Police program nontraditional

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Oregon Daily Emerald

Traditional policing usually involves driving around in a patrol car and waiting to respond to dispatch calls, said Ken Saxon, a Eugene police officer who patrols the University area.

Saxon was sitting on a bicycle when he made the remark, just one indication that he does some very non-traditional policing.

"Traditional law enforcement is reactive," he said. "You do not do anything until you get a call or see something happening."

Saxon said he tries to do more preventative policing. He spends time talking to people.

"I talk to the businesses about possible problems. I talk to the youth. I talk to the homeless people and I go to fraternities and neighborhood meetings and talk," Saxon said.

The goal of these talks, according to Saxon, is to create long term solutions.

Saxon started patrolling the University area four years ago, after businesses on 13th Avenue and the University began complaining about crime and aggressive panhandling in the area. The businesses and the University each offered to pay one-third of Saxon's salary.

Saxon is restricted, by the terms of his salary, to patrol the immediate vicinity of the University. Since he started regularly covering the area, reports and calls have dropped significantly.

Saxon is a model for the new community policing program that is now being implemented in Eugene, said Dave Whitlow, director of public safety.

"Before Saxon was working at the University, we would get calls all the time from that area," Whitlow said. "Now he is working to develop solutions to those problems and, consequently, we are not receiving calls all the time."

The city has already supplied the public safety department with the first $500,000 of an estimated $2 million total that will be needed to fund the community policing project.

The city expects to contribute another $500,000, next year providing four new sworn officers and four support employees, and to pay for two new officers assigned to downtown and to the Bethel school district. The city plans to implement the $2 million total funding over four years.

The Eugene Public Safety Department's Community Response Team has a storefront police station in the Whiteaker area. Foot and bicycle patrols have been started and officers now patrol several area schools. The Lane County sheriff's office is also in the process of applying for a federal grant to start its own program.

Whitlow said the new community policing program requires a new concept of law enforcement. "As it is now, we have no control over demand," he said. "And the citizens, especially in some areas, feel no connection with the officers that are there to protect them."

The new community policing program will be more responsive to the public, with community meetings and daily contact. It will also work "at the root of crime," to create solutions.

A special event, planned to kick off the community involvement phase of Eugene's transition to community policing was held last Friday at the Eugene Hilton. Portland Police Chief Charles Moose, who recently declined to accept a post with the U.S. Department of Justice to remain in Portland and head that city's police bureau, spoke at the event. His address was titled, "Putting the Community into Community Policing."

Moose said that the concepts of community policing are just as important for the public to know as they are for the officers. He said prevention of crime involves looking out for neighbors and making a personal effort to help stop criminal activity.

"This marks the beginning of a direct dialogue with the community," Whitlow said. "We now need to create a list of goals and a proposal for how we are going to deliver service to the people."

Police Arrest Man Wanted for Shooting

PROSPECT, Ore. (AP) — A gun manufacturer suspected of killing his best friend surrendered Monday after police filled his remote mountain home with tear gas.

James Thompson, 58, of Prospect, offered no resistance to the SWAT team that surrounded him in the living room of the ranch house where he had spent 27 hours ignoring attempts to talk to him, authorities said.

Robert James Branch, 54, of Grants Pass went to Thompson's home Sunday after his friend called saying he was having emotional problems.

"They've been friends for 30-some years," said Darlene Christie, Branch's sister-in-law. "Thompson called him, for him to come up. And Bob, being a good friend, went up there."

When Branch got there, he was shot in the abdomen. He managed to drive to a neighbor's house, but died before paramedics could get him to a hospital.

Before he died, Branch identified Thompson as the man who shot him.

"I'm paraphrasing, but he said something to the effect that, 'He shot me, why did he shoot me?'" said Jackson County sheriff's Lt. Jim Van Sant.

Thompson is the owner of Oregon Arms Inc., maker of a lightweight .22-caliber rifle favored by backpackers and trappers. The company was located in Central Point for a decade, but Thompson moved it to Prospect three years ago.

Thompson shut down the plant and laid off his 25 employees three months ago.

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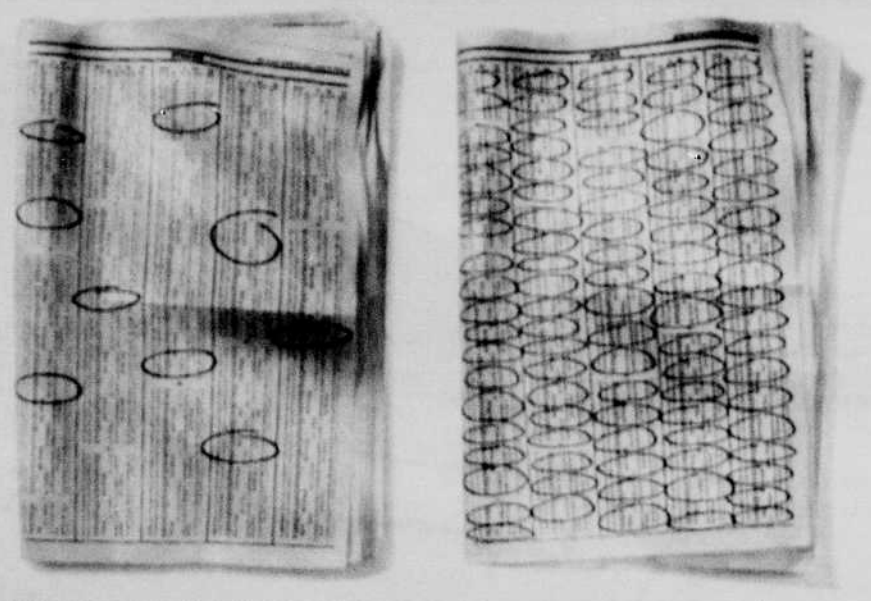

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