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CAMDEN'S METRO MODEL ADDS 100 OFFICERS TO CITY FORCE

by Dave Marsden

Camden, N.J.—A great story* occurring in one of our Forum cities is the dramatic change taking place in this New Jersey town of 77,000 people, across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, Pa.

Camden, N.J., has the unenviable distinction of ranking near the top of the nation for cities its size in both violence and poverty; however, things are changing fast.

On May 1, 2013, Camden's city police department had 230 sworn officers. Despite having state-of-the-art technology and an outstanding police chief in Scott Thomson, the department was fighting a losing battle. The city suffered 52 murders in 2012 alone. In fact, the number of *nonfatal* shootings was so high that each city resident stood a 1 in 270 chance of being shot sometime in the next year.

Today, the Camden Police Department is the newly constituted Camden *County* Police Department under Chief Thomson's leadership, with 330 officers—a full hundred more than last May. Eight-nine officers have recently graduated from the academy and joined the force. In addition, there is a new academy class under way that will bring the force to 411 by June. How did this happen?

The answer was to start with the best of the old force and add new officers dedicated to providing the public with the highest level of public safety. Officers from the old city force re-interviewed for jobs in the new Camden *County* Police Department. One hundred fifty-five officers made the transition, while 45 officers were not selected or chose not to apply. All of the officers had to retake their oaths, according to Chief Thomson. The new department motto is "Service Before Self," according to the chief, who adds that his officers have been to "hell and back" on the way to reinventing themselves and getting a fresh start. "Morale is up," says the chief, and positive results have begun to appear.

From May through December, there has been a 38 percent reduction in violent crime from the same 8-month period in 2012,

ALCOHOL AND YOUTH KEEP TOO MUCH COMPANY WITH VIOLENCE

by Michael Hopps



Alcohol, after caffeine, is America's favorite over-the-counter drug. And after caffeine, it is the drug of choice among Americans both old enough and too young to consume it legally.

Alcohol use—especially excess use—is a risk factor both for being victimized and for perpetrating youth violence. This violence may take the form of bullying, gang violence, assaults that take place in bars and on streets and in

homes, and sexual aggression.¹ The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism concludes that life within a gang has two endemic features: violence and alcohol.²

For both males and females, a riskier drinking style is associated with dating violence. A study published in 2011 in *The Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* characterized dating violence as attended by “more frequent alcohol use, alcohol-aggression expectancies, drinking to cope, and beliefs that alcohol is disinhibiting and that being drunk provides a ‘time out’ from behavioral expectations.”³

George Washington's Center for Alcohol & Other Drug Education estimates that 85 percent of all campus rapes nationwide involve alcohol.

Those who have a drink or two daily (slightly less for women than for men) are not prone to abuse.⁴
⁵ But such moderation does not constitute the drinking pattern of most American youths.

Teens Drink, Older Teens Drink More, Young Adults Binge More

Most parents underestimate the extent of teen drinking and see it as less of a problem than teenagers themselves do.⁶ In 2006, 54 percent of Americans ages 12 through 20 had used alcohol in their lifetime, and 46 percent had used it in the past month. Rates of consumption increase with age among underage persons.

In a 2007 survey, more than 3 percent of 12- and 13-year-old Americans, 15 percent of 14- and 15-year-olds, 29 percent of 16- and 17-year-olds, and 51 percent of 18- to 20-year-olds had drunk alcohol within the 30 days leading up to the time they were surveyed. Binge drinking—five or more drinks on one occasion—peaks in the early adult years.⁸

Much (if not all) of this age-specific drinking behavior is attributable to the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for rational decision-making, planning, and impulse control. The prefrontal cortex is not fully developed in the adolescent and probably does not finish developing until one's mid-20s. (Cracks Jennifer Senior, author of just-released book *All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenthood*, "The only group of people who seemed to figure this out before neuroscientists was car insurance companies.")

Young adults (ages 19–24) have the highest prevalence of heavy or high-risk drinking⁹ and also demonstrate an accelerated trajectory to dependence.¹⁰ While 50 percent of 18-year-old heavy drinkers age out of those drinking patterns, 50 percent have the same drinking pattern 12

and homicides are down 15 percent, according to the chief. Although it has only been 8 months since the personnel change, the trends point in the right direction. While adding more officers who are rededicating themselves to their public safety mission is critical, there has been a major change in policing philosophy and strategy taking place at the same time. In the old force there were only enough officers on board to take a reactive approach to the job. Officers were largely in cruisers responding to crimes as best they could; prevention appeared to be out of the question. But with additional staff and a switch to community policing, there appears to be a new sense of safety and trust among the police and the citizens they serve. There has been a “tenfold increase in citizen contact, and despite that increase the actual number of officer demeanor complaints is down,” says the chief. So what is going on in Camden?

The answer is that officers are out of their cruisers and on foot, reintroducing themselves to residents and developing relationships. The results have been an increase in the perception and reality of public safety. Ordinary citizens are coming out on the streets, driving the drug trade into the background. People are talking to the police, and as a result gun seizures are up 75 percent. The concept of procedural justice and legitimacy, a recent topic of a Forum site call, is well known in Camden and is being actively practiced. People are more engaged in informing on those who are engaging in criminal activity, and police are catching more folks in the act of committing crimes because of their increased presence where crime is committed.

Chief Thomson also polled the citizens of Camden to find out what their reaction has been to the changes in the way the department operates. Three of every four (75 percent) citizens surveyed have a positive view of the police.

What is also groundbreaking about this turnaround is what it may portend for New Jersey as a whole. With a 2 percent cap on any yearly tax increase for any county in New Jersey, the other 36 municipalities in Camden County may be looking to join this new county police agency. With 37 police departments in Camden County, the duplication of overhead (dispatch, administration, etc.) is creating huge budget headaches in these difficult financial times. The separate police “silos” that exist are a barrier to communication and to catching criminals. Chief Thomson expects 6 to 12 additional municipalities to join his county-based force over the next 5 years through “shared service agreements.” This could make Camden County a more efficient and effective police entity, as the economy of scale in this potential consolidation is substantial.

This bold action taken in Camden was not without political risk. Mayor Dana Redd was challenged over her decision to go with a county model in her recent reelection bid, but her judgment was vindicated when she garnered 80 percent of the vote.

According to Mayor Redd, the success of this effort stemmed from “a collaboration between our state, city, and county partners as well as the contributions of the federal government.” She added, “Our success was also due to the resources and technology we provided the police before the conversion to the Metro County Model, and the fact that we had the community at the table from the inception of the effort.” She also attributes much of Camden's success to “the Congress of Resident, Faith-Based, and Community-Based Organizations” that stood with her “for the

years later.¹¹

Candy's Dandy, Liquor's Quicker

Alcohol is absorbed more quickly and with greater effect on an empty stomach or if carbonated. It moves rapidly to all vital organs. Chiefly metabolized in the liver, alcohol's deconstruction requires much more time—roughly three hours for each ounce of alcohol drunk—than its absorption.¹²

By depressing both inhibitory and excitatory neurons, alcohol remakes different people differently—rendering one the recluse, another the flirt, another the fighter, another the life of the party, and another the death on the highway.

It isn't *what* you drink (beer versus wine versus hard liquor) that makes you inebriated to the point of dysfunction; it's specifically *how much* alcohol you consume. If liquor seems to make the consumer more violent than beer, it is simply because its higher-percentage alcohol content makes the drinker drunk faster.¹³ By contrast, if you tried to get drunk on so-called nonalcoholic beer (whose alcohol content is about 1/12 the amount of regular beer), given the speed at which the body metabolizes alcohol, by the time you got drunk... you would be sober.

The Numbers on Binge Drinking Are Staggering

Large numbers of underage drinkers binge.¹⁴ Eighteen to 36 percent of high school students report binge drinking within the previous 2 weeks,¹⁵ and two in five college students report binge drinking.¹⁶ The problem may be underestimated, for some research suggests that students regularly overestimate the size of a standard drink and thus underestimate the extent of their drinking.¹⁷

The point of binge drinking can vary. Some drink simply to get drunk fast, others to show how well they can “hold” their alcohol. But addictions scientists think the young drinker with the “hollow leg” may be more prone to alcoholism than one who feels (and appears) inebriated quickly.^{18 19}

What to Do About This Dangerous Drug?

Analyses of public policy related to alcohol purchase and consumption offer evidence that policy change and enforcement can be an effective deterrent.^{24 25} Effectively limiting the access to alcohol to persons under legal drinking age not only directly reduces teen drinking but also communicates a clear message to the community that underage drinking is unacceptable.²⁶ Checking would-be buyers' IDs more rigorously and reducing the number of alcohol outlets in a neighborhood are two

needed change in public safety and policing.”

To read more on the Camden County Police Department see <http://camdencountypd.org>.

*This story was based in large part on an interview with Police Chief Scott Thomson.

NEWS & VIEWS

Reports

Chronic Violence and Community Health: Reflections on a Symposium Series

Jacob & Valeria Langeloth Foundation, 2014

This **23-page report** (http://frontlinesol.com/Reports/Chronic_Violence_and_Community_Health.pdf) describes drivers of violence and recounts recommendations for action from the symposium series held between October 2012 and February 2013 in five U.S. cities: Chicago, Ill.; New Orleans, La.; Oakland, Calif.; Philadelphia, Pa.; and Washington, D.C. Discussions from the symposium centered on three learning objectives:

- Identify approaches that are reducing the effects of chronic violence.
- Understand the challenges communities face in stemming violence.
- Document models of effective collaboration in the field.

The foundation commissioned the social change organization Frontline Solutions to run the symposium series and write the report.

City Voices and Perspectives

Prevention Institute, 2013

Street outreach and violence interruption can prevent shootings and killings, and in ***City Voices and Perspectives*** (<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-340/127.html>) Health Commissioner Oxiris Barbot describes how the Safe Streets program reduced violence in Baltimore, Md. Because of Safe Streets, one neighborhood went nearly 2 years without a homicide, and nonfatal shootings dropped by more than a third. Part of the City Voices and Perspectives series, this publication shares evaluation data on Safe Streets, including cost savings figures. Safe Streets is the longest-running replication of the Cure Violence model.

National Standards for the Care of Youths Charged With Status Offenses

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2013

These **standards** promote system reform and adoption of research-supported policies, programs, and practices that address the needs of youth, their families, and communities, without unnecessary involvement from the juvenile justice system involvement. The standards aim to inspire policymakers,

strategies associated with decreases in violence.

Two school-based programs—Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention of College Students (or BASICS) and Safe Dates—have been shown to be effective in reducing risky drinking behavior and dating violence among college students and middle and high school students, respectively.

Listed as an effective program in OJP's CrimeSolutions.gov, BASICS is aimed at college students 18 to 24 years old who drink alcohol heavily and have experienced or are at risk for alcohol-related problems such as poor class attendance, missed assignments, accidents, sexual assault, and violence. BASICS is designed to help students make better decisions about using alcohol. The program's style is empathic, rather than confrontational or judgmental. BASICS uses brief, limited interventions designed to prompt students to change their drinking patterns. The program is conducted over the course of two 50-minute interviews. For more information, see

<http://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=138>.

Another CrimeSolutions.gov effective program, Safe Dates is a school-based prevention program for middle and high school students designed to stop or prevent the initiation of dating violence victimization and perpetration, including the psychological, physical, and sexual abuse that may occur between youths involved in a dating relationship. Safe Dates relies on primary and secondary prevention activities to target behavioral changes in adolescents. The Safe Dates program includes a curriculum with nine 50-minute sessions, one 45-minute play to be performed by students, and a poster contest. For more information, see

<http://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=142>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

Funding Opportunities

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (of the U.S. Department of Justice) announces a competitive grant, "National Training and Technical Assistance: Intellectual Property Enforcement Program." Applications are due at 11:59 p.m. (EST) on March 17, 2014. Applicants must register with [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) (<http://www.grants.gov/applicants/>)

legislators, decision makers, and practitioners in how local and state systems can best respond to youths who are at risk for or charged with status offenses.

From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses

Center on Youth Justice, 2013

Solid research on youth charged with low-level offenses shows diverting delinquent juveniles from court and responding with community-based programming are more effective strategies for preventing future crime. This [report](#) raises awareness about law enforcement responses to noncriminal status offenses, encourages dialog about the circumstances behind youth misbehavior, and explores whether courts are equipped to effectively address status offenses.

A Generation Later: What We've Learned About Zero Tolerance in Schools

Center on Youth Justice, 2013

This [policy brief](#) looks at research that suggests zero tolerance discipline policies do not make schools more orderly or safe and, in fact, might have the opposite effect. Some of the most rigorous studies show out-of-school suspension can severely disrupt academic progress in detrimental, long-lasting ways. The brief describes alternatives to strict policies to keep young people safer and in school.

Patterns of Girls' Delinquent Behavior

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2013

Part of a series on the Girls Study Group findings, this [bulletin](#) examines data on developmental patterns of girls' offending from childhood through adolescence. OJJDP created the series to assess trends of offending among boys and girls, highlight risk and protective factors, and reveal causes and correlates of girls' delinquency.

News

PTSD at Least as High in Violent Neighborhoods as in Combat Zones

Posttraumatic stress disorder is as high or higher in violent American neighborhoods than in combat zones abroad, yet hospitals rarely screen for it. [Philadelphia, Pa., has begun to focus on trauma as a major public health issue](#) (http://www.philly.com/philly/health/mental-health/PTSD_as_high_or_higher_in_violent_neighborhoods_than_war_zones.html#FfzqC5YRXB3fuTOh.99).

CDC Sponsors All-Star Panel to Address Preventing Youth Violence

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Grand Rounds will present "Preventing Youth Violence," on Tuesday, Feb. 18, from 1 to 2 p.m. (EST) at the Global Communications Center (Building 19), Auditorium A, Roybal Campus, at CDC headquarters in Atlanta, Ga.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Administrator Robert L. Listenbee Jr. will address "Promoting Violence Prevention in our Communities, Achieving Impact, and Scaling Up."

Howard Spivak, director of CDC's Division of Violence Prevention

[apply-for-grants.html](#)) before applying. View the [full solicitation \(https://www.bja.gov/Funding/14IntelPropTTAsol.pdf\)](https://www.bja.gov/Funding/14IntelPropTTAsol.pdf).

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (of the U.S. Department of Justice) also announces the competitive grant "Second Chance Act Reentry Program for Adult Offenders With Co-Occurring Substance Abuse and Mental Health Disorders." Applications are due at 11:59 p.m. (EST) on March 18, 2014. Applicants must register with [Grants.gov \(http://www.grants.gov/applicants/apply-for-grants.html\)](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/apply-for-grants.html) before applying. View the [full solicitation \(https://www.bja.gov/Funding/14SCACoOccurringDisordersSol.pdf\)](https://www.bja.gov/Funding/14SCACoOccurringDisordersSol.pdf).

System of Care Expansion [planning grants](#) and [implementation cooperative agreements](#), awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, will support efforts to develop, expand, and maintain a system of care providing mental health services for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families. Planning grant applications must be received by March 19; implementation grant applications are due March 21.

Training Opportunities

Registration is open for Workshop on Violence and Mental Health: Opportunities for Prevention and Early Intervention

On Feb. 26–27, the Institute of Medicine will host [Mental Health and Violence: Opportunities for Prevention and Early Intervention—A Workshop \(http://iom.edu/Activities/Global/ViolenceForum/2014-FEB-26.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Institute%20of%20Medicine&utm_campaign=01.23.14+GVP&utm_content=&utm_term=\)](http://iom.edu/Activities/Global/ViolenceForum/2014-FEB-26.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Institute%20of%20Medicine&utm_campaign=01.23.14+GVP&utm_content=&utm_term=), at the Keck Center in Washington, D.C. (500 Fifth Street NW, 20001). This free workshop will explore a model for thinking about mental health, violence, and prevention with the goal of arriving at a better understanding of the relationships between mental illness and risks of violence perpetration and victimization as well as the mental health consequences of exposure to violence. Space is limited, so [register now \(http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1487408/BGH-Mental-Health-and-Violence-Opportunities-for-Prevention-and-Early-Intervention-2-26-14?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Institute%20of%20Medicine&utm_campaign=01.23.14+GVP&utm_content=&utm_term=\)](http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1487408/BGH-Mental-Health-and-Violence-Opportunities-for-Prevention-and-Early-Intervention-2-26-14?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Institute%20of%20Medicine&utm_campaign=01.23.14+GVP&utm_content=&utm_term=) to attend in person or by webcast.

Registration is open for the National Council of

within the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control will address "Why Youth Violence Prevention is a Public Health Issue."

Deborah Gorman–Smith, professor from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration and director of the Chicago, Ill., Center for Youth Violence Prevention, will discuss "Helping Communities Use the Evidence for Youth Violence Prevention."

Sheila Savannah, Health Planning Division manager of the Houston, Texas, Department of Health and Human Services, will speak on "How Comprehensive Youth Violence Prevention is Working in Houston."

Register for the live [Webcast \(http://www.cdc.gov/about/grand-rounds/\)](http://www.cdc.gov/about/grand-rounds/).

First Public Hearing Held by Task Force on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence

At its first [public hearing](#) on Dec. 9, 2013, the advisory committee of the Attorney General's Task Force on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence focused on domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse of tribal youth, and how to better identify, assess, and treat traumatized children.

First Universal Children's Day

Nearly 8,500 children visited more than 4,000 federal inmates in December on the Bureau of Prisons' first [Universal Children's Day](#). The event gave inmates an opportunity to connect with their children through storytelling, parenting workshops, family worship services, arts and crafts, and other activities.

Turning the Curve on Youth Violence

Judges, law enforcement, elected officials, youth counselors, parents, and city workers attended the December [Santa Cruz County Status on Youth Violence Summit](#), which presented current data and focused on making a positive change in youth violence trends. One community director said a strategic plan would be developed to move from data to action.

Other Resources

The [Status Offense Reform Center](#) is a resources hub for policymakers and practitioners working to keep youth with noncriminal status offenses out of the juvenile justice system. In addition to the toolkit for planning, implementing, and sustaining status offense system reforms, the site contains research briefs, Webinars, podcasts, a blog, and a help desk.

New Safe Routes to School Policy Workbook

The [Safe Routes to School Policy Workbook](#) is a customizable tool for school board members, administrators, families, and communities to create and implement policies that support active and safe transportation to school.

Evidence-Based Treatments for Homeless Youth

Professor and researcher Natasha Slesnick [answers questions](#) about the work she and colleagues have undertaken to discover which evidence-based treatments are effective in working with homeless youth.

Starting a Youth Program

Juvenile and Family Court Judges' [Family Law Institute for Judges and Lawyers](#), March 2–5. Topics will include e- discovery and ethics, psychotropic medication effects, child toxic stress, neglect, cyberstalking, and modern parenting.

This [guide](#) provides information for adults and teens interested in starting a youth-serving nonprofit organization. The guide takes users through four distinct steps, each with interactive videos and helpful tools.

IACP Youth Focused Policing: Program Impact Tools

The International Association of Chiefs of Police and OJJDP have created online [program impact tools](#) for law enforcement agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of youth programs. The tools include an eight-step guide that can help identify youth-related issues, set program goals, and measure outcomes to determine the impact.

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