars, a fugitive drug suspect captured within 10 minutes of receipt of the Tip and vandals in our High School.
 - Our small program has caused the arrest of well over 32 criminals and the clearing of over 70 charges.
 - Most of the arrests from our Tips would not have occurred from good police work alone.
- + In smaller communities, Clubs and civic groups are always seeking programs.
- + Our community cares about each other (has been one of 100 Best Places to Live).
- There are only so many places to appear – you do not want to be too repetitious.

- Establish a committee to **review all legal, accounting and corporate structure** at least annually.
 - There is nothing exciting about maintaining up-to-date legal and accounting structures. It is time consuming, tedious and just plain boring.
 - Include in your Policy & Procedure Manual such essentials as record retention, privacy and similar mundane but critical subjects.
 - The penalties for not having an up-to-date Policy and Procedure Manual, a clean balance sheet and check register can be catastrophic.
- + In smaller communities, there does not seem to be as much public scrutiny.
- + CSUSA members will share anything you need and lend a helping hand.
- Manpower and time just may not be available in smaller programs.
- Corporate structure is just not exciting and seldom a priority.

- Develop a close working **relationship with all area law enforcement agencies.**
 - Our Judicial District encompasses 6 small counties and numerous agencies.
 - We are assisting them and most are under-funded and under-staffed.
 - Each has its own unique character, priorities and method of operation.
 - Do community Proclamations, speak at Fallen Officer memorials, National Night Out and work with them on their individual projects, i.e., toys for kids at Christmas and attend their Christmas parties and internal events.
 - Both our Sheriff and Police Chief support us with contributions, cooperation and staff assistance, when available.
- + Smaller communities are much less formal and generally, more personable.
 - We needed food and space for a conference- I only had to ask the Mayor.
- + To the extent they have any budgetary availability, they try to assist us.
- Many area budgets are very tight and thus, limitations on their assistance to us.
- Law enforcement assistance non-profits are just not as warm and fuzzy a subject as many charities, i.e., CASA, HopeWest.
- Care must be taken to not appear as a part of any law enforcement agency.

- **Expand your field of operation** in terms of area, population diversity and other avenues. School / student safety is greatly enhanced by P3 –based Safe2Tell and Crime Stoppers joint operations in the school districts.
 - Personal politics are everywhere and possibly even more so in smaller areas.
 - Our school administration is ignorant of school security procedures and tend to be less than enthusiastic about law enforcement as well.
 - With only 3 grocery stores, if you make enemies, you see them everywhere.
- Assist the community by **participation in related events**, i.e. National Night Out, Fallen Officer Memorials, National Crime Stoppers Awareness Month (January) and other events where you can support all area law enforcement agencies.
- Invite the Attorney General and other governmental leaders for special events.

- **Deliver on promises and publicize all successes.** That is where keeping good statistics on arrest and successes is absolutely essential.
 - Continue to expand and improve Board operations.
 - New members with diverse backgrounds provide needed synergism.
 - We invite High School students to attend and participate in our meetings, providing a younger perspective, designing publicity posters and yearbook advertisements.
 - Publicize fugitives captured, awards paid out, drugs and property recovered and community crime prevention efforts by our program.
 - Continue to refine and enhance publicity, operations and social media activities.
- + Positive notoriety is easier since locals are more aware of current Board members personally.
- Remember, we are always competing with 250 other non-profits for funding and press coverage.
- Just a few of the **unique problems of Crime Stoppers programs in smaller communities:**
 - Too many fundraisers.
 - City vs. county conflicts that impede cooperation between agencies.
 - Absence of law enforcement agencies' personnel to serve as C.S. Coordinators.
 - Reluctance of community leaders to acknowledge increasing criminal activity.
- **For relatively new Crime Stoppers programs in smaller communities:**
While the difficulties and challenges are both unique and sometimes appear overwhelming, they can be overcome with ingenuity, enthusiasm and dedication.

- **For existing programs in larger metropolitan areas:** Share the concepts and ideas we spoke of today with smaller communities and law enforcement agencies in nearby regions to start new Crime Stoppers programs.

MAINTAIN FLEXIBILITY, OPEN-MINDEDNESS AND INVENTIVENESS!

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS FOR CRIME STOPPERS PROGRAMS IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES ARE FROUGHT WITH POT HOLES, BUMPS AND DEAD ENDS!

IN SPITE OF IT ALL, MONTROSE REGIONAL CRIME STOPPERS INC., RELATIVELY NEW AND IN A SMALLER COMMUNITY, IS WORKING!!

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