

Building Bridges: Brick By Brick

Welcome and thanks for accepting the Law Enforcement Community in general and, in specific, the Travis County Sheriff's Office's challenge and accepting the invitation of joint ownership and partnering with community groups.

Steering Committee Co-Chairmen:
Sheriff Greg Hamilton, Travis County
Rev. Mike Manor, ACSW, LCSW

After a number of police shootings of members of minority communities in recent years, Sheriff Greg Hamilton accepts an offer from the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) to hold an one-day summit on Feb. 28, 2006, to begin to improve police-community relations. The NCPC team met with more than 60 local community leaders to understand the issues and prepare for the summit.

Key Outcomes

As a result of the one-day summit, 116 recommendations were made. The NCPC compiled an event summary to Sheriff Hamilton with recommendations for future work. He identified a community leader, Rev. Mike Manor, as a partner for future efforts and a steering committee was to be identified. Partnerships were established with Austin Police Department, Travis County Constable's Offices, Austin Independent School District Police Department and other jurisdictions.

Top Recommendations

- Create meaningful and sustainable conversations between neighborhoods, churches, communities and law enforcement.
- Convene community-wide town hall meetings and forums for more information about citizens academies and to address specific community issues (enlist help from residents).
- Ensure that officers are provided with mentoring opportunities, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and after-school programs.
- Recruit "home-grown" officers within the Travis County community, and encourage officers to recruit from family and friends.
- Bring the media into the process of police-community reconciliation, and get their commitment to promote positive news events.
- Extend invitations to law enforcement and community members to join an event with no specific agenda, such as church services, community fairs and cultural events.
- Establish partnerships between law enforcement and faith-based groups.
- Offer training sessions for law enforcement on diversity issues co-instructed by members of diverse cultural groups.
- Develop more support systems and programs inside and outside jails and prisons.
- Provide programs during the school day that educate students and parents on positive traits of law enforcement, stressing mutual respect. A recent development of Building Bridges is the "17 Questions" for accomplishing a Win-Win successful school year.

