

Policing With Our Community

Woodbury Police Department

Summer 2020



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Multicultural Engagement

For the past 12 months, the WPD has been working with a community steering committee, led by a skilled diversity, equity, and inclusion volunteer facilitator, to develop a police department Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC). The steering committee has defined the purpose, goals and authority of the MAC (see detailed information below), developed webpage content (woodburymn.gov/MAC) and an application/interview process. It was necessary to cancel the initial plan to introduce the committee to the community at a scheduled event in April 2020 due to COVID-19.

Purpose

The Woodbury Police Multicultural Committee enriches the relationship between community members with diverse identities and experiences and the police department by creating opportunities to learn from each other, engage in meaningful conversations, and solicit input for decision making processes that impact the community. By building trust and communication between the police and community members, we will ultimately improve the safety and livability of our community.

Goals

- To provide opportunity for meaningful conversations that create an appreciation for different perspectives and mutual understanding
- To provide an open channel of communication between police and community for the sharing of information and feedback
- To help the police department better serve community members with diverse identities and experiences
- To recommend opportunities for maintaining and improving public trust in Woodbury law enforcement
- To assist the police department with inclusiveness, community outreach, public education and recruitment efforts
- To work together to build a safer community

Authority

The Woodbury Police Multicultural Committee does not serve as an oversight committee but as a liaison between the police department and the community. This may involve serving as a liaison when evaluating police operations, police training, policy designs and reviews, and hiring processes.

The group has been active in advising WPD already. They assisted in the interview process for the department's new K-9 handler, the rollout of our "Lights On" program, (see page 6), and assisted with the design of our senior fraud informational flyer during COVID19.

Moving forward we are working on involving our group in our new police officer hiring processes, giving them a voice in our policy reviews, and involving them in our engagement and recruitment efforts. This will truly be a 2-way relationship as we build a safer community for everyone by forwarding the department's mission of serving all people with compassion and courage

COVID-19 Engagement and Response

The Woodbury Police Department adapted to the changing needs of our community during the COVID19 pandemic. While this time has been difficult for all, the most vulnerable in our community have faced the most challenges. To help address the need in the community we identified two officers who worked full time to coordinate Woodbury Public Safety assistance.

Emergency Food Deliveries

During the Stay at Home order, we teamed up with SoWashCo Cares and the Christian Cupboard Emergency Food Shelve to deliver prepackaged food and groceries every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday to people experiencing food insecurity. Community Service Officers, Police Officers, Sergeants, and Command staff conducted these deliveries with additional assistance from the Fire Department. We made 533 home deliveries, providing 2,028 meals to those in critical need.

We also partnered with Washington County to coordinate a satellite food distribution event at East Ridge High School. People could drive through the event and be provided fresh produce and protein packs on June 19 where we served an estimated 750 people.

Community Masks

As part of the Governor's #MinneSewTa drive, Woodbury Public Safety conducted a community homemade mask collection. Our community donated over 3,153 masks to our drive which we then distributed to senior living and group home locations throughout Woodbury.

Community Help Line

The Woodbury Police Department created and implemented a phone helpline to connect people with much needed resources. Staff took calls from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday and provided information on prescription and grocery delivery to those that couldn't leave their homes, setting up curbside pick-up for Woodbury businesses, connecting people with financial difficulties to local emergency help providers and providing information on county and state agencies for other questions.

Emergency Gift Card Program

The nature of a police officer's service often makes them a first contact for people and families experiencing crisis. Frequently, Woodbury officers would open their own wallets to ensure people in these circumstances could get daily necessities like food, clothing and gas.

In 2019, Woodbury Public Safety took the opportunity during Night to Unite to collect donated gift cards to be used by SoWashCo Cares for district resources and for Woodbury officers to provide emergency aid to people finding themselves in crisis situations.

While making the emergency food deliveries during this pandemic the Woodbury Police Department distributed all of those gift cards, in \$25 and \$50 donations, to as many of the families receiving the food packs as possible. We were able to provide a total of \$1,940 dollars in gift cards to help bridge the gap, for those in critical need, until the federal stimulus money was distributed.

In 2020, Woodbury Public Safety received a \$3,000 grant from the Woodbury Community Foundation and \$200 from the Woodbury Fire Alumni to purchase \$25 and \$50 gift cards to continue this program.

Birthday Parades

With community members unable to leave their homes for birthday gatherings Woodbury Public Safety conducted birthday drive-by parades. We conducted 85 in total.

YOUTH - ENGAGEMENT

The Woodbury Police Department has always seen our youth engagement programs and efforts as a great way to build relationships with our entire community. Our efforts are a wide-spectrum of engagement opportunities including building relationships of trust, hosted programs, educational events and fun partnerships. We approach each opportunity with the idea of building purposeful engagement with the kids of Woodbury.

Youth Police Academy

The Youth Police Academy is free five week introduction to the world of policing. Designed to be a fun and active program for students in grades 6 through 8, this program takes advantage of the HERO Center facilities. The HERO Center is a regional state-of-the-art immersive training center for police, fire, and emergency medical services. For more information on the HERO Center visit herocentermn.org.

Originally scheduled for April 2020, it was promoted by the Woodbury Police Multicultural Committee along with our middle school School Resource Officer. The spring program was cancelled due to COVID-19 but has been tentatively rescheduled for this fall. High school and adult versions are coming soon.

Police Canine 5th Grade Outreach

For the past two years our K-9 unit has conducted demonstrations for all of our 5th grade classrooms in the city. The demonstrations are an opportunity for kids to learn about our dogs and how we use them. These also allow for our officers to explain to our kids why they personally went into law enforcement and explain their role in the community.

School Resource Officers

We have three officers assigned to our schools. Two who serve in the high schools and one that serves our middle schools. These officers create many lasting connections with kids, support the school staff, and are active in many non-law enforcement activities at the school which build relationships and trust.

Other activities

Officers connect with kids at various activities throughout the year. Some of these include:

- Bike helmet ice cream rewards program, (sponsored by Dairy Queen)
- At playgrounds while on patrol
- Stopping in at sporting events
- K-9 demos throughout the year
- Bike/Walk to school event
- Bike Rodeo in partnership with Parks & Recreation
- Night to Unite
- Christmas Shop with a Cop
- Summer Skoolie, (District 833 family fun nights promoting food and community resources)
- Hosted Woodbury Public Safety Scout Nights
- Car seat checks & clinics
- Starlight Cinema Movie Night
- Cops and Bobbers events
- Safety Camp
- Half Pint Safety Camp
- Tiny Tots Triathlon
- Woodbury Days
- Big Truck Day

55 And Older Engagement

The Woodbury Police Department has developed a number of strategies for building relationships and protecting those within our 55 and older communities in Woodbury.

Engaging Seniors

Prior to pandemic precautions, officers would frequently drop in on senior living centers to engage residents in conversation. Several times a year, a more formal Coffee with a Cop would be arranged in common rooms allowing for an hour or more for officers to answer questions and more importantly spend time. Seniors were also included in officer diversity, equity and inclusion training when all officers spent a day meeting with staff and talking to residents of Woodbury Senior Living.

Seniors and Crime Prevention

Woodbury police detectives have seen an uptick in fraud and financial crimes targeting seniors. This is an even greater concern as many seniors are more isolated because of the pandemic. An educational flyer was developed with input from the Multicultural Advisory Committee members that specifically addressed ways seniors could protect themselves from fraud. This flyer was distributed to senior living centers throughout the city to get the info directly into resident's hands.

Communities with Lower Income Engagement and Resources

Community BBQ Events

Since 2018, the Woodbury Police Department has partnered with Christian Cupboard Emergency Food Shelf to host summer community BBQ events at three properties each summer that participate in the Section 8 voucher program. These community-building events feature K-9 demonstrations, fire and police vehicle and equipment, school supply giveaways, bike raffles, child safety seat fitting and booster seat giveaways, free hotdogs, chips and beverages.

We host three events each year and rotate properties each year. The completely free events are designed to reach out to communities to listen to community members, and build relationships and trust.

Emergency Card Program

See Page 4 to see how the Woodbury Police Department provides emergency funds, through gift cards, to people experiencing crisis.

Lights On Program

The Woodbury Police Department is participating in this micro grant program that provides each officer with vouchers to give to motorist in lieu of a citation for burnt out vehicle lights. The driver can take the voucher to a designated repair shop for a free headlight or taillight replacement. The goal of the program is to offer a solution that is restorative rather than punitive, create a positive exchange between officer and motorist and make the roads safer with fewer cars having broken headlights or taillights.

Driver's License Reinstatement Diversion Program

The process of getting your driver's license reinstated after it has been revoked/suspended/cancelled can be daunting as driver's need to work through both the court system and the MN Department of Vehicle Services. The Woodbury Police Department is participating in this program that helps drivers streamline the process of paying fines and getting their driver's license reinstated. When an officer encounters a driver with a revoked, suspended or cancelled status, they provide information to connect them with state diversion managers who help them work through the process.

People with Disabilities Engagement

Polar Plunge

The Polar Plunge is an annual event sponsored by Law Enforcement for Special Olympics Minnesota. Each year the Woodbury Police Department puts together a team of jumpers who raise funds to participate in the local event which takes place at Carver Lake in February. In addition to assembling a team of jumpers, Woodbury police personnel also work to organize the entire event which raised over \$73,496 from 394 plungers in 2020.

Multicultural Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Multicultural Advisory Committee is to enrich the relationship between community members with diverse identities and experiences and the police department including people with disabilities. A current member of the committee is a person on the autism spectrum, providing the group with perspectives from their lens. As the committee continues to grow, we hope to seek out and encourage people with disabilities to become active members of the committee.

Community Mental Wellness

Woodbury Community Support Team

Law enforcement agencies are frequently called to be the default first line of response to situations involving mental health crisis, substance abuse, and homelessness.

In 2019, the Woodbury Police Department formed the Woodbury Community Support Team consisting of a full time detective working with several Woodbury officers. This team focuses on efforts by law enforcement to coordinate with Washington County Community Services through Adult Mental Health or the Crisis Response Team and follow up on crisis calls looking for longer term solutions.

In the 1990s, The Los Angeles Police Department pioneered police mental health collaboration with a model that is still proven successful today, pairing law enforcement officers with mental wellness professionals for co-response to in-progress crisis calls and coordinated response for follow up after the crisis call. In February 2020 members of the Woodbury Community Support Team along with representatives from Washington County Community Services spent a week at the Los Angeles Police Department, a Bureau of Justice Assistance JMHCP designated national learning site, and experienced this cross-system collaboration first hand.

The Washington County Sherriff's Office, Woodbury Police Department, and Cottage Grove Police Department are partnering with Washington County Community Services to develop a one year long coordinated response pilot program. The purpose of the proposed collaboration is to improve the responses to and outcomes for individuals and families experiencing mental illness, people in crisis, substance use disorders, and homelessness in Washington County by implementing this cross-system collaboration that is recommended as a proven best practice nationally by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Crisis Intervention Training

All Woodbury Patrol Officers complete 40 hours of community Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), during which advocates and consumers of mental health services speak on their experiences. The training also includes a group of mental health clinicians for a panel discussion as well as extensive role-play exercises featuring professional actors.

This course gives an in-depth look at mental illness and its implications for law enforcement. It covers schizophrenia and psychotic disorders, mood disorders, cognitive disorders, personality and substance disorders, suicide assessment, adolescent and elder issues, PTSD, excited delirium, suicide by cop, and mental health courts. Patrol Officers also undergo ongoing training on de-escalation techniques, conduct body-worn camera case study reviews, and attend CIT refresher courses.

Police Officer Mental Wellness

Policing is a demanding and often stressful career. On a daily basis, officers can be exposed to the worst humankind has to offer. They are called upon to make life and death decisions in a split-second and margins for error are slim. All of this takes a toll on an officer's mental wellbeing. To help our officers maintain mental wellness we have incorporated several programs.

New Hire Initial Training

Our new hires and their families go through training courses during our in-house police academy and are provided information on financial preparedness, mental health and resiliency. They also meet with our independent professional mental health provider who educates them on our individual mental wellness program, family counseling options, and the substance abuse treatment options that are available.

Annual Mental Wellness Visits

All Woodbury Police Officers must visit with our independent professional mental health provider at least once per year for a mental wellness check-up. If additional visits are needed officers can anonymously attend up to five additional sessions.

Peer To Peer Program

The Woodbury Police Department has two assigned peer to peer support officers with the team being supervised by a Sergeant. Members of this unit receive additional and ongoing training in mental health guidance. Members coordinate our new hire mental wellness training and provide support to current and former officers.

Critical Incident Services

The Woodbury Police Department utilizes an outside group to conduct critical incident debriefs. The Critical Incident Stress Debriefings are a way for individuals to discuss their personal incident as it relates to their thoughts, perceptions, and feelings, in order to reduce stress. They normally take place 24 to 72 hours after the incident and consist of peers and mental health professionals who are specially trained in this type of debriefing.