

2014 SOUTH BEACH ASSOCIATION  
CITIZENS ON PATROL C. O. P. ACTIVITY REPORT

Our C.O.P. program is a part of District 9, which is responsible for the island from the South Bridge to the county line down the island. Our efforts have historically, and for the moment still are, focused on South Bridge to Middle Cove Park with occasional forays into the Blind Creek boat launch area.

I decided to volunteer for Citizens On Patrol (C. O. P.) after hearing the presentation by the Deputy Sheriff for Crime Prevention at the Association Annual Meeting last year and learning in subsequent discussions that activity was at a very low level in South Beach and the program here was in need of revitalization. I completed training and became active at the end of April. To my surprise, I became the leader of District 9 a few weeks later.

For a number of years the program had been active and successful. Then an active leader moved back north and things began to slide. As a comparison baseline, in the first four months of 2014 a total of 11.5 hours were donated to the program. Some members had not driven in over a year and were ineligible to patrol. This was pretty much the activity level for the previous couple of years. No suspicious activity had been reported for a very long time. Crime opportunity notices were not being used. Close patrols, house checks, and elderly and infirm checks were not being done and sufficient staff was not available to properly support those activities. With patrols seldom on the street the crime deterrent effect was largely lost and C.O.P. was not available for citizen assist with information, directions, and assistance.

My goal was to change this. I contacted all previous members I could find, whether active or inactive. I recovered uniforms and credentials from those permanently leaving that I could locate. Two ineligible lapsed members were retrained. One is now active and one subsequently resigned. I recruited seven new members but had serious problems getting them trained. Two did get thru training so far, two withdrew, and three are still awaiting training. But our program is now working and we are a visible and recognized presence in the community. We appreciate all of you who wave as we go by or thank us for volunteering.

In the nine months ending January 31, 2015, 466 volunteer hours were contributed. Thirty calls to 911 were made that resulted in Fort Pierce Police Dept. or Sheriff's Department officer response. One 911 call resulted in dispatch of Animal Control. Four 911 calls were made and subsequently cancelled before the responding officer reached the scene because the suspicious parties left the scene or stopped the activity in which they were engaged. In addition, three generator or lift pump alarms were reported directly to FPUA, three traffic safety issues involving knocked down or obscured stop signs were corrected, dozens of close patrols were made on construction sites that had been the object of vandalism and vacant houses we were asked informally to watch, many crime opportunity notices were issued in situations with valuables vulnerable to theft, primarily in parks and fishing areas, numerous situations were defused and disputes calmed by our visible presence on the scene and assurance that we could have prompt police response if needed, 64 flag downs by citizens for information, directions,

clarification of rules, or assistance with vehicle issues were handled. We also participated with the Sheriff's Dept. in the Fort Pierce Holiday Parade and the Martin Luther King Day Parade. I believe we have been successful in revitalizing the C.O.P. program in South Beach.

Many of our 911 calls are suspicious situations that do not necessarily become major issues. But there have been two or three instances where the first responding officer waited for backup because things could have been more serious. Typical situations encountered include serious traffic accidents, traffic flow issues on busy holidays or weekends, frequent disputes in the parks over vehicle or boat parking and operation, suspected drug dealing, suspected burglaries in progress in occupied but known to then be unattended homes, suspicious material removal from vacant buildings, suspected car break-ins in parks and in residential parking lots, suspicious vehicles trolling the parking lots of beach parks, suspicious persons or activities in neighborhoods, lost article recovery, and multiple reckless driving stops on a single individual.

I would be remiss if I did not mention how impressed I am with the courtesy, professionalism, community knowledge, and support of the 911 call takers, dispatchers, and both Sheriff's Dept. and Fort Pierce Police Department officers. In particular, two FPPD officers with whom I have had numerous contacts, Joe Coleman, who is now doing mostly training, and John Fasanello, who recently transferred to FPPD Crime Prevention were very accepting and supportive of the C.O.P. program and helped me become comfortable in doing this job. They will be missed over here. Following radio traffic is an education in itself and the rapport between officers and dispatch is indicative of a special mutual respect and camaraderie that is impressive.

So, where are we today? We are staffed to provide proper close patrol, house watch, and elderly and infirm check services and are providing close patrols, although they are all at the direct request of contractors who have had vandalism issues and realtors or homeowners who have directly asked me to watch certain vacant properties. I would urge you to go to the Sheriff's web site ([www.stluciesheriff.org](http://www.stluciesheriff.org)), click on the "Community" pull down menu, and find the explanation and forms for requesting these services and the Save Our Seniors program.

What does the future hold? I am attending the Sheriff's Citizen's Academy, a twelve week program ending April 29, to be better prepared to lead the C.O.P. group. We are trying to get a restart of the Night Out Against Crime going for an event this year on Tuesday, August 4. I have been trying to get the Sheriff's office or FPPD interested in doing "coffee with a cop", a national program I ran across in another Florida city that is designed to help community relations and encourage citizens to support crime prevention. I will keep working on that.

I was notified this week by several phone calls from people in Nettles Island that they had graduated six people from the training program ending last Saturday and I was assigned to do their field training and incorporate them into our program. I verified with Crime Prevention that this was, indeed, the intent. Technically, they are in District 9 and part of my responsibility, but there are a number of issues we are discussing that I am concerned could seriously impact the effectiveness of what we have going in South Beach now. We will see how this develops.

We could use more drivers or even people who only want to ride as observers. This is a great volunteer job. You will receive 16 hours of classroom training, 2 -3 hours of field training and then you can determine your own work days and hours. We ask for a minimum of 8 -10 hours per month. If you are seasonal you work when you are here. You will get very familiar with your patrol neighborhoods, provide a crime deterrent for your community, provide assistance to your neighbors and visitors to our area, and have the opportunity to participate in other activities, training, and social events . You can contact me for information using my email on the Association web site, by emailing [mailmurray@aol.com](mailto:mailmurray@aol.com), by calling me at 772-285-1755, or by flagging me down when you see me go by in the C.O.P. car.

Bruce Murray, District 9 C. O. P. Leader